

MASTER OF NONPROFIT AND CIVIC LEADERSHIP

ASSESSMENT REPORT AY 2020

Charles Taylor, Program Director

The size and impact of the nonprofit sector in the Ozarks is extraordinary. There are more than 1,500 nonprofit organizations in Springfield. While they range from tiny, volunteer-only organizations to some of the city's largest employers with thousands of employees, their cumulative impact is undeniable. Just as important is the robust role this sector can play in strengthening our communities. The Covid19 pandemic has illustrated graphically the importance of the nonprofit community to our quality of life, but also the challenges that the community faces.

The MNCL responds to this need as it links theoretical knowledge on best practices to lead and communicate within and about nonprofit organizations with a commitment to practical application of those concepts in community organizations working on the front lines to enhance the quality of life in Springfield and the Ozarks. Partnerships with the City of Springfield, Greene County, Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Leadership Springfield, Springfield Public Schools, United Way of the Ozarks and other influential community organizations affords the program – and its graduates – an unusual degree of public visibility and opportunities for engaged learning in the program and professional advancement after graduation.

Housed in the Department of Communication, the Master of Nonprofit and Civic Leadership is intentionally interdisciplinary, drawing together academic resources from across campus along with the community based resources of political, economic and cultural leaders from the Springfield region. Such an integration is both theoretically rigorous and meaningfully applied. This integration of theory and practice serves the individual professional interests of each student as well as the broader interests of the Ozark community. Most employees of nonprofits have passionate commitment to their organizations, but may not have the background education to lead and manage the organization most effectively. This program enhances the overall capacity and effectiveness of nonprofit and civic organizations. By doing so, it will enhance the quality of life in the Ozarks.

As with all Drury graduate programs, there no faculty colleagues with exclusive, full time teaching responsibilities in the MNCL. Non-full-time faculty have been critical to keeping the MNCL running effectively since the program's inception. In 2018 and prior, roughly half of the courses were taught by adjunct instructors. With the departure in 2019 of Dan Prater, founder of the Drury Center for Nonprofit Leadership, that percentage has increased. Happily, Dan has indicated his commitment to remaining a core contributor to the MNCL (and Nonprofit Leadership Certificate), particularly with the online delivery format. Two other long-term adjunct colleagues (one a former full-time Drury faculty) member have remained committed to teaching the other required MNCL and certificate online courses. However, the ongoing economic uncertainty could make these

commitments more difficult to keep in the future. Overloads are common (particularly for capstone courses in the spring), but IDEA results suggest quality of instruction remains acceptably high.

One of the program director's most pressing needs is to expand the pool of qualified adjunct colleagues able to teach in the program. In particular, it will be important to build our pool of female colleagues and colleagues of color to provide the diverse and inclusive experience our students deserve and our world demands. The move toward online offerings makes this somewhat more feasible.

PROGRAM LEARNING GOALS AND CURRICULAR POINTS OF ASSESSMENT

Leadership: Graduates will demonstrate understanding of theories of effective and ethical management and leadership of nonprofit and civic organizations. (MNCL701; COMM 604; MNCL 602; MNCL 701/702)

Foundations of Sector and Governance: Graduates will articulate broad understanding of history, development and function of nonprofit and civic organizations. (MCNL 601; MNCL 602; MNCL 701/702)

Visioning and Planning: Graduates will demonstrate ability to identify need, analyze opportunities, articulate vision and develop appropriate strategies to collaboratively address key social issues in the Ozarks. (MNCL 602; MNCL 701/702)

Advocacy: Graduates will demonstrate the ability to write and speak in ways that inspire internal organizational commitment and external action. (MNCL 666; MNCL 701/702)

Resources: Graduates will demonstrate ability to select and utilize strategies needed to acquire and allocate all resources necessary to accomplish an organization's mission. (MNCL 603; MNCL 604; MNCL 701/702)

Performance Measurement: Graduates will demonstrate the ability to establish and measure key performance metrics, and communicate results to stakeholders. (MNCL 604; MNCL 666; MNCL 701/702)

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND RESULTS

As a program targeted at working professionals in the nonprofit field, course level assessment strategies are primarily predicated on practical application projects and involve feedback from external stakeholders in the profession. Each course requires presentation skills, including use of digital, visual, and oral skill in ways appropriate to each course's specific content area.

The final assignment in MNCL 602 is an organizational climate audit. To complete the assignment, each student must work with a local 501(c)(3) organization. The purpose of the project is analyze how the organization's stakeholders feel about various aspects of the operation, including communication processes (decision-making, sharing of information), attitudes, board processes, board/staff relations, evaluation, and recognition.

Information is collected through electronic surveys, which are distributed to the organization's entire staff and board of directors (similar surveys, but not identical). These audits are valuable instruments that provide critical insights into the processes, behaviors, and opinions of employees, volunteers, and board members. The reports are useful in giving the organization an objective perspective from various stakeholder groups. Organizations receive a comprehensive printed report that explains findings and offers suggestions for improvement.

In **MNCL 603**, the final course project involves development of a cohesive philanthropy plan with instructor chosen community partners. Students conduct interviews with the partner organization's staff, Board, and appropriate stakeholders to identify keep fundraising priorities, develop an operational plan to identify funding opportunities, and create a case statement for submission to selected funders. Organizational partners provide feedback to the instructor and students.

In **MNCL 604**, students are tasked with demonstrating operational mastery of professional accounting software most commonly utilized in the nonprofit industry. With a focus on building and interpreting balance sheet fundamentals, restricted fund management, payroll, 501(c)(3) tax requirements, efficient use of Guidestar and other reporting systems to build comprehensive financial reports.

COMM 604: Seminar in Communication Ethics requires all students to prepare a working model of communication ethics that can serve as a 'map' for professional communication choices. A primary element of the course involves engagement with professionals from a variety of fields as they reflect on ethical choices central to their work, with particular emphasis on their internal and external communication strategies. Among the speakers in recent semesters have been Steve Edwards, CEO of CoxHealth, Claudette Riley, *Springfield News-Leader*, Brandy Enver-Harris, CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield, Jill Patterson, Attorney and MSU Title IX Coordinator, Brian Fogle, CEO of Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Mark Struckhoff, Former Executive Director of Council of Churches of the Ozarks, and Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement, City of Springfield. While formal work has not been shared with the speakers, the instructor engages each speaker in follow up conversation regarding the depth and nuance of student comments. Consideration is being given to formal external review of work by speakers.

The two-course capstone sequence, **MNCL 701/702**, requires students to partner with a nonprofit partner to develop a comprehensive logic model detailing the development, potential implementation, and assessment of a program/initiative to enable the partner organization to more effectively meet its mission. Developed sequentially, the project requires an organizational profile, needs analysis (SWOT), program precis, and outcomes assessment plan for submission to the partner organization. Organizational partners provide input on preliminary stages, and feedback on the logic model in written form. In a typical year, the culminating event is a public poster session in which students discuss their projects with organizational partners, program faculty, family members, and other interested parties. Sadly, the Covid19 pandemic prevented this final assessment step in Spring 2020.

Follow up interviews with leaders of partner organization with individual faculty and program director are used to measure quality and utility of student projects. All organizational partners rated student work as “very good” or “excellent” with 100% of respondents indicating a willingness to partner with future MNCL classes. A list of recent organizational partners is appended to this report.

REPRESENTATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF RECENT GRADUATES

Cindy Beecher: Director of Administration, United Way of the Ozarks

Anastasiya Gulak: Program Assistant, Open World Program, Washington DC

Felicia Gummi: Executive Director, ‘Texas Can’ Academies

Amy Jardell: Executive Director, Ozarks Literacy Council

Amy Qualls Landrigan: Regional Director, Psychiatric Medical Care, Inc.

Griffin Long: Director of Development, Drew Lewis Foundation

Aria Spears: Women’s Empowerment Specialist, Convoy of Hope

CHANGES MADE ON THE BASIS OF ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Even acknowledging the disruptive impact of the Covid19 pandemic on our courses – and our nonprofit organizational partners – in Spring 2020, an ongoing key weakness of MNCL assessment has been the lack of formal discussion of assessment data by program faculty. In part a function of the difficulty of working with a substantially adjunct and online faculty, but more a function of the program director simply not getting it done as he should, this will be a priority for the upcoming year. However, informal discussion of assessment data have enabled some important revisions to program structure and curriculum.

Given the importance of stakeholder collaboration in the MNCL program, the original vision for the capstone sequence was for two semester sequence. However, discussion with partner organizations made clear this was not a sustainable goal. The instability of nonprofit leadership and the always limited staff of local nonprofits makes it difficult on our partners to commit to full year projects. As such, the courses are now offered concurrently, albeit with a corresponding absence on actual implementation of capstone project proposals. Instead, the projects now contain implementation guidelines and assessment protocols, though only in very rare cases can the projects be implemented and assessed in a single semester. Future discussion will need to focus on whether the courses can/should be reorganized to retain both theoretical heft and practical significance.

Feedback from organizational partners from previous years indicated that students were not always as adept at making formal funding pitches as their most successful employees. As a consequence, project assignments in both MNCL 604 (formal pitch) and MNCL 666 (pitch presentation) were developed and/or revised to emphasize skills suggested by organizational partners.

Informal discussions among program faculty revealed that some students were not as adept as ideal in utilizing financial software to bolster their claims for organizational partners. As a consequence, the instructor of MNCL 604 developed a finance 101 module that students complete during that class and that is available for review during the capstone sequence.

PLANS FOR 2020-21 ASSESSMENT

While providing some valuable information in its current informal incarnation, assessment must become more consistent and systematic in 2020-2021. The Covid19 pandemic scrambled intentions to systematize exit interviews with students, organizational partners, and program faculty (and nearly everything else on earth). This report will be shared with program faculty and assessment discussion meetings scheduled early in the fall semester. In particular, the program faculty will collaborate on an assessment matrix that will prioritize one or two learning objectives each year, with more quantitative (where appropriate) measures developed to affirm learning and/or suggest changes to enhance learning.

Organizations Assisted	
Abilities First	Harmony House
Aids Project of the Ozarks	Isabel's House Crisis Nursery
Amer. Red Cross	Jesus was Homeless (Branson)
Arc of the Ozarks	Lost and Found Grief Center
Big Bro/Sisters	MO Institute Natural Science
Boys & Girls Clubs	NAMI of SW Missouri
Camp Barnabas	Ozarks Counseling Center
Cents of Pride	Ozarks Food Harvest
Children's Smile Center	SCIL – SW Ctr Independent Living
Council of Churches	Springfield Ballet
Diaper Bank of the Ozarks	Springfield Community Gardens
Down Syndrome Group	Springfield Little Theatre
Downtown SGF Association	Springfield Symphony
Farmers Market of the Ozarks	The Child Advocacy Ctr.
Friends of SGF Art Museum	The Kitchen, Inc.
Good Samaritan's Boys Ranch	United Way of the Ozarks
GYNCA of the Ozarks	Geek Foundation
Habitat for Humanity	Least of These (Nixa)