Course Objective

BA 795, the MBA Culminating Experience, is designed to allow you to apply many of the skills you have learned in the MBA program. Participating organizations pay a fee to the CBA to take part in this program and the CBA uses this as a way to extend and maintain good relationships with these local organizations, increasing the market value of your degree from SDSU. We trust that you will find your project to be a rewarding experience as you apply what you have previously studied in class.

Goals and Learning Outcomes

MBA students will graduate having a solid foundation in theoretical concepts and managerial skills needed to lead business organizations; an ability to analyze environments in which managers make and implement business decisions; and an ability to formulate, communicate, and coordinate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities. BA 795 contributes to these goals through its student learning outcomes: After completing this course, you should be able to:

1) Summarize the organizational managerial context of the business decision.
2) Determine the appropriate information needed to arrive at business recommendations.
3) Determine the methodologies needed to obtain the required information from both primary and secondary resources.
4) Implement the appropriate methodologies in a semester-long research project.
5) Analyze the collected information to arrive at sound managerial recommendations.
6) Write a sound research report for presentation to management.
7) Orally present the research results to management in a well organized presentation.
8) Be a productive member of a research team tasked with solving a decision problem.
9) Mitigate interpersonal problems that exist in the research team setting.
| Philosophy | Various components of BA 795 comprise the "Culminating Experience" requirement that all graduate degree candidates must satisfy. Therefore, BA 795 is not a course in the usual sense of the word. As in any major team project, it is expected that all members of the team will contribute significantly to all elements of the project’s components. For example, while a member with a finance concentration might be expected to lead the effort related to financing alternatives, all members of the project team should be involved in, and understand the implications of the financing decisions. |
| Professionalism | You are expected to act professionally in all aspects related to your project. This includes, but is not limited to: maintaining confidentiality of the information provided to you by the client, keeping scheduled meetings with clients, and giving the expected effort to the project. If asked, each of you may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement for your client. All work that you submit to the client, your teammates, and the instructors should reflect your best possible effort, and be free from typographical, spelling and grammatical errors. A standard similar to that expected in a professional business consulting engagement will be adhered to in this course. |
| Time Commitment | The operational standard used by the College of Business Administration for this type of course is roughly 10 to 12 hours per week, during a regular 15 week semester (150-180 hours). This time will be spent either in class, or working directly with the client or on some other project-related activity. Typical projects require a minimum of 400 hours of consulting time to complete and it is not unusual to see projects that require many more hours to complete. Each student should plan to budget a minimum of 100 to 150 hours of project time (in addition to class time). |
| Contribution | The course requirements are modeled after a consulting firm, and, as such, all members of a team are expected to contribute their fair share to the project. Peer evaluations will be collected twice over the term to assess the work of each team member. Although rare, it is entirely possible for a team, on the vote of a majority of its members, to “fire” or drop a teammate (after appropriate consultation with the instructors). Before a team “fires” a member, written notice of the team’s evaluation of the member’s work must be presented to the individual involved and to one of the instructors so that an attempt can be made to remedy the situation. After one written notice has been provided to a team member and sufficient time for correction has passed, the individual can be “fired” without being given further written notice. Although this is a serious action, it does occur in the “real-world.” This action typically will result in the individual failing the course. |

We meet a relatively few times as an entire class during the semester. However, we reserve and utilize the scheduled class time for BA 795. This time is used for scheduled team meetings with the instructors, as a time that all team members can meet without time conflicts and as a time to conduct research related to your project. Do not schedule other activities (such as work, attending other lectures, conducting work for other classes or attending group meetings for other classes).
during the scheduled BA 795 time. This is a mandatory condition for your participation in BA 795 this term. Failure to fully attend all class sessions and meetings will result, at a minimum, in a significant lowering of your course grade.

**Project Manager**

Each team will have a project manager who has overall responsibility for keeping the team on track and coordinating the work of the team. Another important task of the project manager is keeping your team’s faculty advisors appraised of the status of the project through progress reports. For specific periods, project managers will prepare short progress reports outlining what has been accomplished during that period and what the team expects to accomplish during the next reporting period. Those expressing interest in being a project manager typically get first choice of projects.

**Support and Budget**

The Graduate Business Career Management Center, located in EBA 336, is staffed by Angelica Bouras, the program coordinator, phone: (619) 594-3950. All required administrative paperwork is to be turned in to her. We intend to have the office staffed in evenings for that purpose. Your client will need to approve in writing any budget for your project. Your client (or SDSU) is not responsible to reimburse you for any expenditure that has not been authorized. Keep all original receipts (not a photo copy) of items to be reimbursed. As with a typical graduate course, students are responsible for typical project costs, such as photocopying and binding reports. Typically each project team will be responsible for producing at least two bound copies of the final report. For reference, a significant number of prior BA 795 reports are available for review at the office.

**Role of Faculty Advisors**

Each project team will work with two faculty co-advisors. Typically, a BA 795 instructor and an additional faculty member. The role of faculty advisor is to act as a "sounding board" for your project plans and proposals, and to provide limited guidance in the project’s execution. Remember that the projects are intended to be designed and implemented by you and not by your team’s faculty advisors. Faculty advisors must approve your project team’s letter of engagement, overall research plan and final written report. To avoid confusion, maintain regular communication with your faculty advisors (in person and by e-mail), get approval at agreed to stages, and always submit professional quality work when seeking their input or evaluation. Whenever you are in doubt, ask!

**Assessment**

Course grades will be assigned in accordance with San Diego State University policy (see Graduate Bulletin, pp. 62-64).

Your course grade will be based on four components with the following weights:

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>final report content and style (based on application of appropriate business practices and value to client)</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>initial background research, problem statement, research plan and methodology</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meeting administrative deadlines</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>final presentation</td>
<td>25</td>
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Individual grades will be based on a combination of peer review and instructor evaluation of all of the above components. In instances of identifiable differential performance among team members [based on peer review and level of commitment], the team grade will be adjusted accordingly, by as much as several letter grades. Peer evaluations are confidential and are to be shown to no one except the instructor. Evidence of collusion on peer evaluations will negatively reflect in the final assigned grade. Elements that may be addressed in the individual student evaluation process include quality and quantity of input, timeliness and work ethic. It is not unusual for unequal final grades to be assigned to members of the consulting team. In part, this reflects the importance of the peer evaluations and overall commitment to the consulting project. It is our expectation that each final report will require at least minor modification before being cleared for final presentation to the client. Reports requiring major revision or rewriting may be reduced by one letter grade. Late reports may also be reduced in grade.

The College of Business Administration wants to be proactive in enhancing the quality of SDSU’s MBA program. Part of this process involves examining, in a careful and systematic way, whether students are learning what the faculty believes that they should be learning. To this end, the Graduate Committee, a group comprised of faculty and the Director of Graduate Programs, has developed a plan to assess the achievement of a number of important goals. Moreover, the College of Business Administration is mandated to assess student learning outcomes. The MBA program goals are to: (1) develop the solid foundation in theoretical concepts and managerial skills needed to lead business organizations, (2) develop an awareness of the legal, ethical, and technological environment in which managers make and implement decisions, (3) develop an awareness of economic and cultural environments in which managers make and implement decisions, and (4) acquire the capacity to formulate and communicate strategies to solve business problems and pursue opportunities. The primary reason for measuring learning is to use the results to enhance the quality of the MBA program. Summary results are also reported to the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Accredited Colleges of Business, like SDSU, must report on assessment of learning to maintain accreditation. During the third and fourth weeks of class, there will be two mandatory individual assessment activities. Details will be provided in the first class meeting. The result of these assessment activities could result in the final BA 795 course grade being adjusted upward or downward by one half of a letter grade.

Activity 1 – Individual written report (2-3 pages single spaced) that refines the objectives for the project, assesses relevant environmental factors, and develops potential data considerations for conducting the project.

Activity 2 – In-class assessment exam.