

THE NATIONAL MENTORING PROJECT: A WHOLE PERSON LEARNING APPROACH TO VALUES-LED MANAGERIAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

“My subject is the educated imagination, and education is something that affects the whole person, not bits and pieces of him. It doesn't just train the mind: it's a social and moral development too.” (Frye 1963, p. 66)

Demands to incorporate topics related to ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) into the curriculum for marketing students are growing; however, traditional approaches to such training have had limited success. We, therefore, propose a whole person learning approach to such education. Whole person learning aligns strongly with the concept of integrity which is defined as “quality or state of being complete, whole, or undivided” (Nelson & Trevino, p. 150). As Frye suggests, education is more than just engaging the mind, it is about engaging the ‘whole person.’ Whole person learning involves the physical, emotional, and social aspects of learning as well as the cognitive aspects (MacRae-Campbell, 1997; Rogers & Freiberg, 1993; Taylor, 2007). It intimately involves the learner in the process allowing them to choose what is learned and how it is learned.

To illustrate the approach, we describe the first year of operations of the National Mentoring Project that utilized a whole person approach. The project linked three sectors: education, non-profit, and business. It was the brainchild of three partners: Donohue Brent Training and Consulting, Queen's University's Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility, and a corporate sponsor, Molson (Canada's oldest brewery). It intimately involved students and managers in social and community issues. Students and managers were asked to apply their marketing skills to important social projects. The National

Mentoring Project began when the founders asked what appeared to be an impossible question: What if business schools could deeply engage students in CSR projects while corporations leveraged their employee volunteer programs, maximized the benefit they receive from their donations budgets, provided better training for their future managers, and helped charities and social causes all through one program? As impossible as this may sound, that is what the new National Mentoring Project was developed to achieve, and it did accomplish these goals.

Seven students were selected in the fall term for the program. To apply, students had to first find a project at a Canadian non-profit organization that fit with one of the sponsoring firm's priorities (active lifestyles, healthy communities and skills development). In the winter term, students were assigned a mentor from Molson's Talent Pipeline. The mentor worked with the student and the non-profit providing advice on a number of fronts, including guidance with the development of a plan focused on how to best complete the project. The following summer, Molson paid the students' salaries while they worked non-profit implementing their project.

We tracked participants' experiences over the course of the year and gathered qualitative data related to how they assessed the various stages of the project. Our findings strongly suggest that everyone benefited and learned new and deep skills in an experiential and collaborative way. Participants described the outcomes of the project as being very positive and, for some, it was even transformative.

References Available on Request