PROJECT GENESIS

What’s the Problem?

• “That law class is REQUIRED . . . Ugh, why?”
• “That law class” is required EARLY ON
• So, I need to:
  • Connect my students to the material personally ("I don’t want to be a lawyer.")
  • Make the study of law “real-world” ("When will I ever use this?")
  • Demonstrate the practical value of the law ("What does this have to do with marketing, finance, etc.?")
Why Build-A-Business?

- AACSB requires:
  - curricula “facilitate and encourage active student engagement in learning,” and that
  - students should “engage in experiential and active learning designed to improve skills and the application of knowledge in practice.”
- GSU Learning Outcomes & RCB Objectives have similar goals
- Address Current Criticisms of Business Curriculum
  - Underdeveloped critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills
  - Lack of liberal learning
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

What is Build-A-Business?

• Semester-long project

• Comprised of a series of versatile and adaptable paper assignments

• Analyzing a student-selected business idea

• Within the context of legal concepts discussed in class
PROJECT EXECUTION

How Do You Build A Build-A-Business Project?

- Multiple papers assignment in a semester-long project format (*chunking*)
- Each assignment comprised of multiple short-answer questions (*chunking, con’t*)
- Organized based on the order in which the material is covered in class (*scaffolding*)
- Regular instructor feedback provided to assist in producing a comprehensive assessment (*scaffolding, con’t*)
PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS

How Do Students Build-A-Business?

• Paper 1
• Begins with personal interest and creativity (HYMFB & F*ck Ya Fashion)
• Sets the stage to introduce their concept
• Forces certain business decisions that have legal impact
• Partially substantive
  • Moves into recalling and explaining information presented in class (pros/cons of a business form)
  • Some application of knowledge (ID need for contracts)
• Feedback is less critical, more suggestive (What about this/that . . . ?)
PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS

How Do Students Build-A-Business?

• Paper 2
  • Entirely substantive
  • Move students toward higher-order thinking
  • Hypothesize potential events
  • Categorize events as particular torts
  • Further categorize facts as individual elements of claims
  • Conduct analysis based on uniqueness of individual business, not just generic recall (active learning)
  • Consider ramifications of prior business decisions
  • Feedback more in-depth, critical
PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS

How Do Students Build-A-Business?

• Final Paper
  • Revise and enhance prior analysis
  • Conduct additional substantive analysis on last set of legal concepts
    • Hypothesize and categorize
    • Active learning, again
      • Unique analysis, not generic recall
      • Consider impact of prior decisions
  • Ultimately produce a comprehensive analysis and assessment
  • End with Code of Ethics
What Do You Get with a Build-A-Business Project?

• Real-world application, rather than concepts in a vacuum
• Relevant lecture hypos and better student engagement
• Getting It vs. Memorizing It
• Versatility, versatility, versatility
  • Streamline or expand assignments
  • Add research components
  • Convert to in-class exercises
  • Require presentations
  • Assign as group work
• Success Stories via student-run businesses
What Do Students Think about the Build-A-Business Project?

• Spring 2015 Survey
  • 2 classes; 29 student respondents (out of 31; 95%)
  • Standard Project, with Research variation

• Fall 2015 Survey
  • 4 Classes; 262 student respondents (out of 336; 78%)
  • In-Class Exercise variation

• Fall 2015 Survey
  • 3 classes; 68 students respondents (out of 108; 63%)
  • 2-Paper, Group Work variation
  • 25 Honors students also incl. Presentation variation
What Do Students Think about the Build-A-Business Project?

- Spring 2015 Survey Results (Standard, with Research)
  - 76% liked the opportunity to “create” their own business and analyze legal issues that would typically confront that business
  - 79% indicated that the Project helped them better appreciate how many different kinds of legal issues affect the creation and operation of a business
  - 86% felt that breaking the Project up into multiple assignments made it more manageable
  - 76% agreed that the Project was a good assignment that should be kept
What Do Students Think about the Build-A-Business Project?

- Fall 2015 Survey Results (In-Class Exercises)
  - 68% reported that the exercises helped them appreciate how the law can affect the formation and operation of a business
  - 75% reported that the exercises helped them appreciate how legal concepts learned in class actually apply to a business
  - 71% reported that the exercises helped them understand how to anticipate when a business might be exposed to liability
  - 45% said that the class sessions in which they completed the in-class team exercises were their favorite in the course
  - 11.1% viewed the Project as a waste of time that should be discontinued
What Do Students Think about the Build-A-Business Project?

- Fall 2015 Survey Results (Group Work)
  - No less than 91% agreed or strongly agreed that the Project helped them:
    - appreciate importance of having awareness of legal concepts in a real-world business setting
    - understand how legal concepts apply to real-world businesses
    - spot issues in real-world business setting
What Do Students Think about the Build-A-Business Project?

- Comments
  - “... allows one to be creative, have fun, and understand the material better.”
  - “... helped put all the concepts discussed in class into perspective.”
What Do Students Think about the Build-A-Business Project?

- Comments

- Group Work: “I was able to learn how to better work with a group of people with different backgrounds.”

- Presentation: “. . . [H]aving to present this semester project in a "shark tank" style made us think more in depth and from different angles.”
“I’m glad I took your class . . . I learned a lot that is very relevant to what I’m doing now.” - Dev
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