2018 Application Form for
ASC Grants for New Service-Learning Course Proposals
<u>Deadline February 5, 2018</u>

1. *Communication Dynamics in Groups*

2. Applicant Information
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3. Course Description

- *Background Context*

The School of Communication is particularly excited about this grant call because it overlaps, in many ways, with School objectives. If I received funding for this grant, my goal would be to reconceptualize and re-envision an existing course on the books in our department. This course is Comm 4635 – Small Group Communication, which I understand has not been taught consistently for several reasons over the past few years, but which we want to make a capstone-type experience for some of our students in strategic communication and communication, analysis, and practice (CAPS). This initiative is also responsive to the Provost's call, in the fall 2017 retreat, for courses that strengthen training in working in teams. Based on discussions with the Director of our undergraduate communication program, our program is in need of more classes that marry theory with real-world application. She was excited at the prospect of offering a class like this because she thought this would be attractive to our 800 strategic communication majors, and offers an additional course providing real-world experience for our several hundred CAP majors. For these reasons, I am excited about the prospect of developing this course and would believe it to be a nice addition to our School.

- *General Description of Course Goals*

The overall goal of this course is for students to develop the knowledge and skills required to become more effective team members and leaders. In order to achieve these goals, this class focuses on three specific aspects of teamwork: Group structure, processes, and outcomes. This course will be structured such that theory and research in each of these three domains will be presented. By understanding how different group structures lead to different productive (and destructive) group processes, it is hoped students will be able to apply this knowledge to their own experience working on a team.

I am excited about this grant opportunity because, while I have taught this class before at another institution, there are some key differences between how I taught the class then and how I would teach the class now. Devoting time this summer to finding a better textbook, changing up the format (because I taught this course on a quarter system), improving the quality and clarity of my "mini" assignments, and researching organizations, would be what I'd hope to accomplish with assistance from this grant.

- *General Description of Course Content*

This course will require that students apply the principles they learn in class towards their own service-learning group project. Due to the subject matter, this class can uniquely take a meta-level perspective to learning about teamwork while actually engaging in a group project. Thus, this class offers students a unique opportunity to make theoretically informed decisions about how they conduct their group in real-time.

As previously mentioned, the course will be broken down into three sections, loosely titled (1) group structure, (2) teamwork processes, and (3) performance. During the *group structure* section, students will be exposed to varying perspectives about the role of individuals within a group. Some examples of topics in this section include: Group formation, leadership emergence, and diversity. The second section, *teamwork processes*, will examine how different communication dynamics affect group processes. Some examples of topics in this section include: Cohesion, leadership styles, influence, and decision-making. Finally, the section labeled *performance* will discuss the pros and cons of different metrics for success. Some example topics will include: productivity, satisfaction, and decision quality. Additionally, this section will also cover issues related to methods and measures of success. The inclusion of this topic helps integrate this course with our research methods classes and our organizational communication course. We are hoping that these topics will be particularly attractive to strategic communication and CAPS majors. Although this course focuses on the service-learning context, importantly, the class content intends to build conceptual understanding and communication skills that are applicable to both nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

- *General Description of Service-Learning Component*

The group project students will be working on is typically a fundraising event for a local nonprofit or charity. Throughout the semester students will have to work with an organization to help them with their fundraising goals. I have done this project in the past with a similar course (at a different institution) and have found that this task works well. This is because fundraising is a ubiquitous need in organizations of this kind, therefore where and how the fundraising takes place can be flexibly applied across different organizations. A press release about this class project can be found here:

Here is a sample of the instructions I will provide to students regarding this project.

> For the duration of the semester, students will work in project teams whose objective it is to raise funds for a charitable organization of your choice. The purpose of this project is to provide you the opportunity to design and implement a collective project that serves the community, all the while working as a team, making decisions, developing your group communication skills, connecting with other groups on and off campus, and presenting the results of your efforts. Your group may choose to do any type of fundraising activity that is feasible and ethical, given the constraints of time and resources. The overall experience will enable your group to become a bona fide decision-making and task group whose outcomes have real-life consequences.

- *General Description of how Service-Learning Activities Contribute to Goals*

There are several ways in which this project contributes to the goals of this course. In order to make this connection, I will divide this section into a discussion of academic goals and professional goals.

Academic Goals

The opportunity to learn, discuss, and reflect upon group tasks while in the process of making group decisions is invaluable. For the academic component of this course, students will be exposed to group-based theory and research about how various group dynamics affect group communication processes and performance. Following these readings and discussions, student teams will be asked to make decisions about *how* their group will perform a task. Thus, this class focuses more on group communication processes than group outcomes. After completing each task, students will have an objective metric of their success (their grade). It is hoped that this format allows students to link group communication processes to outcomes, which is the fundamental goal of this course.

Professional Goals

Although the opportunity to learn about groups while working in a group constitutes a unique hands-on opportunity to learn, the excitement in this course is really generated through the service-learning project. Fundraising for a local charity is an effort that students can feel good about and use on their resume. Also, because students pick their charity, their level of investment is usually quite high, which improves project commitment and performance. In addition to these motives, students will also learn to apply critical professional communication skills that will credential students with the soft skills demanded by most employers.

Taken together, the service-learning project considerably augments the teamwork experience.

- *Tentative Syllabus Provided*

[Sent in a separate attachment]
Please note this syllabus does not include all the necessary sections, but instead outlines the learning objectives, assignments, and tentative list of topics covered in the course. I hope to use this summer to fully develop these ideas to figure out ways to make the most out of class time and group meetings.

4. Community Focus and Reciprocity

- *Intended Community Partners*

All local nonprofits or charitable organizations are eligible to be community partners for this project. I will, however, have to OK all organizations before they are solicited to ensure they meet the guidelines specified in this proposal. In the past, popular charities included food banks, youth services, or charities aligned with health.

Over the summer I will work on getting together an initial list of websites that will help guide students in the right direction. As I teach this class more regularly, I imagine the guidance I can provide in this capacity will improve because it will become clear what organizations are more or less receptive to this project. I do want to stress, however, that letting students search for these organizations and find one that excites them is an important component to this project. Therefore, I want students to identify the organization with which they will work.

- *Describe Community Partners' Participation in the Development of this Project*

One of the nice characteristics of this project is that the participation of the community partners is fairly open-ended. In the past, some partners have been very involved and have invited students into current fundraising plans and in other cases partners have been very hands off. This is something we will discuss at length in class. Managing this uncertainty, or ambiguity, from a communication perspective, however, is an important professional skill for communication majors to learn. When I prepare this course, one of the documents I will create is a contract for students to provide their partners. This contract will outline the minimal partner obligations for seeing this project through. It is hoped that this contract helps facilitate a more in depth discussion about what is expected from both parties.

- *How Does the Service Project Reflect Priorities and Stated Needs of Partners*

In my experience, most charities are happy to accept money from a group of students tasked with the responsibility to raise money. Therefore, most partners are fairly receptive and open-minded about efforts in these regards. Again, whether the organization invites students to participate more fully in some of their on-going efforts will vary, but this isn't a difference that will affect the project or grades given that students will be graded on the assignments they complete for class about their efforts, not the efforts itself. Also, the language in the contract presented to partners before students commit to working with them will help initiate a conversation about whether project goals and the organizational goals are compatible.

- *Anticipated Community Benefit and Project Impact*

Aside from the financial benefits that will be incurred by this project, there are several informal benefits that may be enticing to community partners and students. The first is that partners create a relationship with Ohio State students and the School of Communication, that may provide benefit to students through future service learning projects, through internships, and other potential opportunities, and benefit the organizations through access to talented and enthusiastic Communication majors. At a minimum the efforts required in this course raise money for charities that they otherwise would not have received. When successful, however, this partnership can yield other benefits that may be realized down the road.

5. Letter of Support from Department Chair

[On the next page]

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Communication

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31 January 2018
Steven Fink
Executive Associate Dean
College of Arts and Sciences

Dear Dr. Fink,

I am writing in support of Hillary Shulman's Service Learning Grant request.

I am quite excited about Professor Shulman's initiative for the redesign of this course, Comm 4635, Small Group Communication. The course is being reconceptualized to focus largely on learning both theory and application of theory regarding communicating in work teams, utilizing as she describes a major service learning component. This revision, I would note, is highly responsive to the presentation in the fall Provost's Retreat, which highlighted the importance of training undergraduates in the ability to work effectively in work team contexts, as well as the importance of experiential learning.

As such, it will play an important role in our undergraduate curriculum. It is 4000 level elective that will provide a capstone-type experience in that it integrates theory and application of theory to real-world problems, an experience that students can include in their portfolios. It is especially important to students in our Communication Analysis and Practice focus area, which currently has less experiential learning than in other areas such as Journalism and Strategic Communication.

While the grant will cover the start-up costs of the course, the ongoing expenses once up and running should be modest and the School is committed to covering such costs given the value and importance of the course to our curriculum.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Slater
Director
Social and Behavioral Sciences Distinguished Professor

COMM 4635 Communication Dynamics in Groups

Professor: Dr. Hillary Shulman
Email: Shulman.36@osu.edu
Office: 3140 Derby Hall
Office Hours:

Required Texts: [*Will spend summer looking for a new text however because I have some problems with all the textbooks I have previously used*]

Goal: The overall goal of COMM 4635 is to develop the knowledge and skills required to become more effective group members and leaders.

Objectives: 1. Students will understand and apply factors that shape the communication process in groups.
2. Students will understand and apply relevant principles, theories, and research findings associated with group communication to their own lives and various leadership contexts.
3. Students will understand and apply basic communication competencies needed by individuals to be more effective leaders.
4. Students will understand and apply the communication skills needed to function within task oriented groups and teams.
5. Students will have the opportunity to design and implement a project that serves the community.

Assignments: 1. **Exams.** You will have two exams in this course. The exams will contain multiple-type test questions, possibly including: True/False, Multiple Choice, Matching, and Open-Ended Questions. Exams questions will be generated from the material covered in class lectures, and readings.

2. **Final Project + Presentation.** Each person will be required to apply the knowledge gained throughout the term in a final project. Because this class is designed to help people understand and critically think about group processes, group members will have the opportunity to evaluate their group members and dock loafing group members points if they do not equally participate in the project. Additionally, groups will present their project and findings during the last week of the class. The group paper will be worth 100 point, while the presentation will be worth 25 points. Information for the writing of the final paper will be provided throughout the term.

Project Topic
Throughout the term, your group task will be to fundraise for the charitable organization of your group's choosing. Groups will have to come up with an event or fundraising strategy to help raise funds or interest for this organization. Groups that are successful will have a clear mission and goal (set in the midterm project proposal) and will work together to accomplish this goal. More information about this project will be provided throughout the term.

3. **Midterm Project Proposal.** Groups are natural procrastinators. In an attempt to ensure your group remains focused on the project as early as possible, your group will have to turn in a proposal at the beginning of week X. This proposal should be 2-4 pages long (double-spaced). In this paper the group should briefly

describe their organization of choice. Following this introduction, the paper should lay out the group's strategy for raising money for this organization along with a timeline. Please be as specific as possible. This paper should end with the group's objective goals ($, # of members, etc). These goals should be ambitious, yet realistic, and the numbers should come from some tangible comparison point. These details will be discussed more specifically in class.

4. **Individual Reflection paper.** In addition to the final paper, each person will be asked to write a 2-4 page paper reflecting on the processes that occurred within your work group for this project. The purpose of this paper is to allow you to reflect on the processes that occurred within your actual group. Thus, successful papers will accurately and intelligently apply course concepts to their own performance. Please note this paper must be typed, double-spaced, stapled, and be within the specified page limit in order to receive full credit.

5. **Mini-Reflection Papers.** In an effort to help individuals stay on track throughout the term, smaller assignments will help guide students through the reflection process. Each paper will take a different form. While some reflection papers will ask you to write an essay answering a specific question, others might ask several questions about how your group's processes relate to content from the readings. The details for each assignment will be discussed in class, and/or posted on blackboard.

Anticipated Overview of Topics:

Module 1: Group Structure
- Group Formation   - Leadership Emergence   - Group Diversity
Module 2: Teamwork Processes
- Leadership styles   - Cohesion   - Decision-Making   - Influence   - Check-In on Projects
Module 3: Performance
- Productivity   - Satisfaction   - Decision Quality

TENTATIVE OUTLINE FOR SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT BELOW

(Draft)
COMM 4635 Group Fundraising Project Overview (Still in Progress)

For the duration of the semester, students will work in project teams whose objective it is to raise funds for a charitable organization of your choice. The purpose of this project is to provide you the opportunity to design and implement a collective project that serves the community, all the while working as a team, making decisions, developing your group communication skills, connecting with other groups on and off campus, and presenting the results of your efforts. Your group may choose to do any type of fundraising activity that is feasible and ethical, given the constraints of time and resources. The overall experience will enable your group to become a bona fide decision-making and task group whose outcomes have real-life consequences.

Part One: Orientation
During the first few weeks of the semester, your group will need to:
- Get to know one another, coordinate schedules
- Develop an initial group identity (name), establish initial group roles and norms, etc.
- Identify potential organizations you wish to serve in a fundraising capacity
- Decide which organization to serve
- Establish a connection with the organization
- Learn about the organization
- Assess your group's progress and process to date leading up to the Midterm Proposal
- Monitor and provide informal feedback on your group members' performance

Part Two: Planning
During weeks X and X, your group will need to:
- Brainstorm potential fundraising activities
- Design a specific plan for meeting your fundraising goals – Need to include for Midterm Proposal
- Develop a timeline and task roles for meeting those goals
- Begin the early stages of implementation
- Assess your group's progress and process to date
- Monitor and provide formal feedback on your group members' performance

Part Three: Action
During weeks X through X, your group will need to:
- Acquire necessary resources and permissions
- Implement its fundraising plan
- Monitor progress to evaluate and revisit decisions
- Stage fundraising activities and events
- *Complete fundraising by the end of week XXX*
- Monitor and provide informal feedback on your group members' performance
- Assess your group's progress and process to date

Part Four: Presentation and Reflection
During weeks X and X your group will need to:
- Produce a professional portfolio of your group's work
- Develop and deliver a 15-minute oral presentation to the class about your project and your group communication experience
- Develop a detailed formal outline of the presentation
- Formally present your chosen organization with the monies you raised
- Monitor and provide formal feedback on your group members' performance for Reflection Paper
- Assess your group experience
- Submit a final individual reflection report

Work Products for the Group Project

Credit for work on the group project will be shared unless otherwise specified. All group members are expected to contribute to the project and all will receive the same grade on all group work products, regardless of whether assignments are delegated to individual members.

Midterm Project Proposal

In an effort to compel your group forward, you will have to complete a midterm project proposal that asserts, in detail, the steps you will be taking to complete your final project. This proposal should be 2-4 pages long NOT inclusive of references and Appendices. You will need to state the organization or charity you will be raising money for and name a contact person at the site you are interested in working with. Also, explain briefly what the organization does (background info). After this introduction, you should state your monetary goals and make an argument for why the goal you set is both A) ambitious and B) achievable. In addition to these sections, you should also include an explanation of how you will fundraise and a specific timeline that states how you will achieve your objectives. This timelines should have dates, and content that will be discussed at group meetings. Finally, if your group has assigned roles to different members, you should articulate these roles. All communications in this class should be considered professional and formal – so it is highly recommended that you pay attention to details and keep your content and formatting consistent.

Group Project Portfolio

On the day you make your formal presentation, your group will submit a project portfolio that includes all of the various documents and materials you have generated during the course of the project. More than a pile of notes, the portfolio should be a professional presentation that documents in detail the work you have accomplished throughout the term. Sections and items you may wish to include are: information about the organization, contact information, meeting agendas and minutes, timelines, memos of individual tasks accomplished, publicity materials, press coverage, budgetary information, photographs of events, progress and process reports, letter to the charitable organization presenting your donation, thank you letters to donors, etc. You can be as creative as you wish, but the final product must be polished, professional, and thorough.

Final Group Presentation

Each group will present an account of its project to the class in a 30-minute oral presentation. In addition to discussing the specific project, your group will need to discuss the development of the group and how communication did (and did not) work. The presentation should consist of four distinct parts: (1) summarize the events of the project and overview your charitable organization; (2) discuss how communication functioned in your group, using course concepts and theories; (3) discuss how this project influenced your learning of course material; (4) reflect upon what you would and would not do differently if you had to do a similar project. On the day of the presentation, you need to submit a formal outline of the presentation, your project portfolio, and a letter and check or money order to your chosen organization. All members of the group must speak during the presentation, and you should be prepared to field questions from the class.

Miscellaneous Group Assignments

From time to time, I will ask groups to complete brief assignments designed to help you apply course concepts to your group experience, to keep your project moving forward, and to provide an opportunity to reflect upon your progress. Details of these assignments will be discussed in class. Assignments may include creating a team identity, developing a mission statement, using electronic discussion and collaboration tools on Blackboard, completing various team-building tasks, reporting on your chosen charity, formalizing group rules and rules, developing agendas and meeting minutes, providing feedback to group members, etc.

Bonus Incentives(?)

To add an element of friendly competition to the group projects, members of the group raising the most funds (net after expenses) will each receive X extra credit points; the second place group will receive 3 extra credit points, and so on. Extra credit will be earned *only* if the group meets or exceeds its initial stated goal. If any group or individual member of this class interferes with or attempts to sabotage another group's project, the extra credit opportunity will be revoked for the entire class. If the class as a whole exceeds SOME AMOUNT everyone will also receive 5 bonus points.