**Application for Cintas Ethics Experiential Learning Grant**

**Submitted by: Rebecca Luce, Associate Professor, Management & Entrepreneurship**

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Course Overview

My application for The Cintas Ethics Experiential Learning Grant is for students taking a new undergraduate course I am teaching in Spring 2014 called “*Managing for Sustainability*.” This course is part of the *Sustainability: Economics & Management major* that was introduced in the Williams College of Business this fall. Managing for Sustainability is open to all students across campus and has no prerequisites. There are 21 students enrolled in the course, representing a variety of majors: Management; Marketing; Environmental Science; Economics, Sustainability & Society and Entrepreneurial Studies.

Sustainability in the business management sense encompasses three dimensions: economic vitality, environmental stewardship and social responsibility, often referred to as the triple bottom line. Forward-looking firms are taking steps to not only reduce expenses through efforts to reduce waste/increase recycling, reduce energy consumption reliant on nonrenewable resources and decrease use of raw materials, but are also investing in initiatives that are strategic in nature by developing more sustainable products, linking revenues to creating social value and incorporating sustainability perspectives into all major decisions.

Experiential Learning

As with all the courses in the new Sustainability major, experiential learning will be emphasized in Managing for Sustainability. The primary project for the students taking the course in Spring 2014 will involve working with two Cincinnati nonprofits on a community development project. The two organizations are:

*The Community School in Lower Price Hill*

The Community School (CS) in Lower Price Hill (LPH) provides adult education to the public, particularly LPH residents. It was founded in 1971 by neighborhood parents and grandparents tired of seeing their children drop out of the formal public school system. What started as small GED instructional classes in a basement storage room is today a modern learning facility that encompasses the entire campus of the former St. Michael Parish. Core programs include one-on-one GED preparation, Read to Succeed (a literacy program), and College Bridge (a program to prepare students for attending college at Cincinnati State).

LPH is one of the poorest neighborhoods in Cincinnati. Over 51% of residents live below the poverty line, compared to 29% in the city as a whole. About 40% of LPH residents have less than a high school education versus 15% for the city. Substantially fewer LPH residents have managerial occupations than in the city overall (males = 4% vs. 10%; females = 3% vs. 7%).

*Interfaith Business Builders*

Interfaith Business Builders (IBB) is an organization that is concerned about the long term scarcity of jobs, ownership opportunities, stable community and voice in many of Cincinnati’s poorer neighborhoods. The organization is committed to community economic development by creating employee-owned cooperative businesses. Co-ops, as they are called, offer people a dramatic opportunity to exercise new control in their lives. In IBB’s co-ops, employees are the sole owners of the business and make all business-related decisions with the guidance of a co-op board made up of external and internal representatives. Each co-op employee owns one share in the business, regardless of position. All are entitled to share in the profits of the business at the end of the year, based on the number of hours each has worked. Co-ops are workplace democracy in action. At least half of IBB’s co-op employees are unemployed or underemployed when they join the co-op.

*The Project*

In discussions with Sean Rhiney (Executive Director, Eigel Center for Community Engaged Learning at Xavier), Jen Walters (Executive Director, CS) and Mary Knauff (Program Director/Counselor, CS), Jen indicated that LPH desperately needs an affordable public laundromat. Most LPH residents do not have washing machines or dryers in their homes; traveling to the nearest laundromat is time-consuming, logistically complicated and expensive. Since sole ownership entrepreneurial start-ups are high-risk ventures, we concluded that forming an employee-owned co-op (with the assistance of IBB) to launch and run the laundromat was a better approach. Not only is the risk lowered due to the support and expertise of IBB, but a group of LPH residents will be benefited through employment in the new business. A follow-up meeting with Jen, Mary, Ray West (Executive Director, IBB) and me set the project in motion.

The students in Managing for Sustainability will work with CS and IBB to conduct market research, design the business, develop a business plan and assist in securing grant funding for the LPH laundromat. In this process, they will rely on the outcome of a project for IBB completed by an MBA course on Corporate Sustainability I taught a year ago. The students in that course created a handbook for IBB detailing the steps involved in launching a new co-op, from vetting concepts to opening the doors for business.

Critical to this project’s success is face-to-face interaction between students and LPH residents, as well as with CS and IBB staff. Students will need to learn about the neighborhood, the programs offered by CS, the ins and outs of co-ops and, most importantly, the needs and hopes of LPH and its residents.

Expected Student Learning Outcomes

* Students will gain an appreciation for the difficulties faced by neighborhoods where economic opportunities are limited.
* Students will increase their understanding of the viewpoints of and challenges faced by people who live in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood.
* Students will learn about the ways in which nonprofit organizations in Cincinnati work for community development, especially in regard to economic development.
* Students will learn how employee-owned cooperative businesses work and how co-ops can contribute to the stable employment and personal development of their members.
* Students will learn what is involved in starting with an idea for a new co-op business and bringing it to life.

Funding Request

The funds I am requesting for this course relate primarily to the project described above, but also include other experiential learning elements for the students to help them appreciate the history of Cincinnati and its neighborhoods as foundational context for their project.

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|  **Item Description** | **Cost** | **Total** |
| 4 Class Trips to Community School-Transportation-Refreshments: 1 Residents Meeting | Bus service = $60/hr; min. 4 hrs = $240/trip$5 \* 45 | $960.00 225.00 |
| Cincinnati History Museum-Admission -2 Docents-Transportation to Museum Center | $5.50 \* 25 adults $35 eachBus service |  140.00 70.00  240.00 |
| Class Trip to Imago\*-Admission: Caretaker’s Program-Transportation | $6.50 \* 25Bus Service |  163.00 240.00 |
| Class Trip: Price Hill Will-Private Room at Coffee Shop-Refreshments-Transportation | $50/hr$5 \* 30Bus Service |  100.00 150.00 240.00 |
| Co-op Meeting at Community Blend-Refreshments | $5 \* 30 |  150.00 |
| **TOTAL FUNDING REQUEST** |  | **$2678.00** |

*\*Imago* is a grassroots, environmental education organization located in the Price Hill neighborhood of Cincinnati, OH. For over 30 years Imago has been modeling and educating about living in concert with the natural world, animate and inanimate, human and nonhuman. Throughout our history Imago has featured innovative programs and solutions designed to help reconnect people and the planet. Caretakers program: Through great activities and demonstrations students will learn about some of the major environmental problems. Themes will include waste, pollution, natural resources, habitat loss, recycling, composting, energy conservation and more. At the end of the day, each child will not only know more about the threats affecting our environment, they will learn skills that they can practice to make a difference.

*\*\*Price Hill Will* operates on the premise that community development requires a comprehensive approach. We believe that all the elements of community — great housing, good schools, a thriving business district, access to healthy foods and medical care, engaging activities, and awesome neighbors. — work together to build a vibrant neighborhood, and that if any one element is lacking, all others will be adversely affected. Price Hill Will focuses on physical revitalization, economic development and community engagement. The flagship of our Physical Revitalization work is our Buy-Improve-Sell program which turns vacant, blighted properties into attractive, energy-efficient housing that's an asset to the community. We also have a lead abatement program to help residents reduce lead exposure in their homes.

**I certify that I will not accept funding from this grant, should I receive it, in addition to funding from any other source for the same purpose.**

Rebecca A. Luce