An Exemplar in Mentoring and Professional Development: Teaching Graduate Students Transferable Skills Beyond the Discipline

Gina Weisblat, PhD, MA
Coordinator for the Office of Research of Family and Community Medicine
Northeast Ohio Medical University
Faculty for the Nonprofit Program
Cleveland State University (Urban College) and John Carroll University
National Kresgee Nonprofit Fellow 2011-13
4209 SR 44, PO Box 95
Rootstown, Ohio 44272
Tel: (330) 325-6766
Email: gweisblat@neomed.edu

Christine Sell, MA, CRA
Staff, Graduate Grant Writing Center
Pre-Awards Manager, Office of Sponsored Programs and Research
Cleveland State University
2121 Euclid Avenue PH308
Cleveland, OH 44115-2214
Tel: (216) 687-3624
Email: c.sell@csuohio.edu

Author's Note

The Graduate Grant Writing Center applied for a grant in the 2010 round of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) Comprehensive program, US Department of Education. Parts of this paper are taken from the narrative portion of that grant. This paper is solely the work of the authors and their analysis of the establishment and purposes of a grant writing center for graduate students at Cleveland State University. It does not represent the views or official policies of Cleveland State University. This article is based on a presentation at the Society of Research Administration International Symposium in 2011. The corresponding author is Christine Sell.

Abstract

If university research is to remain a high priority in the national education agenda, graduate students must be prepared to move into research positions. Cleveland State University created the Graduate Grant Writing Center to enhance students' understanding of research principles and ethics, appreciation of the value of collaborations and networks, acquisition of proposal writing skills and experience, and, through practice, well-developed funding search skills. Individual consultations, workshops and mini-courses, electronic resources,

website links, free online courses, plus peer and faculty mentoring are ways in which the Center provides education, resources, and experience to young scholars. The Center began operations in the 2010-11 academic year on an asset-based paradigm, and is overseen and guided by an Advisory Board comprised of university community members, faculty, and graduate students. This paper examines the development of center programs and their impact on students, scholarship, and twenty-first century skill sets.

Keywords: funding, graduate students, graduate research

Introduction

Dante, who in the *Inferno* explores hell, takes careful notes and is able to capitalize on the lessons he learns from others. Understanding and applying lessons from challenging experiences and giving them context provides today's society with the best leaders of our times. Knowing how to maneuver through arduous tasks, staying motivated and committed, and finishing with strength is what Cleveland State University (CSU) believes embodies the very nature of its students. Creating opportunities for intellectual curiosity and advancement by utilizing existing assets can transform our practices in the university community. Assets exist in universities beyond those that we traditionally see (e.g., economic). The university must unlock this capital and employ it for the greater vision and fulfillment of its mission. The use of the Graduate Grant Writing Center (GGWC) by university stakeholders (faculty, staff, and students) employs the same influences found in the community building and capacity process. There are many tools available for organizations to self-assess, build capacity and connect with outside resources. In recent years, most of the literature has focused on capacity.

This paper will show how capacity cannot be achieved or exercised without first recognizing and utilizing existing assets and understanding how these assets blend internally and externally to achieve their maximal use. Learning how to then take this blend of existing assets, and extend it one step further (to capacity) allows us to leverage these assets to create a solid foundation for organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The GGWC has employed this process of utilizing existing CSU assets (faculty, support programs, and student organizations), building capacity through collaborative mentoring and teaching, ultimately establishing a new framework for teaching, and modeling an effective center for 21st century skills within an environment that promotes guidance and skill, trust, and a balanced norm set of integrity and ethics. The Carnegie Perspective provides the nurturing yet firm ethical and normative structure needed to build on existing and new skill sets; increase innovation, creativity and collaboration, and make the most of the potential energy that exists within the framework.

CSU's Mission, Students, and Trends

According to The Commission on the Future of Graduate Education (2010), U.S. graduate education is a strategic national asset. Like all valuable assets, it must be nurtured to remain viable and strong. Strengthening higher education -- specifically graduate education -- is an investment in our future. In a recently released report, the Council of Graduate Schools

and the Educational Testing Service (Wendler et al., 2010) noted that graduate education faces somber issues, the most critical being low completion rates. Furthermore, between 2008 and 2018, the number of jobs that require a graduate degree will grow by 2.5 million, which translates to a 17 percent increase in those requiring a doctorate and 18 percent in those requiring a master's degree. (Wendler)

CSU is an urban public institution of higher education located in downtown Cleveland, Ohio. CSU is dedicated to creating quality programs; attracting, retaining and graduating students, and helping them to find satisfying career paths in the local economy, thereby increasing the economic growth of the Northeast Ohio region. Consequently, there is an institutional emphasis on professional education that has relevance to the local and regional economies; nearly 85% of the over 100,000 CSU graduates remain in Ohio as leaders in business, finance, government, communications, engineering, education, information technology, law and health – all essential to Northeast Ohio. The idea and practice of interdisciplinary research is a core part of CSU's mission, intertwined with its graduate and professional education programs. The University believes that approaching challenges as opportunities is critical to its success, and thus focuses on its own assets and those of the surrounding community -- drawing on the natural talent, connections and positions that exist. Also vital is the process of building capacity that comes from the success of meeting CSU's mission. The university is distinguished by its recognition that the greatest needs of all its students – graduate or undergraduate, full time or part time, hometown or international -- are stable financial support, connectedness and networks, and strong academic support services that can assist in attaining degree goals and successfully putting those degrees to use.

Nearly 90% of CSU's student population works at least part-time while attending classes. This is a critical factor, as many of our students need financial support to supplement their already rigorous life of work, family and school. Additionally, Exner (2010), in reporting on findings from the Ohio Census Bureau, noted that one out of every three Clevelanders lives in poverty. In 2009 an estimated 35% of the city's population lived below the poverty line – up 5% from the previous year. Cleveland was ranked second (behind Detroit) as the poorest large U.S. city in 2009. Since the majority of CSU's students are from Cleveland and its surrounding communities, the Census Bureau figures have a particular resonance. Located in the center of the city and seeing daily evidence of its students' financial and social conditions, the university has committed to supporting students with funds and, more importantly, support systems to help them to persevere in their studies, obtain degrees, and become effective contributors to the 21st century workforce.

Support Programs –Cultivated as Assets to Support GGWC

CSU support for current and future graduate students is included in the Title III Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) (First: 2006 – 2011, Second: 2009 – 2014). The SIP provides grants to help eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs) become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen academic quality, institutional management and fiscal stability. Some

of the programs that CSU offers have built a tremendous foundation for recruiting students to GGWC and providing on-going additional support to their scholarship and success.

Support programs that GGWC has utilized provide continuous assistance to its students through programs and services such as Academic Advising, Academic Skills Sessions, Career Planning Seminars, Cultural Enrichment Opportunities, Computer Application Workshop, Financial Aid Guidance, Graduate School Preparation, Leadership Development, Peer Mentoring, Tuition Assistance, and Tutorial Services.

One such program is the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program, which provides students with critical academic, research, and professional experiences, including faculty mentors, to enhance competitiveness in gaining admission to graduate programs. Additionally, Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) funds graduate fellowships in academic programs to assist students with outstanding records and credentials who need financial aid to enroll in graduate programs and pursue the highest achievable degree in their chosen fields, so long as those fields have been designated as areas of national need.

Improving Rates of Diversity By Drawing on Existing Assets

These programs and many others offered at CSU have helped to increase diversity of enrollment while raising persistence and completion rates. However, assistance programs, though they reach many students, do not reach all of them – in fact some programs, by their eligibility requirements, preclude participation by many students. The university, over the last two years, has identified gaps in its service to students (i.e., inadequate funds for a given population), and determined that assets must be cultivated and applied toward graduate degree completion rates and preparation beyond the classroom to ensure career success. The growth of global economies and international learning communities means that traditional notions of what knowledge and skills advanced students need to carry with them into the marketplace are no longer sufficient. In a world that changes daily, expanding graduates' skill sets is crucial because those skills may quickly become obsolete outside the academy (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005), failing to leverage human capital for career advancement (James, 2000; Sagas & Cunningham, 2004). The task for graduate education in the 21st century will be twofold: (1) to sustain the specialization of the discipline, and (2) to encourage students to initiate and pursue creative avenues within changing industries in this global economy.

Leadership at CSU realized the twin needs of training for career opportunities outside academia as well as mentoring students academically and in ancillary professional development programs to provide the non-academic and critical transferable skills (grant writing, collaboration, peer mentoring, public presentation skills, ethical training in research techniques and practices, and network building) that will prepare master's and doctoral recipients for a wider range of employment opportunities.

The College of Graduate Studies, at the behest of Dr. George Walker, Vice President of Research and Graduate Studies, began to look for ways to assist students in their search

for financial support that would help them persist to graduation. A committee of four (Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Director of the CSU Writing Center, a newly-hired Special Assistant to the Vice President, and the Pre-Awards Manager from CSU's Office of Sponsored Programs and Research) was charged with creating a center that would help students to find external tuition and research dollars and provide them workshops and other forms of assistance to help them persist to graduation and employment. It was through this defining process that the committee recognized the potential of the center to train students in additional skill sets and provide them with individual and group mentoring sessions on such topics as writing skills, research techniques, and partnership building.

Connecting to the Current Issues in Education

Wendler et al. (2010) raised concerns over the declining number of doctoral degrees awarded to U.S. citizens, reporting that in 2007, 57 percent of doctoral degrees in the United States were awarded to U.S. citizens; 20 years earlier, 82 percent were awarded to U.S. citizens. The current percentage of doctoral degrees awarded to U.S. citizens is lower still. Foreign applications, on the other hand, rose by 11 percent in 2011. Two other concerns are the low completion rate for graduate students and the amount of time it takes for those who do complete their degrees. After extensive training, most students are in their early 30s, with life circumstances that can complicate their choices to enroll, persist, and complete degrees. (Wendler et al.)

Additionally, with national trends toward downsizing staff and the professoriate within the academy, it has become apparent that the traditional track of becoming a faculty member after training might not be available to many graduates. Thus, graduate students need better career guidance (Wendler et al., 2010). As the authors observe, "For many doctoral students clear career entry points are lacking, and it is critical to provide career transparency to these students," and "professional development programs at the university that provide doctoral students with transferable skills valued by employers outside of the academy need to be considered. Innovative graduate programs offering internships and financial support from industry also are called for." (Wendler, p. 56)

The committee began its work in late summer 2009 by examining national models. Graduate grant writing and research resource centers exist at many universities, each tailored to that institution's individual needs and operations. The committee examined centers and spoke to personnel at Indiana University, Florida International University, University of California Los Angeles, University of California Berkeley, and University of Pennsylvania. In addition, the committee explored programs and advising centers hosted by professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association. And, as Cleveland is home to one of the five National Foundation Centers (a vital grantsmanship service organization for information and skill building), it was recognized early on that Cleveland's Center would become a strategic partner in the CSU effort. The committee also read various reports about the future of graduate education from the Council for Graduate Schools, Educational Testing Services, and other sources. The committee soon found that CSU was not alone in experiencing problems in funding, persistence, and graduation. Across the nation, schools

were struggling with retention, rising tuition costs, decreasing federal funds, and the need to acquire more meaningful support of graduate education.

In some ways, determining what the solution ought to accomplish for CSU students required a general understanding of what graduate programs at universities should do for their students. By developing an understanding of such needs as defined by students, the committee identified several areas of potential action. The committee determined that it could not help students with daily academic needs such as finding advisors, choosing electives, or finding courses appropriate to their interests. Nor could it provide students advice or solutions to family and relationship problems. It could, however, refer students to the right places for these services so that they would be better able to meet the rigorous demands of certain nonacademic skills critical for growth in the 21st century.

From its examination of reports from the College of Graduate Studies Admissions department, the committee identified areas in which the center might take effective action. For example, support issues that affect students include state of the art equipment for writing and research. The need to balance school, work, and family relationships involves effective time management. Moreover, the growing diversity of university populations requires that graduate and undergraduate programs must provide for special assistance and academic and social support for significant numbers of minority or international students who find themselves in an academic and social milieu that may be unfamiliar. The need for acquiring skill sets beyond the discipline, including research methods; writing skills; ethics, technology and computer skill training, along with interview and conversational English skills – developed with peers and advisors. Language and writing skills are important to students who are preparing papers, conducting research, and need assistance with academic or research grant writing.

Beyond these are other skills that are important to academic and career growth, such as grant seeking and writing, exposure to or information about nonprofit agencies and foundations, and workshops that prepare students to take licensure exams in those professions that require them, e.g., social work and teaching.

One critical support for students is in academic achievement, such as providing tutors for non-traditional students, and research mentors – both peer and faculty. Workshops teaching skills, sessions with tutors, and other events must address students in their social and academic contexts. That is, increased services must be provided at non-traditional times such as during weekends and evenings, and flexible daytime slots so that all graduate students can access skills development – no matter what their academic schedules, employment arrangements, and lifestyle commitments. These diverse offerings must be provided in the various campus locations the students frequent.

Addressing students' needs in the 21st century requires understanding their increased financial needs that must be met through tuition and living assistance via stipends, scholarships, remission of parking and other fees, transportation assistance, free

and affordable campus services, grants and awards for research expenses, employment opportunities, and paid internships to help defray the costs of schooling. Universities must recognize that graduate assistantships are too few and do not address the depth and breadth of student needs.

One area of need that cannot be ignored and whose importance grows daily is the creation and sustaining of social networks that connect students to community resources. Universities must take the time to identify agencies that will help with career advancement, job placement, job searches, and other issues, such as providing graduate lounges on campus allowing students to interface with each other and work on projects individually or collaboratively. Faculty and staff need to continue developing their efforts toward fostering cordiality and collegiality when dealing with graduate students.

Careers in the 21st century will increasingly require students to link to communities and industry. This does not necessarily preclude a career in the academy, but it may indicate a changing role for scholars as they work in a university environment that includes these external partnerships. The committee decided that to provide students with viable career paths to industry and elsewhere, including higher education, skills that are deemed marketable and transferable outside the academy have equal value within the 21st Century university. Thus, the committee decided to create a center, not unlike many others it had identified at universities around the country, to teach graduates various skill sets. This idea was consistent with preferences and recommendations existing in The College of Graduate Students, which had for some time identified the acquisition of grant-making skills as an essential part of a doctoral candidate's academic training. The committee recommended to the Vice President and to the College of Graduate Studies the establishment of the GGWC, which would present workshops on various topics during the academic year to acquaint students with outside fellowships and other support programs, and to impart to them the skills needed to write successful proposals to acquire grants.

Mentoring in the Center

In the 21st century it is imperative that we shift our learning and teaching paradigm from an individual effort to an inclusive one comprising shared experiences with the collective and with multiple individual contributions to the greater group. This shift requires changing the model of pedagogy and the production of knowledge to alter the way we do things interactively at the university, within the community and with today's learners and workers. The GGWC has taken the prototype of the center and integrated the asset-based paradigm to utilize existing university and community talent for the development of mentoring-focused programming. Specific underpinnings of this effort relate to the need to create kinesthetic experiences with problem-based real world exercises that allow for collaborative and transparent co-learning and mentor-based direction. Table 1 catalogues some of the activities and programs that the GGWC has implemented as a part of this engaged learning experience.

Essential to the success of this model is the engagement of students in exercises and events that will broaden their capabilities and ensure their commitment to progress to graduation and employment. Critical to this goal is the participation of faculty and staff members in the mentoring and teaching of research and grant-writing skills, as well as the ethical underpinnings of research methods and report writing.

Table 1: Mentoring Types, Activities, and Outcomes

Mentoring Types	Operationalization	Contextual Action	Outcome
One on One	We meet regularly with the student through process of identification of sources, funders, plan and application.	This is accomplished on-site, via email, regular appointments and follow up meetings with students and faculty (when appropriate).	Grant completion and follow-up iterative process of additional grants, certification and developed skill set.
Small Group	We meet with a faculty member and a small group of students and co-mentor both through the process of writing the proposal collaboratively.	Faculty member usually organizes the group and we meet with them as a team, teach process, aggregate the division of labor and revise the proposal as a team.	Collaborative grant writing and intellectual exercises to deepen group "habits of mind"; grant completion and developed skill set and social capital.
Integrated Group	We meet with practitioners, faculty, students and community members to build a "community" effort grant. The outcome is based on a project with scholarship as the underpinning effort, but community focused.	This is held in the community or on campus and there asset number of formal meetings and then meeting with potential funders to ensure process meets needs of the outcome. GGWC staff facilitates and builds the connections and funding relationship.	Community engagement with the university –tearing down of the figurative "ivory tower"; collaborative grant writing and intellectual exercises to deepen group "habits of mind"; grant completion and developed skill sets and social capital.
Apprenticeship	We offer "HIGH SCHOLAR" students the opportunity to work closely with one faculty member or the Director of the center to engage in the rigorous process of a University based proposal.	Student works intensely for a period of 3 months with the faculty or Center director and is engaged in high-level university meetings. Also individual interpretation and teaching by experience takes place.	Students have learned to write high level academic grants, built new "habits of mind" and increased their social, human and cultural capital.
E-Engagement	Students take part in an e-learning course and have regular distance learning interaction with center staff and complete the entire iteration of search, program definition, grant application and submittal electronically.	This whole process is done via the Internet.	Grant completion and follow up iterative process of additional grants, certification and developed skill set.

The Model

This model represents the underpinning theory of the GGWC -- an asset-based paradigm that focuses on the process as an outcome. Specifically, it first takes the existing assets of social, latent, cultural, and human capital and blends them together to create a base for a shared experience and success. These specific capitals were blended: (1) social capital encompassing the relationships that the GGWC had within the University and the community at large; (2) cultural capital, which includes the knowledge of how to work within the context of the University and the larger community; (3) human capital comprising the skills that CSU graduate students have when they come to the Center and understanding how to leverage these with the existing skills at the university or virtually through other universities to enrich skill sets; and (4) latent capital (Weisblat, 2011), which is our ability to utilize internal knowledge assets, community needs and learning tools in creating a new level of scholarship and research capabilities and skills applicable in the 21st century learning and work arenas to further leverage our indigenous resources at the university.

Second, we looked at how to build capacity from this process. We wanted to create innovation, curiosity, collaboration and an open system of learning to foster our students as they grew in new areas of competency. In this process, we were able to utilize the Internet to strengthen our connections, to underpin our community's needs, and to create a deeper understanding of research and scholarship principles and practices.

The third step in the process was the contextual action phase. Here, we asked our students to apply their learning and the iteration process to CSU and the greater community by filling out applications and reviewing the guidelines and action steps for completion each step of the way. We leveraged their assets to build their capacity and then operationalized the process by identifying their strengths and playing to them in the progression. This step was accomplished through group sessions and in private, mentored blocks spanning several meetings between students and center experts.

Lastly, to create credibility and build the GGWC, we had to sustain the work that we had done and share it openly with other students, while maintaining transparency with the faculty to ensure continued trust and credibility. In addressing sustainability, we ensured connection to our shared mission (via on-going support and assistance) and open communication with faculty and other scholars to improve the scholarship and build the interdependence and reliance on each other while recognizing that learning is a collaborative process. We also encouraged faculty to explore scholarship with their students as an iterative and learning process. This exploration was accomplished through relationships between students and faculty members or through meetings with faculty members to explain the goals and processes of the center and invite their participation in programs.

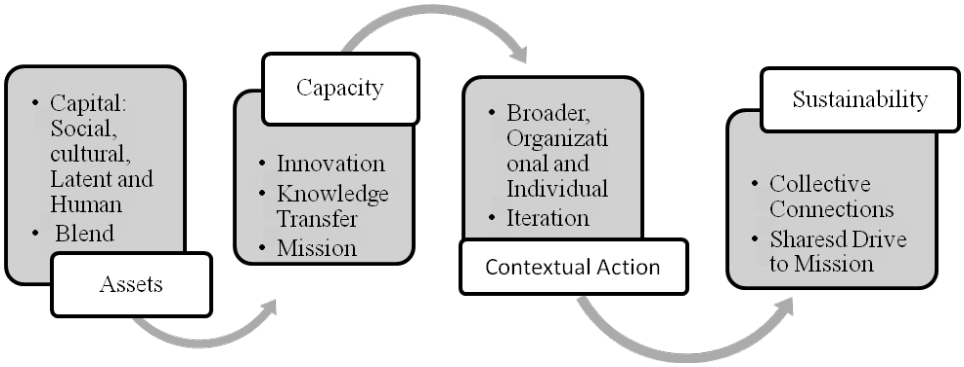


Figure 1. Asset-based paradigm model (Weisblat, 2011).

This process drove outcomes that increased openness, transparency, and collective thinking, and leveraged multiple and inter-disciplinary skill sets. This allowed for us to continue to revisit each piece of the model. The leadership style must be collaborative and hold integrity to build on all existing assets and create a new paradigm for learning and learning outcomes in the 21st century.

Intellectual Underpinnings

An organization's assets are akin to the genetic traits that help individuals achieve their potential and maximize their efficiency. Only a few scholars have looked at nonprofit assets, and their focus has been peripheral. Often a nonprofit organization has assets that are unrealized and underutilized. Weinberg (2005) pointed out the importance of organizational assets, but focused not on what those assets were, but rather on the need for an intermediary to translate those natural assets into workable capital. In business models, many people have noted the importance of intellectual and knowledge capital for success (Delgado-Verde et al., 2011). Much time has been spent on building capacity and creating opportunities for new development based on this process. Asset identification to leverage greater success is not a new concept at the community level, but it is at the organizational level, and that is what was developed in this center. In constructing a theory around asset identification and community building, Kretzman and McKnight (1993) drew upon the relationship among the individual and the non-profit organization (NPO) and community, framing their story from the vantage point of community development and accomplishment. We define organizational assets aggregated from the literature as social, human, cultural and latent capitals. Examples in the literature ground each of these components as present but not usually recognized in organizations.

Ancillary to the major point of this paper, it is critical to remember assessment of effort and to understand that the same set of influences found in the community building and capacity process can be used to create an assessment training protocol for center staff and a tool kit to help the organization reach its full potential. Moreover, consistent use of

the assessment tools becomes embedded over time as a habit of mind, one of the overarching goals of the center: to teach students that process, through repeated iterations, is in itself an outcome that leads to success. Students (and indeed organizations) will thus be better able to recognize their own assets and utilize them more efficiently. Once students recognize their existing assets and how to blend them well, they can in turn increase their capacities and provide a platform for ongoing growth and learning. With this new knowledge, students, as well as nonprofit organizations such as the center, will begin to incorporate asset discovery and assessment processes as a standard habit of mind, a new ethos equally applicable to individual and organizational asset recognition and implementation. This ethos, along with the increased capacity, identification, and implementation, helps students to increase their effectiveness in research projects, skills acquisition, and career attainment.

Organizations often define assets in terms of financials (Sullivan & Sheffrin, 2003), but the same can be applied to the goals of the students participating in center programs. However, financial security alone will not lead to success, though in terms of organizations, it can provide a backdrop for a great deal of entropy as a result of the structure of non-profit funding. For example, an organization may use existing board members and successful projects to leverage long-term endowments and a strong funding base, emphasizing grants, fees and revenue-producing services to the exclusion of their other assets; this can put an agency in peril quickly if something changes the funding stream on which they depend.

The same scenario can apply to the graduate student solely dependent on scholarship or fellowship money or on skills that serve only the profession for which the student is training, with the expectation that he or she will obtain employment in the field – which may not be the case. Different tools must be developed and at hand to meet many or all eventualities. This blend -- realization of internal and external supplementary assets -- is imperative for effectiveness. Nonprofits (and students) have the greatest success when driven by a shared goal and ideology that they can make a difference (Gostick & Elton, 2010). Taking this into account keeps nonprofits true to their mission and assists them in recognizing their natural assets. The GGWC keeps these principles in mind as it designs programs for its constituents.

Our model sets aside economic assets and focuses on the other assets that, if defined and utilized, can combine to help our university and its students reach their various capacities, thus building an *ethos of asset recognition*. We define GGWC assets as social capital (bridging, bonding, and organizational), human capital, cultural capital and latent capital. The model illustrated in Figure 2 depicts assets as existing and immediately consumable efforts or supplies that an organization can provide. Second, the model shows that if assets are recognized and blended they can help an organization increase and reach its capacity. We apply this same model to the individual students working through the GGWC to attain their highest levels of learning and skill development. Third, the model shows that an asset ethos can be achieved if the first two steps occur. The asset ethos refers to the value of the process of steps one and two in creating an individual history and foundation. That is, if GGWC participants can recognize, develop and utilize their existing assets and blend them

for efficiency and effectiveness, they create an expectation of success that changes their self-perception. If this happens repeatedly, students may begin to build an expectation and discipline for working in this style, establishing a bank (the assets and capacity) to create an endowment of ethos (process, expectation aimed at growth, and full utilization of resources). The model also illustrates that if these items align, GGWC participants, like nonprofit organizations with limited outside resources and change agents, can indeed create greater efficiency and effectiveness.

One additional important note to the model is leadership. The key to shifting focus from capacity building to asset recognition, from economic assets to a wide array of assets and their influence, requires leadership. Leaders, or mentors, who can understand the importance of providing guidance and vision without micro-managing will help students acquire, develop, and use their assets effectively.

Sifting and Defining

Balancing Assets with Capacity Building at the Center

The employees of the GGWC have recognized that the center can only be effective for students if it remains aware of its own weaknesses and strengths, failures and successes. It is critical to distinguish between an organization's assets and its capacity. A classic example of an organizational asset is existing social capital. An organization's multi-layered connections can work to build new capital with existing resources. For example, when a GGWC employee has strong connections with an individual from another department, center or outside agency, he or she will have a better chance to utilize veiled resources (space usage or legal advice, e.g.). Not insignificantly, these relationships and networks translate into hundreds of dollars saved – a boon in these difficult economic times.

It is important to realize that assets define capacity. An asset is what exists at a given moment within the community, and can be used immediately for consumption or leveraged for other gains. On the other hand, capacity is similar to an existing genetic code, which may exist but lies dormant in the anticipation of usage. Capacity is the ability to learn a skill that relies on a source to unleash that ability. Assets exist because they have been learned or are just a natural strength that is present. Translatable into real capital by their activation, they have the potential to create and build capacity.

Assets Defined – Social, Human, Cultural and Latent

The assets that have been used as a process for community building are defined in the work of Kretzman and McKnight (1993). Building communities by pulling individual, organizational and collective community assets and capacities together is a frequent theme in the literature about revitalizing struggling neighborhoods (Jennings & Torres, 2007). Revitalization and community change have seen much iteration of programs and services, all of which are ultimately based on the existing capital within those communities and their abilities to leverage new capital.

The GGWC relies on bringing together the members of the university communities to leverage new results for their graduate students. Success in acquiring external funding, refining writing skills, and developing ethical research tools, habits and skills, are all new capital that increases institutional capacity and effectiveness.

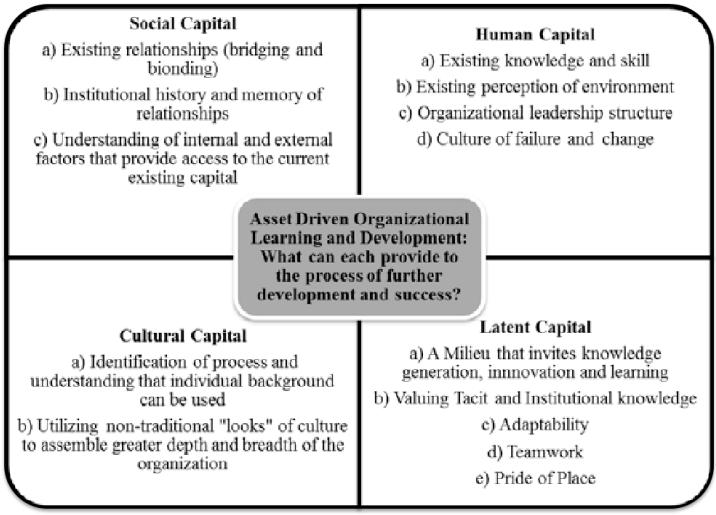


Figure 2. Nonprofit organizational effectiveness model: assets and identifying features.

Social Capital

Social capital is widely discussed in the literature as an important construct for labeling the utility and effectiveness of relationships. The concept of social capital provides access through social connections to economic and cultural resources via the relationships and networks that people form (Coleman, 1988). Social capital is a product of individuals' relationship networks and the sum of the resources they contain; it also considers how successfully individuals can set those resources in motion. (Putnam, 2000)

The literature provides an array of definitions for social capital. These definitions vary in their association and school of thought from focusing on the individual, as he or she relates to the community, to a collective consciousness within the community, and the economic implications of these perspectives. Bourdieu (1986) used the construct of multiple types of capital (economic and cultural) to distinguish social capital as its own construct. Coleman (1990) observed that group outcomes have an impact on the human and cultural capital that exist:

> Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. (p. 302)

Burt and Lin placed social capital within the construct of time, place and space. Burt (1992) defined the success of social capital by its impact on the network, while Lin (2001) focused primarily on how the individual impacts the group and delineates the market return for both the individual and the group.

Social capital has been linked to helping government transformation, improving school performance, and having an impact on economic performance, health and well-being, and crime (Halpern, 2005). Social capital also encompasses organizations, their employees, volunteers, members, and stakeholders (Schneider, 2009). Their individual networks, when collectively utilized, can serve as the adhesive that cements organizational success (Torpe, 2003). Organizational social capital is important in converting resources into tangible outcomes (Andrews & Edwards, 2004) and can be converted in many ways to authentic means.

The GGWC views social capital as an asset most likely untapped by our students yet one that is critical to their success. Training and discussion at the center deal with the identification of social networks and their relationships to academic achievement and success. Development of social networks is encouraged in mentoring programs and taught in GGWC workshops. Students are provided with handouts and charts to help them identify resources and human capital and to plot those assets in a format that helps them understand how to employ social capital to achieve their goals.

Human Capital

The second construct confirmed by the literature as important to successful community building for the GGWC is human capital, defined as the skills, expertise, competencies, and other characteristics that an individual expresses are relevant to economic activity (Becker, 1964; Schuller, 2001). This core of competence, knowledge, and personality attributes is crucial to and embodied in the ability to perform tasks that produce economic capital (Becker, 1993). Human capital has been defined by the field as either specific or general. Specific human capital is an individual attribute that may contribute to the overall economic stability and success of a community, but has its roots in an individual (Florin et al., 2003). General human capital, by contrast, has been defined as a capacity that may be derived or used to have a specific impact on general economic and community development. General human capital may be defined by answers to the following questions: What can a particular set of tools produce, who can yield defined advancing outcomes based on the acquired skills, and what environmental influences may enhance or corrupt this process? Economists have viewed the very nature of human capital as unstable and unpredictable; it is often defined individually or dogmatically within a structured system as opposed to a variable that can be a change agent for improvement if utilized in the correct circumstances.

Human capital has been categorized by Ryan (2001) as: 1) facilities capital, defined as the funds of a building or acquisition of offices and facilities; 2) working capital, or the dollars used to cover expenses during low cash flow and the funds from which strategic investments will build on the organization's capacity; and 3) permanent capital, defined as

the endowments and reserves that a nonprofit may use to invest in housing and business development. The literature is replete with ways in which human capital can be leveraged, raised, managed, consumed, and multiplied.

Translating human capital into a workable asset is central to using existing assets for change, and dependent on knowledge and leadership. (Frese, 2005) Human capital is what the organization already has; the key is how to take this existing asset and blend it within the culture of the organization and the environment in which the nonprofit pursues its mission. An example that depicts the difference between asset and capacity within human capital is someone who comes to the organization with a practiced skill such as grant writing or evaluation, versus someone who may join the staff, is very eager to learn, but does not yet possess the needed skill set.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is defined by Kilbride (2000) as "proficiency in and familiarity with dominant cultural codes and practices -- for example, linguistic styles, aesthetic preferences, styles of interaction" (p. 573). Kilbride makes the case that culture is defined by its community, and that this experience, knowledge and understanding may be used to gain capital in general. He notes that Lamont and Lareau (1988), building on Bourdieu, frame the definition of cultural capital within a social capital framework:

> Cultural capital *[is]* institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion, the former referring to exclusion from jobs and resources, and the latter, to exclusion from high status groups. (Kilbride, p. 5)

In other words, cultural capital can be an asset that allows entry into a variety of communities based on norms versus traits, and can act as a mechanism to convert social capital or human capital into actual perceptible goods. (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985)

Cultural capital provides for easier entrance into communities. Knowing the nuances that exist and using the natural attributes more effectively saves times and builds collective ownership and understanding where trust can run low. Organizations come with certain competencies; recognizing these and applying the knowledge to the algorithm that dictates organizational behavior can increase team play and success. (Gostick & Elton, 2010)

Cultural capital is an area in which the GGWC provides needed assistance to students who may not have strong writing skills, who probably have little exposure to corporate cultures, who may have limited English language proficiencies, and who have limited exposure in research and research ethics in their educational experiences prior to graduate school. It is in these areas that the center has strong impact. The center uses the same methods to develop cultural capital for and with students: workshops, individual

work sessions, faculty mentor relationships, community partnerships and speakers, informal conversation groups and special writing assistance workshops through our partnership with The CSU Writing Center re-enforce for GGWC participants the importance of this asset.

Latent Capital

Latent capital has been defined within the realm of nonprofits in a myriad of ways, but never under a central premise. Often the characteristics of latent capital are defined in a variety of articles as the interplay of social capitals, organizational learning, and effective leadership. In the literature on business innovation, efficiency and operation, a similar construct has been identified as knowledge capital. Knowledge capital has been described as a mix of intellectual capital and practical skills, and is understood in this field as a key organizational factor for effectiveness (Darroch, 2005). At times, knowledge capital is separate in the literature from intellectual capital. It is important to make these distinctions, as there are many studies that combine or highlight one or another. Intellectual capital (Sanchez et al., 2000) is often formed from the constructs of human (Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005), social (Putnam, 2000), and structural capital (Edvinsson & Malone, 1997). For purposes of this paper, we will define latent capital as a mixture of organizational contentment, organizational plasticity, organizational knowledge and wisdom, organizational team playing, and team esteem.

The central thesis of latent capital is that relationships and environment matter. The fundamental idea is that social networks are a valuable asset, and that those networks coupled with an individual's background (Human and Cultural Capital) and outlook help define one's ability to succeed individually and contribute to the greater good. Interaction enables people to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric necessary to open the doors to successful learning and change. All of these facets are integrated into every program and element of the center. Underlying each event and meeting is the notion of creating community in a way that invites students to share experiences, knowledge, contacts, and information. Whether through an informal coffee and conversation event or in a more formal presentation of research ethics and methods, the center staff focuses on an environment that is open and relaxed, and that communicates on all levels that students are a respected part of the university community, their ideas and skills are appreciated, and the center staff is here to assist them as they develop more skills and capabilities.

Furthermore, the center sees the theory of latent capital as the chief informant of its approach to teaching students a new way to think about education – as a team effort that involves faculty, staff and students. Space is given in interviews, gatherings, and even email communication for the student and members of grant and research teams to express their views on the project in their own best way. Latent capital is the integration and application of intangible variables (team work and attitude, e.g.) that help convert one's raw material into a usable energy source. That energy must be great enough to overcome the friction that may hamper an individual's ability to learn, and also tap additional sources of potential energy for learning. Having an adequate supply of latent capital is essential for the ultimate learning process to begin.

Latent capital is the utilization of social capital (such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 2000) and human capital (the knowledge, skills, competencies, and other attributes embodied in the individual) to create an environment ideal for learning and growth. The social capital (bridging and bonding) provides the basis for constructing a community within the walls of the institution, within the greater community and within the classroom. It also provides a level of understanding and respected civility, in which the norm is hopefulness, trust, expectation of self and others, and understanding. Activation of this social capital promotes the leverage of tangible and intangible resources.

Organizational Effectiveness

The role of the CSU GGWC is similar to that of any NGO or nonprofit: to meet the needs of constituents for whom the economy fails to provide efficiently. Given this, the mark of organizational effectiveness of our center can be measured and is within the literature on nonprofits. Some argue that nonprofit organizational effectiveness is based on comparison or benchmarking with similar organizations (Herman & Renz, 1999). Stone and Cutcher-Gershenfeld (2002) reviewed the empirical literature and pointed to several markers as central to defining effectiveness; more applied studies have also added to the composite of terms that defines this construct. Organizational effectiveness can be measured in many ways. For the purpose of our center, we measure effectiveness based on reaching organization-set goals with increased success based on asset recognition – that is, on students acquiring outside financial support for research and education, for positive and measurable change in writing skills, for the effectiveness of research teams that include our students, and for the numbers of students who complete our courses -- whether for credit or simply through the GGWC workshop programs.

Leadership

Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal (2001) make a case for strong collaborative leadership by showing how other styles of leadership do not fit within the context of building communities. They point out that leadership is a contextual construct, meaning that people can have different roles at different times and still fill a leadership void. Leadership is an essential factor in identifying assets, building capacity, creating an asset ethos and ensuring organizational effectiveness. Chrislip and Larson (1994) see the role of leadership as engaging others by providing opportunities for individuals to work together, by identifying and locating community stakeholders, and facilitating and sustaining the actions of these members. They note, as does Chaskin et al, that collaborative leadership provides a mechanism for involving and investing multiple members of a community in the process of change. By allowing organizations to follow this model and build upon it, and lead, it increases the number of resources and connections available, provides more individuals to share the workload, promises that there will be greater agreement on an ultimate vision, and builds trust where it traditionally does not exist.