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## **BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee Internship Course**

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## **Abstract**

Throughout my time as a Multidisciplinary Studies student at Boise State University, I was encouraged to participate in multiple student leadership opportunities, all of which elevated my academic pursuits and positively impacted my educational experience. Through the relationships I'd established with faculty, I was invited to take the lead on a new student initiative for my final capstone project in the Interdisciplinary Professional Studies program.

I was responsible for developing a new Student Advisory Committee for the Bachelor of Applied Sciences (BAS) and Interdisciplinary Professional Studies (IPS) programs. The committee will serve as a focus group tasked with providing valuable feedback and thoughtful discussion around program initiatives based on the student experience to enhance and explore current and existing program offerings in an effort to remain relevant, innovative, and dynamic in our course of study.

While developing the committee's proposal and bylaws, I recognized the importance of equipping the students for the roles and responsibilities they would assume while serving on the advisory committee. This motivated the second phase of development which involved designing a supplemental internship course to provide students with the knowledge and strategies necessary for them to be successful.

In collaboration with Alexis Kenyon, Associate Director, I applied integrative thinking and creative problem-solving skills to develop an internship course specifically for the students who will serve on the BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee. This course will allow students to purposefully engage in their own student leadership opportunities.

This overviews the developmental process for the new supplemental BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee Internship Course and highlights key aspects of the course design.

**Keywords:** Student Advisory Committee, Internship Course, Service Learning

## **BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee Internship Course**

### **Introduction**

As a Multidisciplinary Studies (MDS) student at Boise State University (BSU), I was encouraged to participate in multiple student leadership initiatives and found that each opportunity I participated in seemed to elevate my academic pursuits and positively impact my educational experience. Determined to make the most of each opportunity I continued to accept the invitations to engage with students and faculty and was amazed by the impact I could have as a student within the MDS program. Through the connections I'd established with faculty, I was invited to take the lead on a new student initiative that would satisfy my final capstone project for the Interdisciplinary Professional Studies (IPS, formally MDS) program.

I was responsible for developing a new Student Advisory Committee for the Bachelor of Applied Sciences (BAS) and Interdisciplinary Professional Studies (IPS) programs. The committee was designed to serve as "a focus group tasked with providing valuable feedback and thoughtful discussion around program initiatives based on the student experience to enhance and explore current and existing program offerings in an effort to remain relevant, innovative, and dynamic in our course of study."

While developing the committee's proposal and bylaws for my LEAD 490 Capstone Project, I realized the importance of equipping the students for the roles and responsibilities they would assume while serving on the advisory committee and questioned, "How might I better equip future BAS/IPS students to serve effectively in their roles on the new BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee so that they become a successful, productive, and cohesive team?". This inspired the second phase of development which involved designing a supplemental internship course to provide students with the knowledge and strategies necessary for them to be successful while serving on the BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee.

My objective was to provide a complete course structure and academic content for an internship course designed specifically for the students electing to serve as student leaders on the BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee. The internship course will equip student committee members with the information, techniques, and tools necessary for them to accomplish the assignments and tasks they are given on behalf of the BAS/IPS program initiatives.

This was a significant undertaking and required extensive research and discovery, strategic partnerships with BAS/IPS faculty and administration, consideration of the student demographic represented in our program, a thorough understanding of the program initiatives, and determination to remain curious, flexible, and committed to the overall objective. The BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee exists to “empower student leaders to work directly with our faculty and staff to continue to enhance, study, and test important program initiatives from a student perspective. It serves to formalize and sustainably structure an experiential academic model for these student-led working groups,” and I was responsible for building a course that prepares students to successfully accomplish program initiatives while serving in this capacity.

### **Elements Coming Together**

#### **Innovative Approach**

Getting started, I focused on building partnerships with key stakeholders to ensure that I could gather helpful insights and secure valuable feedback from both a student and faculty perspective. I hosted weekly meetings and brainstorming sessions with BAS/IPS Associate Director, Alexis Kenyon, connected with external department representatives (Ashley Orme-Nichols of Conflict Management and Marcee Boggs of the College of Arts and Sciences), and surveyed current BAS/IPS students. This allowed me to discover alternative ways to create value for students while satisfying the needs of the department and was sure to expose any fixed mindset I may have otherwise assumed.

As I began thinking about how the development of the BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee and supplemental internship course would impact the students within the department, it was important that I first acknowledge how our student demographic is fundamentally different from that of a traditional college program. This recognition and understanding are what would allow me to create value and a unique course structure that most closely aligns with the student's needs and goals.

Being a non-traditional, online-only student myself and having participated in two separate internships, worked in two student employment positions, and completed three different certificate programs at Boise State, I was confident in my ability to collaborate, communicate, and create a comprehensive and innovative internship course.

### **Emotional Intelligence**

The overall nature of this initiative to develop an internship course specifically for the students serving on the BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee demonstrates both an exercise in and a focus on emotional intelligence. I dedicated hours of research to determine the type of information and instructional material that students might find helpful in a supplemental course, with consideration to the work students will be assigned on behalf of the BAS/IPS programs.

The awareness I have of my own experiences as a student within the program and the knowledge I've gained from my other emphasis areas (self), as well as an understanding of the student demographic represented in the programs (others), influences the material I've included in each of the seven individual modules. As a result, I've been able to identify the necessary skills and intentional instruction to foster successful collaboration among students serving on the advisory committee.

With thoughtful intention in my approach to designing this course, I was able to keep the end user's experience in mind throughout the internship course development. The content is

structured to help establish a common language among committee members, introduce students to specific frameworks and strategies for cohesive group work, and guides them through some of the common challenges groups experience to help compensate for the student's different starting points.

Not only does this equip the students for the work they will do while serving on the BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee, but it also strengthens many important professional skills students may find helpful in their other spheres of influence. This provides additional value for students who choose to take advantage of this experiential learning opportunity and will likely influence the caliber of students who may (or may not) be interested in this opportunity.

### **Creative Thinking**

Using the creative framework, I was diligent about exploring the seemingly unexpected connections pertaining to the work I'd set out to accomplish. This involved remaining curious about the connections I was making and creative in the conclusions I would identify.

I considered the infinite possibility of topics and content that could be integrated into the course from various perspectives and challenged what each decision or pathway might mean for the different stakeholders involved (students, staff, faculty, and program administrators). I spent the majority of my time in the questioning and investigation phase of creative problem-solving evaluating the current constructs associated with an internship course. I asked several questions at each stage in the creative process in order to gain additional insights and challenge any fixed thinking or rigidity that I may have stumbled into.

With respect to what I discovered in the research and questioning stages, I began to consider fresh possibilities and potential solutions that might help create additional value for the students who would eventually engage with the material I was building and held meetings to present my alternatives. I also used those discussions to help evaluate and gauge the quality of

my ideas based on the responses and feedback offered by key stakeholders. This involved a lot of direct engagement, additional investigation, and incubation of what I'd learned.

While I may lack formal training in course development and might seem a little raw and unstructured in my approach, I believe that my previous experience and multidisciplinary approach allow me to think more freely and explore beyond the natural constructs people might encounter while developing a course, thus making this a very unique approach.

### **Your Innovative Solution**

The concept of offering a supplemental internship course with instructional material designed specifically to guide the students through the collaborative process and prepare them to navigate challenges they may encounter while working as a group is unlike any other student committee affiliated with Boise State.

The internship course helps bridge the gap between the students' various starting points, develops a common language, invites shared understanding, expands networks, and creates meaningful experiences for the students, which ultimately improves the overall effectiveness and impact compared to typical advisory committees. By offering upper-division, college credit through an internship, the students stand to gain something of value to them for their time spent serving in this way. Students will also continue to grow their personal networks and gain critical skills and experience working on a high-functioning team.

In return, the BAS/IPS programs have an opportunity to gain direct access to student feedback when working to enhance and explore current and existing program offerings as the direct result of students learning to communicate more effectively and appropriately regarding program initiatives. The program can more easily identify and attend to any gaps or needs and desires of the students which might not otherwise be the case without the development of key skills addressed in the internship course.



This innovative solution considers the experience of each of the key stakeholders and the continued development of a growing program in these rapidly changing times. It accounts for the common challenges a new student initiative like this frequently encounters and has a framework in place to overcome those obstacles.

### **Results**

The final Internship Course consists of a 25-page course roadmap outlining 7 unique modules scheduled to take place over a 15-week course structure. The course material and resources, including student assignments, journal prompts, assessments, course syllabus, course schedule, links to articles and video instruction, and templates designed to organize and strategically structure committee meetings are organized by module in a Google Drive folder.

By developing the supplemental Internship Course content and instructional material for my previously proposed BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee, the program is ready to move this new student initiative from the development stage and into the implementation phase. The implementation phase involves partnering with eCampus to begin building the course into the Canvas platform using the materials I've provided to the BAS/IPS program administration team.

While the total impact of my capstone project remains to be seen since the new BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee is scheduled to launch in Fall 2023, the response I've received from key stakeholders has been extremely positive and there is quite a bit of excitement surrounding this initiative. The faculty and administration that I've spoken with are very supportive of the decision to develop a supplemental internship course that coincides with the work students will assume while serving on the BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee. Based on discussions I've had in Treehouse meetings and emails I've received following up on those discussions, there seems to be a genuine interest in the opportunity to serve on the BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee from the student perspective as well.

## Conclusion

As a project-oriented, high-achieving student, I was fairly confident in my ability to design the supplemental internship course, especially since this initiative relates to my passion for equipping others and providing the tools and knowledge people need to be successful. I am, however, humbled by the traction this initiative has gained with a much wider audience than I could have anticipated. I was recently interviewed for an upcoming article that will feature the BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee and Internship Course at an instructional level, which has the potential to greatly expand the reach and possible impact this project might have.

In a recent survey, BAS/IPS faculty and administration unanimously agreed that the internship course content was clear and comprehensive, deliverables adequately responded to the “How might I...” challenge (shown above), the course gave consideration to the BAS/IPS student demographic, and that the supplemental internship course will enhance the student experience of those serving on the BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee. One reply offered, “This provides foundational knowledge for training the committee to get them up and running quickly so they can do meaningful work throughout the semester” and continued on to say that the internship course would provide students with the “skills to work in a team setting and address conflict should it arise.” Another submission identified, “Self-reflection and self-awareness” as the two most important aspects of the internship course content stating, “I think students will love exploring their personalities and how they might 'fit' in the larger context of a group. The reflection will make them see where they can leverage their strengths and areas of growth!”

If I had more time, I would have loved to expand my reach to include discussions with additional departments and to have further explored the option to partner with the honor society or another student organization to provide additional value to the students going forward.

## Appendix

Link to my [Service Learning Project Poster](#):

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1wvabD5TpTW3yOIlbR52JCKXJyJtsaaUImc6RWXDq7Zw/edit?usp=sharing>

Link to my [BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee Internship Course Roadmap](#):

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1K0zT1DaaolujZAmcFYncvcAMT-8KDFPnk\\_xB8oDxA4/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1K0zT1DaaolujZAmcFYncvcAMT-8KDFPnk_xB8oDxA4/edit?usp=sharing)

Link to my [BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee Internship Course Materials & Resource List](#):

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bCEjML4ZDHzwAzQFrfoB8qRVyOkB\\_ZODm1-2b4n3M0g/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bCEjML4ZDHzwAzQFrfoB8qRVyOkB_ZODm1-2b4n3M0g/edit?usp=sharing)

Link to my [BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee Internship Course Syllabus](#):

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/179wwuCQz3Q6bFJhVkxYmVWwa1uJvrsOs/edit?usp=sharing&oid=107587761413726557860&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Link to my [BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee Internship Course Google Drive](#):

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GTuEe8m8pglesdil78o2rFc5yng6JJKN?usp=sharing>

Link to my [BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee Internship Course Feedback Survey](#):

<https://forms.gle/KVU2JPzqqZ85TdJN6>

Link to my previously proposed [BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee Proposal](#) for reference:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17CPHg8u7bgve8hrBTOAJYZrnnQU0SYdV/view?usp=sharing>

Link to my previously submitted [BAS/IPS Student Advisory Committee Bylaws](#) for reference:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nDPu4WDz--5dB4e7qFH9NxZfldmPSgbV/view?usp=sharing>

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