

Fall 2007

UAP 5774: Economic Development Studio

Wednesdays 2:30 pm to 5 pm
Architecture Annex Room 114 and Capri 256

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Course Description

This course is a practical learning experience for students interested in economic development. Students will serve as team of consultants to an agency that is interested in addressing a particular planning issue. We will work as a team and will use tools of economic development analysis and strategy development. We will regularly interact with government agencies and community partners. Interim products and presentations will be an essential component in the progress of the project. Students are expected to contribute professionally to the work on the project.

Course Objectives:

- Conduct a “real world” study for a client that includes data gathering, analysis, writing and presentation.
- Gain hands-on experience in conducting a study for an agency partner.
- Become familiar with detailed tools and strategies in economic development.
- Understand project management skills and requirements.
- Gain experience working in as a team for a client.

Studio Project

No stone left unturned: Documenting untapped labor market potential

In June 2007 the Economic Development Studio @ Virginia Tech, a partnership between Virginia Tech’s Office of Economic Development and Urban and Regional Planning program, released a report on domestic outsourcing entitled *Farmshoring in Virginia*. This project will study areas of untapped labor market potential suggested by the findings of *Farmshoring in Virginia*.

Farmshoring in Virginia explored the prospects for domestic alternatives to overseas outsourcing. The study documents the extent of this phenomenon, relevant occupational characteristics, and industry dynamics. It also provides analysis of a number of Virginia communities, identifying opportunities and challenges they face in attracting domestic outsourcing or farmshoring.

Sustained access to skilled workers was a concern across diverse industries and regions examined in the study. For example, information technology, where workers are often younger and industry certification standards are disseminated widely among training providers, offer a very different challenge from advanced manufacturing, where firm specific training requirements may be the norm, with a greater openness to retraining workers. Identifying how communities can meet such needs is also challenging as existing and potential labor supplies vary greatly across regions, influenced by location, existing and historical industrial structure, and the presence of assets such higher education institutions. Any look at this issue is further complicated by the current context of tight labor markets, especially for skilled employees, and the backdrop of retiring baby boomers, declining birth rates, and fluctuating levels of immigration.

A key question for communities interested in pursuing farmshoring strategies is how to document the availability and aptitude of new untapped or underutilized supplies of labor for target industries. Strong documentation will buoy efforts to market to firms and may suggest innovative programs or policies for consideration by state, regional or local stakeholders in economic development in order to strengthen their supply.

We have tentatively identified three broad categories of labor markets potential for future study. These include new and recent college and university graduates, military and other federal retirees, and participants in traditional workforce development systems. The proposed study will document the availability and aptitude in several of these supply areas (to be named later) for targeted industries and regions. Utilizing a mix of data sources, including primary data gathered through interviews, focus groups, and surveys, the final product will provide both a basis for industry marketing materials and a replicable research tool for future studies.

Deliverables from the student's part of the project will include unique primary data on worker availability and aptitude in participating regions for use in marketing to new companies or servicing the needs of existing industries. The specific components will be reports on target industry needs, labor market intermediary capacities, and a preliminary survey instrument targeting potential workers. Students will formally present the findings of their report to the class and to the client.

Requirements and Grading

The grades in this class will be based on the following criteria:

- Preparation: Your efforts and contributions to the group's work (inside and outside of class)
- Leadership: Your role in contributing to progress of the team.
- Participation: Your contributions inside and outside of class (with client, with your colleagues)
- Professionalism: Seriousness of your work and contributions
- Team work: Your role in the team
- Quality of products: Quality of your work and contributions to milestones, presentations, etc.
- Milestone achievements: Quality of your contribution to the milestones

Evaluations

The instructors will conduct periodic evaluations of the class' progress and will solicit feedback from students throughout the semester.

Readings and other Research

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard as needed. Students are also expected to conduct additional research on their own depending on their tasks in the project. Further, primary data collection involving

Milestones:

The Milestones represent assignments that in sum will comprise the final report for the client. Students in teams will prepare these interim products and present them in class. Each interim product should be researched, written and presented in a professional way. Changes in the due dates and the number of milestone products should be expected depending on client needs, data availability, etc.

Late or Missed Milestones

For this class, it is instrumental that we achieve the milestones as indicated in the schedule. We will define the nature of the milestones in the beginning of the class. You and your colleagues will be responsible for determining how to achieve timely progress towards the completion of the milestones.

Virginia Tech's Honor Pledge

We expect that all assignments in this class conform to Virginia Tech's Honor Pledge as well as to the usual academic standards. The pledge states that "I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this assignment." This means that you will refrain from plagiarism and cheating or from any other form of receiving unauthorized assistance. For more information, see: <http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

Special Needs

Any student with special needs or circumstances should feel free to meet with us during office hours.

Required text:

Gramise, Shari. *People and the Competitive Advantage of Place: Building a Workforce for the 21st Century*. 1st ed. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006.

Additional Readings: Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard and/or handed out in class.

Florida, Richard C. *The Flight of the Creative Class: The New Global Competition for Talent*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2007: 133-158.

Giloth, Robert P. "Learning from the Field: Economic Development Growth and Workforce Development in the 1990s." *Economic Development Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2000): 340-359.

Giloth, Robert P. *Workforce Intermediaries for the 21st Century*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004: 73-92 & 155-170.

Giloth, Robert P. *Jobs & Economic Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998: 105-120.

The Economic Development Studio @ Virginia Tech. *Farmshoring in Virginia*. Blacksburg, VA: Office of Economic Development, 2007: (Complete summary report and review technical report as needed)

Weiss, Bennett Harrison and Marcus. *Workforce Development Networks*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998: 1-23.

SCHEDULE/ASSIGNMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE!!!!

Calendar	Date	Topic	Readings & Class exercise	Milestones
Week 1	August 22, 2007	Introduction	The Economic Development Studio @ Virginia Tech (2007)	
Week 2	August 29, 2007	Why Does Any of This Matter?- The Context of and Trends in Workforce Policy	Giloth (2000) Harrison, et al. (1998) Chapters 1 and 2	
Week 3	September 5, 2007	Drilling Down to Our Neighborhood- Urban and Regional Impacts/ Opportunities & Challenges of Workforce	Gramise (2006) Intro, Chapters 1-4	Milestone #1: Client consultation (Date Tentative)
Week 4	September 12, 2007	Why Can't I Find a Good Plumber/Computer Programmer? -Skilled Labor Shortages in the Global Market	Gramise (2006) Chapters 5-8 Florida (2007) Chapter 5	Milestone #2: Class work plan
Week 5	September 19, 2007	By the Numbers- Study Design & Methodology and Data Sources in Socio-Economic Analysis	Giloth (1998) Chapter 6 EXPECT ADDITIONAL READINGS AND GUEST SPEAKERS ON METHODS	
Week 6	September 26, 2007	Connecting the Dots on Those Who Connect Others-Workforce Intermediaries	Giloth (2004) Chapters 3 and 6	
Week 7	October 3, 2007	Students' interim presentations		Milestone #3: Brief Presentations
Week 8	October 10, 2007	Work Session:		Milestone #4: Presentations and feedback
Week 9	October 17, 2007	Work Session:		
Week 10	October 24, 2007	Work Session:		
Week 11	October 31, 2007	Work Session:		
Week 12	November 7, 2007	Discussion of final products		
Week 13	November 14, 2007	Presentation rehearsal		Milestone #5: Synthesis of group write ups
Week 14	November 21, 2007	<i>Thanksgiving</i>		
Week 15	November 28, 2007	Final Presentation or Discussion		
Week 16	December 5, 2007	Final Presentation or Discussion		
Week 17	December 12, 2007	Final Report due		Milestone #6: Report due

Further detail on the milestones that follow will be developed at a later date.

Milestone One: Organization

Conduct a consultation with the clients. This will focus on/target existing industry selection and identification of key community contacts in industry and with education/training providers.

Milestone Two: Best Practices

In this step we will conduct a national best practice review identifying occupational structures and training requirements in the selected industries. They will also identify appropriate labor intermediaries for the participating regions considering issues and opportunities relevant to the overall analysis.

Milestone Three: Research design

We will conduct key informant interviews with economic developers, firms, and intermediaries in the study region. The purpose will be to identify potential participants for focus group/survey pools and gather information like:

- historical suitability/hiring track records for intermediaries with target industries or comparable industries;
- comparison of pay and other compensation packages in higher cost regions for target or similar industries; and
- identification of industry specific certifications and requirements.

Data gathered from those interviews will be used to develop an agenda for focus group sessions with potential workers. These group sessions will be used to develop and “pre-test” potential survey questions. That data will also be used later in the project to aid in interpreting the survey results.

Milestone Four: Completion of Studio Report

In this step, the students will prepare a written report. This report will include data gathered from all preceding steps and will include up to two preliminary survey instruments. This will be presented to the clients in person or via web conference.

Faculty

John Provo is the Senior Economic Development Specialist with OED. He received his Ph.D. from the School of Urban Studies and Planning at Portland State University where he worked for the Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies conducting studies of industry clusters, analysis of economic and community policies, and staffing governance processes involving substantial public participation. He received a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1999 and a bachelor's degree in government from the College of William and Mary in 1989.

Mike Potter is a graduate assistant in the Office of Economic Development. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Public Administration/ Public Affairs from Virginia Tech. Mike's current research interests are the Congressional oversight of agencies and the historical context of public administration. Prior to coming to Blacksburg, he worked for six years in government relations and policy research for American Bankers Association in Washington, DC. In this capacity he was responsible for writing position papers, testimony, and comment letters. While working for ABA, he earned his Masters in Public Administration from Virginia Tech. Mike also has his Bachelor's in History from West Virginia University.