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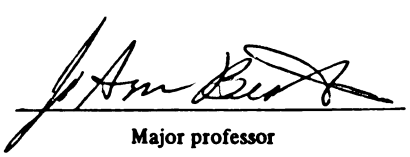

Major professor

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THE NEED FOR AND FORM OF NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION AT THE GRADUATE LEVEL: THE CASE FOR NATURAL RESOURCE SPECIALIZATION AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

By

Greg Ostrander

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ABSTRACT

THE NEED FOR AND FORM OF NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION AT THE GRADUATE LEVEL: THE CASE FOR NATURAL RESOURCE SPECIALIZATION AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

By

Greg Ostrander

This study was conducted to examine the need for university level nonprofit management education, and specialized subsector education in particular. It looks specifically at the needs of creating one such program for the natural resource based nonprofit subsector, a graduate level initiative that would specialize in the management of environmental and conservation organizations. This program would be located at Michigan State University within the Department of Resource Development, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Focus groups were employed to determine the educational needs of local natural resource based nonprofit organizations in the mid-Michigan area. Two sessions were held with past and present employees of such groups in order to gain insight into the necessary skills and knowledge required for their organizations' success. Additional input was sought to determine other relevant factors in the design of such an initiative.

Results showed a wide array of skillsets and real world experience opportunities to be incorporated into the creation of such a natural resource based program. Findings were then used to create recommendations as to ultimate form and curricular content. Implications for the creation of additional specializations at the University are also considered.

It seems inappropriate to dedicate something as trivial as a thesis to the memory of those who died in the tragedy of September 11th. It would likewise seem unthinkable for me not to mention them and the others who have died in the war on terrorism in even some small way here.

It is my hope that their sacrifices will serve to prod the rest of us to remember what is truly important in life. May it also serve as a reminder of both our enduring freedoms and our eternal responsibility in safeguarding them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to God and the following people:

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To Maria, Elise, Peter, Doris, Kelly, Doris, Nick, Loretta, Robert, Ben, Frances and the rest of my family for their constant support and role in making me the person I am today.

To Mike Novak, "Doc" Davis, Norm Brown, and the other people of the world who go out of their way to help others because it is simply in their nature.

Most importantly I would like to thank my God and savior Jesus Christ through whom all things are possible. May he forever give us the wisdom and strength to do what is right.

"Far and away the best prize
that life offers is the chance to
work hard at work worth doing."

- Theodore Roosevelt (1903)

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PREFACE

In writing a thesis on the importance of natural resource based (NRB) nonprofit organizations, I was forced to deal with the difficult task of defining what exactly *is* a natural resource based nonprofit. This term was chosen in lieu of "environmental", "conservation", or a host of other terms whose connotations have unfortunately become controversial, politically charged, or exclusionary. Their use in early drafts prompted a series of questions that I sometimes found myself hard pressed to answer.

This change created almost as many problems as it solved, for I must now attempt to define this somewhat ambiguous term even though I know I will no doubt offend some people in the process. This is not my intent. I simply found it to be too distracting of an issue to address anywhere in the body of the paper. It is still an important issue that needs to be examined, so I have decided to address it here and up front.

Such a definition could be determined by the use of formal Internal Revenue Service NTEE codes, although this would be quite restrictive. A "I know one when I see one" approach would only cow to the opposite extreme. The literature is replete with acknowledgement that the sector is highly eclectic in nature (Rosenbaum, 1998; Kline 1997; Shabecoff 1993; Norton, 1991). According to Reinhardt (2000:8),

> Environmental groups are wildly heterogeneous. Some use multi-million dollar budgets to hire Ivy League lawyers, scientists, and economists who work on a broad range of environmental issues worldwide; others are focused on a single issue in a particular community. Community-based groups on the other side of environmental issues, advocating less government intervention and increased tolerance for environmental externalities, have also appeared.

Attempts to invalidate these latter groups as "true" NRB organizations would run counter to the basic nonprofit tenet that extols plurality. It is also highly contextual, as one

person's "scorch and burn" is another's "wise use". Just as both the National Rifle Association and Hand Gun Control are both legitimate nonprofit organizations, so must a wide variety of ideologies be accommodated here.

Another issue in characterizing these groups includes an examination of the *primary emphasis* of their organizations. A good case in point is 4-H, an excellent nonprofit that no one would question has strong roots in rural America, farming, and natural resources. Their history is replete with programs that highlight responsible environmental stewardship. But are they a natural resource based nonprofit or a youth organization? Does is have to be an either/or, or can it be a both/and? The Michigan Lung Association is another good example. Is it a NRB group or a health organization? Is the Greater Lansing Food Bank a NRB group or a health and human services organization? I want to stress that this is not a question of any group having to being "good enough" to be considered a NRB nonprofit, and no judgements as to worth are being made here. It is simply a matter of degree in mission emphasis, a degree that is an important consideration to this study because of the need to focus on a very specific type of organization.

It is also important to unequivocally state that any group not classified as a NRB nonprofit by this study is *not* unimportant to the purposes of this study or any proposed programs at Michigan State University. Most youth, advocacy, health, environmental, and conservation organizations have more in common than they do apart. All such groups will have equal access, and it is the hope of the author that if a formal nonprofit management education center is established at Michigan State University that it will eventually cater to a wide variety of specializations. There is also no reason why students

interested in working or volunteering for such groups as 4-H, Future Farmers of America, or the Michigan Lung Association could also not enroll in a NRB program if they feel that it would benefit them.

With all that being said, my definition of a natural resource based nonprofit organization is simply this: any unincorporated volunteer group, or any formal 501c3, 501c4, or political action committee that has as its *primary focus* a *mission that deals with the quality of natural resources or its management* in a nonviolent manner, regardless of ideology. Emphasis is placed on the mission's primary cause, and not a secondary beneficial effect, but can still include hunter's conservation clubs, policy development centers, membership organizations, land conservation groups, and local advocacy organizations, just to name a few.

That is it, and it is still somewhat ambiguous and relatively unsatisfying, but it is still enough for the purposes of this study. And that is all this is: a one shot exercise for a highly focused thesis. Regardless of the definition, I wish to thank all of the individuals and organizations that have worked and sacrificed to further the mission of shepherding our planet. This includes the farmers of our land, the hunters of the Great White Buffalo, the migrant workers of our fields, the scientific managers of our wildlife, the religious leaders of our churches, the fishermen of our Great Lakes, and the preservationists of our planet. The movement will succeed when we finally put our differences aside and move forward with the important task at hand. We truly do have more in common than we do apart.

- Greg Ostrander, March 27, 2002

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In an age of smaller government, privatization, and budget crises, nonprofit organizations are increasingly being called upon to fill the void left by the United States government and its shrinking welfare state (Ott, 2001; Light, 2000; P. Hall, 1994). Whether or not these nonprofit organizations are up to the task is another matter, and in areas as important as health, education, and the environment there is little room for error. Many now see the nonprofit sector in the throes of a multi-faceted crisis as it continues to try to do so much with so little (Wolf, 1999; Salamon, 1997; Hopkins, 1993).

1) The Nonprofit Sector in the United States

The importance of the nonprofit sector

Nonprofit organizations are formally classified by the Internal Revenue Service as legal institutions that are neither for-profit private entities nor public governmental agencies. Other common names include not-for-profits, third sector organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Less formal definitions would include voluntary organizations of all sizes regardless of whether they were legally incorporated. To most Americans they are simply the schools, churches, unions, and charities with which they associate or have contact with every day.

The important role of the third sector serves as the cornerstone of "government failure theory", where State intervention is seen as an inefficient choice for the management of certain public goods and services (Young, 2001). This notion and the demise of "big government" took strong hold in the 1980s under President Reagan, and

has gained fresh legs (albeit wobbly ones) under President George W. Bush's "faith based" initiative (Taylor, 2001).[1] In these cases the nonprofit community is seen as programmatically more effective, financially more efficient, and serving as a necessary buffer between the public and its government.

The importance of voluntary organizations has origins that date back to Tocqueville's notion of a "civil society", and the widely held belief that nonprofits are a major reason for the success of the United States as both a democracy and a country (Salamon and Anheier, 1997). In advocating this view Peter Drucker states:

> Today, we know that the nonprofit institutions are central to American society and are indeed its most distinguished feature...[they are] central to the quality of life in America, central to citizenship, and indeed carry the values of American society and...tradition (1990: xiii).

For many Americans, giving money to nonprofit organizations allows them to voice their opinions on important societal questions by "voting with their dollars", supporting issues and causes they hold dear to their hearts (Van Til, 1994; Ostrander and Schervish, 1990).

The economic impact of the nonprofit sector is an important contribution to American society as well, with the number of paid nonprofit employees rising from 5.5 million in 1977 to 10.6 million in 1997 (Independent Sector, 2001). This represents 7.1% of total U.S. employment numbers and is largely due to an accompanying increase in the number of nonprofit organizations, which rose from 739,000 to 1.19 million during the same period. Figures also put the nonprofit share of the national income at 6.7% in 1998, representing $7.3 trillion. Looking specifically at 501c3 and 501c4 organizations, 1998 figures show 874,000 of these nonprofits employing 9.6 million people.[2] Such numbers aside, perhaps the greatest impact of nonprofit organizations as diverse as Right to Life,

the Sierra Club, and the National Rifle Association have been in their shaping of public opinion, governmental policy, and national election results.

Current problems and challenges

Despite their successes, many nonprofit organizations now face serious challenges as we head into the 21st century. Gone are the glory days of the 1960s and 1970s which saw massive Federal funding for these groups, and financial sustainability continues to be a serious threat for all but the largest nonprofits (Wolf, 1999; P. Hall, 1994). Americans also seem to have less time for civic engagement than they had in the past, resulting in a membership that is more likely to write a check than it is to volunteer valuable time (Putnam, 1995).[3] Even with increases in total giving by the general public, it does not appear that they will be able to make up for the losses in government funding. Relevant data has varied, showing either an inability to match the rates of these losses or an outright decline in per capita giving growth (Ott, 2001). Giving as a percentage of household income has also stayed flat at 1.7% from 1991 to 1998 (Independent Sector, 2001).

The scandal over how the Red Cross has used their September 11th donations (Barstow, 2001) also highlights another problem that the sector is facing: a loss of credibility and trust among the general public towards nonprofits (Salamon, 2001). This is particularly problematic because the explicit role of nonprofits is to *serve* the public trust. Unfortunately, the Red Cross scandal is not an isolated incident, as the United Way and other prominent nonprofit organizations have run into recent credibility problems as well (P. Hall, 1994).

This loss of trust has bled over into the U.S. Congress. Some members contend that nonprofits are abusing their tax exempt status to unfairly compete with private businesses, and are calling for better reporting and more accountability (Hopkins, 1993). The Red Cross scandal has made things worse, and at a recent House subcommittee hearing Louisiana Representative Billy Tauzin went on record as saying "like a kid in a candy store [the Red Cross] got big eyes...the question is whether they misled the American public or not, and I think they did" (Levine, 2001). In Michigan, Attorney General Jennifer Granholm has also recently called for legislation that could potentially limit donations to charities in the Middle East and other war torn areas of the world (Detroit Free Press, 2001). While most major attempts to pass prohibitive legislation have failed, a worse case scenario could revoke the tax exempt status of many nonprofits, essentially ending the sector as we know it today (P. Hall, 1994).

2) The Role of Education

A need for educated leaders

How nonprofit organizations and their managers have responded to these and other challenges has received decidedly mixed reviews (Ott, 2001; Light, 2000). While it has been acknowledged that some significant strides have been made, there remains a general sentiment that nonprofit managers have failed to keep up with the additional demands foisted upon them in the past decades. A need for effectively trained and educated leaders is seen as an important issue (Wolf, 1999; Weber, 1996; Herisse1995; Cohen, 1989).

Appropriate education for these leaders is similar in some ways to those of their counterparts in government and business, but decidedly different in others. For example,

Light (2000) suggests that many nonprofits can benefit from implementing a variety of reforms that private industry has already employed. Scientific management is one such example. Many nonprofit managers have little formal business education, making this "best practices" approach that establishes standard codes of conduct particularly helpful. Other potential reforms include increased accountability and the use of measurable outcomes, increased use of marketing and public relations, and increased financial discipline in the face of economic downturns and cutbacks. Light (2000) also warns, however, that nonprofits are at risk if they simply try to study these models and blindly impose them upon their own sector. The distinctive reality they operate under calls for a more sector specific approach in a variety of areas.

This specificity has been sorely lacking in many instances. A case in point can be seen in the need for increased marketing skills in nonprofit organizations, where the scholarly literature has favored the needs of the private sector for quite some time:

> It has tended to focus on the problems of managers who deal in goods, who work in large enterprises, who market from the manufacturing level, and who operate in the corporate setting...relatively neglected have been the marketing activities of organizations that sell services...[and] tend to be small...[like] nonprofit and voluntary organizations (Moyer, 1994: 249).

Some of the inherent qualities of nonprofits make their individual needs even more unique, factors that many see as fundamentally different than those of business and government. These include value-laden missions, profits that are seen as means rather than ends, and revenues that are limited by an inability to issue monetary stock or levy taxes.[4] Herman and Heimovics (1994) see nonprofits as having to stress the integration of mission, resource acquisition, and strategy into mutually reinforcing coherent plans.

Specialized education and training to deal with these issues is needed but not widely available. Well-known nonprofit expert Peter Drucker wrote:

> Little [training or education] pays any attention to the distinct characteristics of the non-profits or to their specific central needs: to their mission, which distinguishes them so sharply from business and government; to what are "results" in nonprofit work; to the strategies required to market their services and obtain the money they need to do their job; or to the challenge of introducing innovation and change in institutions that depend on volunteers and therefore cannot command...There is thus a real need among the non-profits for materials that are specifically developed out of their experience and focused on their realities and concerns (1990:xv).

American universities have responded, and since that time the number of schools that offer at least three graduate level nonprofit courses has increased from 17 in 1990 to 86 in 1999 (Ott, 2001). Mirabella and Wish (2001) more recently put the number at 97 for such programs, although much of this coursework still only counts towards a "nonprofit specialization" within existing Masters of Business Administration (MBA) or Masters of Public Administration (MPA) programs. At Michigan State University, only two courses are needed to fulfill the requirement of nonprofit specialization within a Masters of Public Administration.

While specialization of this type may be adequate for introducing students to a sector they may have to work *with*, they are very different in nature from the broad offerings of typical professional degrees that attempt to prepare students for careers *in* a specific sector. Some universities do have more comprehensive nonprofit programs with broader coursework offerings, although it is difficult to tell how many are in existence as most reside within a variety of other departments and do not stand on their own. These more comprehensive programs often have membership in the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council, which listed 29 programs as members in 2000 (Brown, 2001).[5] This

proxy is by no means definitive as to the true number of larger programs, but is useful for illustrative purposes.

The true state of nonprofit education in the United States thus remains somewhat unclear. While there is no doubt that the number of universities that offer *some* graduate courses is quickly growing, it is difficult to tell if their programs offer enough breadth and substance to be of true benefit to the sector. Considering the increase in the number of nonprofits and their employees (Hodgkinson and Weitzman, 2001; Gronbjerg, 2001), a valid question remains as to whether these institutions will be able to adequately fulfill this growing need. At the very least, some specializations within existing programs will need to be expanded, and more actual nonprofit departments may need to be created. In way of comparison, there are currently 767 MBA and 347 MPA programs in the United States.

Subsector education in natural resource based nonprofits

One aspect of these larger nonprofit programs is that they most often teach "generic" sector education, preparing students for careers in the nonprofit field as a whole and not specifically for any of its differentiated subsectors. The eclectic nature of individual nonprofits and their missions, which includes groups as diverse as unions, churches, universities, and charitable organizations, also raises the question of whether or not an increase in nonprofit *subsector* education is necessary as well. While there are indeed many programs in existence geared specifically towards arts administration, hospital administration, and educational administration, specific educational programs for a number of other nonprofit subsectors has been seriously neglected. Advocacy organizations serve as a good case in point, despite their important mission in increasing

awareness and advancing action for important societal issues and causes (Snow, 1992). The only subsector specialized education that concentrates a significant amount of time on advocacy issues are Masters of Social Work programs (Mirabella and Wish, 2000), although these focus almost exclusively on health and human services issues (Sturtevant, 1997).

Turning to the needs of natural resource based (NRB) nonprofit organizations, Langton (1982) advocated the importance of a long list of skills (e.g., administration, financial management, fundraising, board development, staff management, volunteer utilization, citizen organizing, media relations, coalition building).[6] He concluded that the next stage in the success of the environmental movement would be in the successful management of the NRB nonprofit organizations themselves:

> [NRB nonprofit] groups have a strong need for leadership, particularly in promoting values and change regarding environmental protection and preservation. At the same time, their management needs are great because they must administer membership records, renewal notices, publications, finances, and the like. If they don't take care of their management needs they will not have the resources to promote their values; but, if they do not promote values, they will not attract resources (Langton, 1982: 14).

He spent little attention discussing exactly how these leaders would gain these skills, however. Snow (1992) saw a particularly strong need for leadership *education* for NRB nonprofit organizations, a need he advocated as being largely unaddressed at the university level. Considering the "unique and crucial roles [these NRB nonprofit organizations play] through effective research, mass communication, lobbying, agency monitoring, litigation, and various forms of direct action" (Snow, 1992:xxx), it would seem that such important organizations as the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, the Nature Conservancy, the League of

Conservation Voters, and the National Wildlife Federation would be able to find specialized education available for them at the university level. There are many such organizations at the state and local level as well, such as the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the Michigan Environmental Council, Urban Options, the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation, Earth Share of Michigan, the Michigan Audubon Society, and literally hundreds of other small all-volunteer organizations. But an extensive literature review and web site search of university based nonprofit management programs found no such NRB specialization. At most, some offered opportunities to take dual degrees and courses in environmental policy. None explicitly offer to teach management classes geared specifically towards NRB nonprofit organizations (Mirabella, 2002).

If nonprofit programs are not available that specialize in the management of NRB nonprofits, an alternative would be to have NRB departments offer a focus on nonprofit management. However, research done by Snow (1992) reveals that little is being by these departments in regards to this issue either. Only 11% of such schools said that they had a thorough curriculum in management and administration, and only 2% said that this preparation was one of their primary missions. None of the natural resource graduate programs were geared towards the needs of NRB nonprofits:

> To the extent that they train in agency management at all, their efforts clearly emphasize the administration of natural resource agencies of government and, to a lesser degree, private enterprise. Moreover, many of these programs seem to place little emphasis on humanistic and philosophical concerns related to working in the environmental professions (Snow, 1992: 218).

In regards to his assessment of nonprofit management programs, Snow (1992:195) had similar discouraging words:

> Most of these [nonprofit] programs are very new and seem to tend toward training executives for careers in large, stable nonprofit institutions. How well such efforts will prepare students bound for jobs in nonprofit organizations committed to social change...is an open discussion.

With both nonprofit management programs and natural resource programs largely ignoring the NRB nonprofit leadership issue, there exists a great need for the creation of such programs at the university level. This need is even greater today because "the work of conservation is more geographically dispersed, more technical, and more complex than ever" (Roush, 2002).[7] Beyond these technical factors, NRB nonprofits also face a leadership challenge similar to that seen in the nonprofit sector as a whole. Much of this is due to old traditions that required most NRB leaders to first and foremost be highly trained scientists as opposed to effective organizational managers (Berry and Gordon, 1993). Berry and Gordon also point out that the complex and uncertain nature of the environment itself means that NRB leaders have to consistently deal with emotionally charged issues that involve long time horizons, many of which rely on conflicting scientific bases and multi-disciplinary solutions.[8]

In addition, environmental leadership also relies heavily on "managing" stakeholders not directly employed by their organizations. On an internal level, their unpaid volunteers can not be dictated to as easily as paid for-profit employees. And externally, major citizen involvement is often required at public hearings and other forums to help determine environmental policy. Grassroots organizing skills are utilized in all sectors, but they are particularly relevant to nonprofit advocacy organizations whose missions often expressly rely on the involvement of members, volunteers, and ordinary citizens in advancing important societal issues.

It is only logical that NRB nonprofit education reflect the factors of both the nonprofit sector as a whole as well as those of the NRB subsector in particular. These need to be incorporated into a program that is appropriate to their specific needs as opposed to just specializations within M.B.A. or M.P.A. programs. If not, the sector will have to continue to be content with NRB nonprofit leaders that are not formally trained in leadership and oriented more for government or private sector employment.

> ...the field is wide open. Attention should be given to the creation and refinement of a curriculum emphasizing nonprofit organization management in the context of environmental advocacy. Visiting faculty who possess practical experience could help design such programs and would be of great use in teaching...and in providing internships in their respective organizations (Snow, 1992: 219).

3) The Role of Michigan State University

Recognizing this deficiency, Michigan State University and the Department of Resource Development are seeking to fund the Gordon Guyer Endowed Professorship in Nonprofit Natural Resource Management and Preservation. Professor and acting Chairperson of the Department of Resource Development, Scott Witter (2001), notes:

> [NRB nonprofits] have sought to organize sports persons, conservationists, and environmentalists alike to work together to enhance and preserve habitat needed to keep an important part of our heritage...To continue this tradition will not only require a sustainable natural resource base, but coordinated efforts of these nonprofits, Land Grant Universities, regulatory agencies, industry, and the general public.

Although the specific duties of the professorship remain to be delineated, one potential direction would be the establishment of a nonprofit management program that would educate tomorrow's NRB executives, employees, board members, and volunteers. This approach would require the endorsement of the Dean and other administrators, but if

such approval were given the exact nature and form of the program would need to be determined:

> **Given the importance of nonprofit organizations in American society, and the lack of adequate higher education for prospective NRB nonprofit leaders in particular, what form and content should a specialized program in NRB nonprofit management take at Michigan State University within the Department of Resource Development, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources?**

The most obvious questions that arise deal with the coursework associated with the program. Whether or not it should be a two-year professional degree or a traditional academic program should also be explored, as well as whether or not internships and other forms of experiential learning should be used to give students a real life feel for the job and its requirements.

Preliminary investigation has shown that no such program currently exists, and research in the area is clearly needed. This would benefit several stakeholders, particularly NRB nonprofit organizations that look to Land Grant universities such as Michigan State for aid in educating their prospective leaders and employees. Federal and State governmental agencies would also benefit, as many are now forced to partner with these organizations in the face of increasing budgetary constraints. Given that the mission of these nonprofits is for the public good, society as a whole would also benefit through safeguarded lands, cleaner water, protected species, and healthier economies.

Michigan State University, its professors, and its students would also benefit from a successful natural resource based nonprofit program. The reputation and prestige garnered from pioneering this program would gain nationwide attention and dovetail nicely with the University's many other natural resource based programs and public policy initiatives. The university would attract and retain more students interested in

nonprofit careers, particularly in the NRB field. With a core curriculum established, it would also be much easier to address the needs of other nonprofit subsectors, and the goal of a broad and diffuse university program or actual stand-alone nonprofit center could be established.

Perhaps most importantly, such a program would help Michigan State in meeting its obligation as a Land Grant University by providing education for the public good and not just the privileged few. It seems particularly appropriate that a school with such historic ties to the land could now help to sow the seeds for the very organizations that are needed to continue the environmental safeguarding of our forests, wetlands, prairies, lakes and streams.[9]

CHAPTER ENDNOTES

[1] President Bush's faith based initiative was in jeopardy even before the events of September 11th due to concerns from the right over governmentally attached strings and from the left over questions about the division of church and state. Whatever form is eventually passed will likely be watered down considerably from its original version, although America's increasing religiousness since September 11th could potentially turn the issue around. Regardless of the outcome it still serves as an excellent example of how government is looking to outsource services to nonprofit organizations.

[2] 501c3 and 501c4 refers to an IRS classification system that helps to distinguish the various nonprofits. These two in particular refer to the types of organizations that the general public most readily associates with nonprofits, and includes such groups as the Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club. 501c3 and 501c4 groups do not include churches, hospitals, libraries, schools, unions, or the myriad of other organization that make up the sector. In 1997 Michigan had roughly 24,000 IRS classed 501c3 and 501c4 organizations, as well as 2800 501c5 organizations (labor, agricultural, and horticultural) (Skene, 2000).

[3] Putnam draws a distinction between many community groups, which are in decline, and nonprofit organizations, which are seeing their ranks of dues paying yet uninvolved members swell. Much of this has to do with an exchange of money for time, with today's public putting a premium on scarce leisure opportunities. While this may not be a problem for all nonprofits, it is particularly problematic for those that rely on volunteers for staffing.

[4] Although some governmental units may argue that they have value laden issues as well, most Americans no longer see government employment as the way to "make a difference" in the world like they did during the days of President Kennedy. Watergate, Iran-Contra, and the Monica Lewinsky scandal have all played a role in this regard, and the nonprofit sector is becoming the vehicle of choice for doing good deeds with less political constraints (Kornacki, 2001). Like many things, this has started to change after the events of September 11th, which have seen increasing trust in government and interest in government employment. It is too soon to tell if this is a trend that will last.

[5] "Membership in NACC requires that a center be a formally organized unit within a university in the United States, with a director, with a research component in its program, and a substantial explicit emphasis on the study of nonprofit organizations." (Young, 1998: 122)

[6] Langton referred to these nonprofits as environmental and conservation groups, which are collectively referred to as natural resource based [NRB] organizations in this thesis. See the preface for details.

[7] Jon Roush worked with Snow (1992) when The Conservation Fund supported Snow's research into NRB nonprofit leadership.

[8] While private, public, and other nonprofit leaders have to deal with these issues as well, for environmental leaders they tend to be pervasive and ubiquitous as opposed to organizationally specific and intermittent.

[9] This tradition goes far back at Michigan State. In 1938 the W.K. Kellogg Foundation financed 1,675 scholarships to attend the then Michigan State College and its agricultural short courses. These focused on farming, civic responsibility, and leadership skills (Van Buren, 1990).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The extant literature was reviewed to find information on the educational needs of NRB nonprofit managers and their relevancy to the creation of university level NRB program. This yielded little in the way of specific data for a variety of reasons. Research efforts in the nonprofit sector are relatively young, with earliest attempts occurring only as far back as the 1970s (Hall, 1995). Efforts have also been limited by available resources for such work, as "funding for research on nonprofit organizations has been dwarfed by funding for studies of just about every other organization known to human kind" (Light, 2000:89). Another reason that information was not found on NRB nonprofit education is that much of the effort to create educational opportunities for nonprofit organizations have been of the "generic" variety, geared towards creating managers who can work in the sector as a whole.

Without such specific data, the literature review focuses on two related areas. The first section looks at issues relating to nonprofit management education programs *in general*, starting with an exploration from the field's beginnings and ending with an analysis of their current program offerings. The second section examines the history of NRB nonprofits in Michigan to gain insight into how the characteristics of the sector might affect the curricular needs of a NRB nonprofit management education program.

1) Nonprofit Management Education Programs

Nonprofit management programs first began to come into existence at the university level in the early 1980's (Hall, 1995). Most of the available literature on the

topic has come from the proceedings of two conferences hosted by the University of San Francisco's Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management, one in1986 and another in 1996. The papers presented at these conferences resulted in the publication of two books, "Educating Managers of Nonprofit Organizations" (O'Neill and Young, 1988), and "Nonprofit Management Education, U.S. and World Perspectives" (O'Neill and Fletcher, 1998). The findings of these two conferences offer an opportunity to analyze both the initial foundational tenets of the field and how they have evolved over time.

First conference, 1986

Reflective of the burgeoning nature of the field, the first meeting consisted of only fifty participants and the presentation of ten papers. O'Neill and Young (1988:18) described one of its purposes:

> In a sense the entire conference was about the curriculum issue, including whether there could or should be a separate nonprofit education curriculum and, if so, what it should be. Our thesis throughout has been that the characteristics of nonprofit organizations and the characteristics of nonprofit organization management must be the dominant force shaping any curriculum to meet the needs of these managers.

There was general agreement among the conference participants that the nonprofit sector was truly different as compared to those of government and business, and that a significant need existed for nonprofit management education programs to address their differing educational requirements. The exact form these nonprofit programs were to take was not as clear, however.

Some participants saw rationale for the creation of "generic" nonprofit programs that prepared managers for careers in the nonprofit sector as a whole (Cook, 1988; Cyert, 1988; DiMaggio, 1988). In advocating this, Cyert (1988) draws parallels to the past

experiences of business schools, which up until World War II had been highly specialized by individual industries. It soon became apparent that "management was management", however, and discipline based business schools came to be preferred. Economics was also seen as a factor, as only the largest of schools could afford to have a wide variety of subsector specializations. DiMaggio (1988) also pointed to academia's uncertainty over "what nonprofit managers really need to know", noting that highly specialized programs might lack the flexibility to change within the industry's dynamic operational environment. From an employee perspective, the nonprofit sector typically has short and slow moving career ladders, decreasing the likelihood that all students are able to get jobs in their preferred areas. Without broad, generic training, it would be easy for them to become trapped and pigeonholed.

These same researchers also saw reasons for potential specializations within nonprofit education. DiMaggio (1988) points to the many different sizes, technologies, and external operating environments of the organizations within the sector. O'Neill and Young (1988) felt that size-related diversity was perhaps the most provocative of these areas, and felt that separate management programs based on size might be needed. Cook (1988) argued that separate schools based on size was not practical, but did see significant differences in the requisite skills of small and large nonprofits. Smaller nonprofits were overall determined to be harder to manage because they could not afford to hire specialists like accountants and fundraisers, instead having to rely on individual managers who possessed a broad set of skills. Slavin (1988) also saw highly variable missions, cultures, languages, and protocols as important differences among nonprofits that would make generic nonprofit management education difficult. Such programs

might only be able to train "operational" managers, who would have difficulty dealing with professional employees who resented being evaluated by those untrained and unsympathetic to their specific programmatic missions. Cyert (1988) acknowledges that some areas (e.g., hospitals, education, social work) were indeed too specialized to require only generalized nonprofit training.

A general sentiment emerged that training should ideally be generic wherever possible, but that the nonprofit sector would still require more specialized programs and subsector specific coursework than typical business or governmental schools due to its heterogeneity. According to O'Neill and Young (1988:2),

> ...the diversity of nonprofits argues for increased attention to the educational question: the nonprofit sectors contains organizations not only in the arts, education, health care, social work, and religion – the few non-profit related disciplines whose schools pay serious attention to administration – but also in a myriad of other fields such as advocacy, research, community development, trade associations, and foundations. The fact that such organizations fall not only outside the business and government sectors but also outside the 'mainline' nonprofit disciplines appears to argue for a more comprehensive approach to nonprofit management education.

Another area of general agreement from the conference was the need to develop programs to meet the educational needs of the *local* nonprofit community (Mirabella and Wish, 1999; O'Neill and Young, 1988). Levy (1988: 29) added,

> A critical ingredient for the success of almost any such endeavor must be the capacity to connect meaningfully with nonprofit institutions and to satisfy concerns articulated by their leadership. For it is they that are the sources of employment for graduating students, the living laboratories for student learning and, given their training needs and expertise, an important market to tap both for tuition subsidy and part-time faculty. The success of many business schools in offering MBAs and executive education programs is attributable in no small measure to their strong linkages with the local, regional, or national corporate community. Nothing less is needed for a set of authentic, mutually advantageous interactions with the third sector organizations.

Second conference, 1996

The second conference was much larger, with 125 participants coming from fourteen different nations. The number of nonprofit programs across the country and around the world had increased substantially, and the amount of research began to increase with it. While the conference hosts cautioned that the sector was still a "very new and evolving field" (O'Neill and Fletcher, 1998:13), it was also evident that things were considerably farther along than they had been in 1986. More than three times as many papers were presented, differing substantially in focus and scope. Many of the central ideas brought about in the first conference were expanded on as well.

One tenet was that great diversity existed within the nonprofit sector, diversity that allowed for specialization in smaller programs who could not afford to cater to the individual needs of the entire nonprofit sector. Many also felt that curriculum should be driven by, at least in part, by the characteristics of nonprofit organizations themselves, their managers, and their leadership concerns. Tschirhart (1998: 61) addressed these issues in "Nonprofit Management Education: Recommendations Drawn from Three Stakeholder Groups":

> ...no nonprofit management education program can hope to cover all aspects of the field...resource constraints and the breadth of the skills and knowledge relevant to management require tradeoffs in program offerings. Therefore, priorities need to be established in designing a nonprofit management education program. Understanding the perceived needs and practices of key stakeholders can help in determining these priorities.

The stakeholder groups in Tschirhart's (1998) study were nonprofit managers, students, and faculty. The survey asked participants to "evaluate the importance of 32 knowledge and skill areas that might be taught as part of a nonprofit management program"

(Tschirhart, 1998:62). Looking specifically at the manager group, 53 executive directors or their designated employees participated from a wide variety of nonprofits in the Bloomington, Indiana area.

The findings for the managers showed a clear preference for certain skills and knowledge areas. Ratings were assessed on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being very important. Their top five choices and mean scores were *leadership* (4.85), *ethics and values* (4.79), *long-term planning* (4.64), *financial management* (4.58), *and conducting effective meetings* (4.57). *History of philanthropy* (2.52) came in last. These findings were seen as an important informational source for guiding appropriate curriculum, and were also useful in that they sometimes revealed stark differences with the preferences of other stakeholders. Faculty ranked *leadership* (4.22) at only 11th, choosing instead *fundraising* (4.56) as their number one. *Organizational mission development* (4.50) was tied for their 2nd choice, which managers had ranked at 25th (3.89). Students ranked *creativity* (4.76) as their first choice, *interpersonal skills* (4.48) as their 3rd, collaboration and networking (4.45) as their 4th, and *public relations* (4.44) as their 5th. Several of these differences reached statistical significance ($p \leq .05$).

Based on the wide range of nonprofits included in the study its specific results are only indirectly relevant to the needs of NRB nonprofit organizations being considered here. *Lobbying*, for example, consistently ranked near the bottom among all three stakeholder groups, either due to beliefs that it is illegal (Smucker, 1999) or because the managers' missions were unrelated to advocacy work. That is not likely to have been the case for organizations that are oriented towards social change. This suggests two things.

First, a caution that stakeholder perception are only that. Perceptions. And as such they can sometimes be wildly wrong (as in the case of the legality of nonprofit lobbying). What is perhaps more important in this context, however, is the fact that a nonprofit management program might have failed in properly addressing the needs of the managers themselves if only faculty or administration input had been used in designing the curriculum.

This is an important finding, as research reveals that the needs of nonprofits, their managers, and their employees are frequently considered less important compared to other stakeholders. Young (1998) surveyed 24 university members of the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council, asking them to prioritize their stakeholders. Students, funders, faculty, alumni, administration, nonprofits and "write-ins" were all allowed. "Within the top three priorities, the most frequently cited stakeholder group was students (18), followed by university administration (16), faculty (between 11 and 13, depending on the interpretation of "researchers" and "academic community"), funders (10), community nonprofits (9), and national nonprofits (6)" (Young, 1998:122). Mirabella and Wish (2000) cite similar work by Light (1999) that found that significant gaps existed between the skills taught in public policy graduate programs and the skills the new employees found they really needed when they entered into the workforce. These included such potentially relevant skills as ethics, leadership, and conflict management.

As part of the second conference, Wish and Mirabella (1998) also examined the many curriculums of the burgeoning nonprofit management education field. They found these programs housed in a wide variety of schools and departments (e.g., business, public policy, social work, stand-alone centers). Curriculums varied as well, with MBA

based programs focusing more on the internal organizational environment of nonprofits (e.g., human resources, financial management). Those based in MPA programs were more likely to address the external environment as well (e.g., fundraising, philanthropy), although they were sometimes lacking in general business areas. Brudney and Stringer (1998) also saw volunteer management as a widely neglected course offering. The interdisciplinary centers and some of the larger MPA programs offered the broadest array of courses. The fact that the MBA, MPA, and MSW programs tinged their curricular content to meet their dominant departmental paradigms was seen as a potential area of concern. This was not as frequently the case with the stand-alone centers, although their offerings tended to be generic in that they often taught management as a discipline and failed to incorporate the requisite values of the nonprofit sector (Milofsky, 1996).

Consequent criticisms and responses

Milofosky (1996) leveled these charges in an editorial on the proceedings of the second conference. He felt that the programs continued to teach nonprofit leaders older management paradigms more relevant to for-profits firms, such as those espoused by Weber. These ignored the driving passions and ideologies of employees who were motivated by more than money. But if the creation of "old school" managers was not desirable, neither were programs that produced only esoteric research of limited practical use to the sector:

> ...the old division between academic knowledge and practical training does not work anymore...We are training neither ivory tower analysts nor administrative technicians. Instead, we imagine a cadre of free thinking intellectuals with a commitment to and involvement in practical action (Milofosky, 1996:281).

Billitteri (1997) also criticizes the "esoteric" research produced by these programs, and Eisenberg (1999: 40) contends that the programs are creating only "...managers and technicians, and not organizational leaders – that is, people with vision, a feeling for the dynamics of public policy and politics, and the capacity to inspire their colleagues". In his opinion this was due to a lack of real world nonprofit executives in the ranks of adjunct faculty. He also criticized the dearth of programs offering courses that dealt with nonprofits' external environment (e.g., coalition building, community leadership, public-policy advocacy, grass roots organizing, government and business sector interrelationships). A curricular survey of nonprofit management offerings shows that the majority of courses taught by these programs revolve around the *internal environment* of nonprofit organizations (Mirabella and Wish, 2000). This was the case regardless of the department that the programs were housed in.

Frequency and Focus of Available Coursework (by Department)
adapted from Mirabella and Wish (2000:225)

	MBA	MPA	MSW	SAC*
External Environment Courses				
Philanthropy & the third sector	7%	14%	9%	17%
Advocacy, public policy & community organizing	1	8	37	8
Fundraising, marketing & public relations	16	8	5	19
Internal Environment Courses				
Internal management skills	42	34	27	22
Financial management	13	10	5	7
Human resource management	16	8	5	19
Environment Spanning Courses				
Legal issues	2	4	1	5
Strategic planning	5	4	0	2

(columns may not add up to 100% due to additional coursework offered)
*SAC = "stand alone center" of nonprofit management education

In the case of advocacy coursework in particular, it is noteworthy that only 1% of any classes taught within MBA based nonprofit programs dealt with such issues as grassroots organizing and public policy. MSW based programs had the bulk of their coursework here, yet only devoted 5% of their coursework to fundraising, marketing, or public relations. The MPA and stand-alone centers offered more of a balance in this regard, but still spent the majority of their coursework on internal environment issues.

Focus groups done in follow-up to this curricular survey showed that the majority of professors and alumni felt that the departmental location of their programs was superior to those of others (Mirabella and Wish, 2000), perhaps suggesting a philosophical inculcation that permeated the programs. Many respondents chose an interdisciplinary combination of degrees as their first or second choice, however, indicating that not everyone is satisfied with the current formats of these programs.

Mirabella and Wish (1999) also saw value in identifying the skill competencies the nonprofits saw as valuable, both for use in developing educational programs and then in evaluating their impact on nonprofit graduates and their organizations. Mirabella and Wish (1999:331) called attention specifically to the work of Mary Stewart Hall and others whose efforts have "focused on the determination of target skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for effective nonprofit administration". Mary Hall's (1994) work was used specifically to develop the nonprofit field's first competency based curriculum at Seattle University, a method that the school continues to use in updating their program content (Hall, 2002). Focus groups from Hall's (1994) original research were comprised largely of nonprofit leaders, and their input was used to determine a set of seven core competencies that represent the requisite skills of successful nonprofit managers:

- Employ the use of effective personal and interpersonal behaviors (e.g., self awareness, the engenderment of trust, accountability, communication skills)
- Create vision and establish direction (e.g., mission statements, innovative programming, strategic planning)
- Manage the organization (e.g., budgets, finances, risk)
- Create and maintain a client focus (e.g., respect, credibility, need identification)
- Build a diverse and effective workforce (e.g., teamwork, leadership cultivation, volunteer management)
- Encourage external cooperation (e.g., mutual understanding, public relations, collaboration)
- Develop resources (e.g., entrepreneurship, market analysis, funding diversity)

Current program considerations and curricular offerings

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has been an active funder in research on nonprofit education programs, and seeks to link nonprofit practice and academic knowledge through its "Building Bridges" initiative (www.Centerpointinstitute.org/Bridges/index.htm). Launched in 1997, it is looking at several issues, one of which is to see how new nonprofit programs are being developed. It has followed ten universities as they have gone through the process of creating such programs, and after five years has identified several trends that bear consideration here:

- The impetus for creating such programs often came from faculty and administrators, not from students and practitioners.
- Universities have relied on relationship building strategies both internally and externally to help get their programs off the ground.
- The relationship between the program and the community has focused more on information dispensing than co-learning.
- Programs tended to become more comprehensive over time.

While some of these trends are encouraging, two run counter to the tenet of nonprofit involvement established during the University of San Francisco conferences: 1) a lack of local nonprofit involvement, in the beginning impetus stage, and 2) a lack of co-learning, that potentially results in cookie cutter technical assistance approaches of little true value to nonprofits.

The web sites of some of the nonprofit education programs that took part in the Building Bridges initiative were explored to gain information on the form and structure of their programs. These included Case Western Reserve, Harvard University, Indiana University, and Western Michigan University. Rankings by U.S. News and World Report (2001) and faculty reputation from the literature reviews were also used to select additional programs for investigation. Harvard University, Indiana University at Bloomington, and Seton Hall University were ranked 1st, 2nd, and 5th respectively as the best graduate schools with public affairs specialties in nonprofit management. The University of Michigan, Grand Valley State, and Oakland University were also selected due to their geographic proximity to Michigan State. Seattle University was chosen for its competency based curriculum, and the University of San Francisco was included for its role in hosting the nonprofit management education conferences.

While by no means comprehensive, the web sites of these10 programs still contained information of interest. Programs were housed in a variety of settings and offered a broad array of degrees: MPA, MBA, MSW, Ph.D., and certificates. Most were roughly two years in duration, although credit requirements indicated that they may take slightly longer. Some required the completion of a research paper while others referred to a variety of other "capstone" courses, learning papers, policy analysis exercises,

comprehensive exams, or real world projects. For programs that were designed for students already at work in the nonprofit field, these included projects for the actual organizations they worked for. Evening, weekend, and internet courses were also offered to help these working students. Small class sizes or regional focuses were sometimes stressed. Opportunities for networking were frequently mentioned, and in some cases students went through the program as a sequential cohort group.

References were made to a variety of factors that stressed the practical nature of the programs. These included the use of nonprofit executives as adjunct faculty, efforts to put theory into practice, the flexibility to customize (except in the cases of cohort groups), and internship/service learning opportunities. Despite the criticisms of previous authors, several courses were found dealing with volunteer recruitment and retention, ethics, leadership, intergovernmental relations, advocacy, organizing, collaboration, and entrepreneurship, although they were not found in all programs.

Efforts were also made to identify programs that were housed exclusively in colleges or departments of natural resources within these ten schools. None were specifically found, although the University of Michigan offers the Corporate Environmental Management Program (CEMP), which offers a joint degree, three year program where students earn both a Masters of Business Administration and a Masters in Natural Resources and the Environment. Harvard offers top ranked environmental policy courses, and Indiana University offers environmental science, chemistry, and engineering courses within their policy program as well. Without further information it is difficult to tell how successful these programs are in creating NRB nonprofit leaders. The University of Michigan's CEMP is held in high regard, "although it appears to lend itself

more towards the for-profit end and not nonprofits per se" (Roush, 2002). Although its website (www.umich.edu/~cemp/) advertises that "the program equips leaders, executives, and managers - whether they work in the private sector of for an environmental nonprofit organization", it is a joint degree program with the School of Business and may suffer from a "management is management" predilection and shortcomings in "external environment" coursework. The web review found no courses that specifically mentioned nonprofits, and none that would appear to deal with lobbying, advocacy, or grassroots organizing. An inquiry sent to the program on the matter was not returned.

Summary

In summary, the rapidly growing field of nonprofit management education has experienced significant growth over the past two decades. Opinions continue to differ as to the best place to house such programs and the amount of subsector specialization they should entail, although some general agreement has been found in addressing the needs of local nonprofit communities. Criticisms have been leveled against the sector claiming that many of these programs are producing only internally focused technical business managers, although the most recent literature and explorations of current programs show that these deficiencies are starting to be addressed, at least in intent. Natural resource schools are beginning to more adequately address administrative needs, although few if any are focusing exclusively on the needs of NRB nonprofit organizations.

2) NRB Nonprofits in Michigan and the Nation

A brief examination of the NRB nonprofit sector in Michigan is warranted for several reasons. Primary of these is a need to explore the potentially unique characteristics of NRB nonprofit organizations themselves, especially when one considers that the available literature on nonprofit management program creation has focused on the issues of "generic" nonprofit degrees or other unrelated areas of specialization. The importance of partnering with the local nonprofit community has also been highlighted, not only to ensure the financial sustainability of the program (Levy, 1988) but to increase the program's impact on the effectiveness of the local nonprofit community (Mirabella and Wish, 1999).

This local focus allows professors to move from spectators to participants in the nonprofit community, an important consideration to students who are attracted to programs with strong specializations and linkages to the nonprofit sector (Larson and Wilson, 2001). Most of these students are already employed in the sector and seek programs that are close to home, so there is also opportunity for comprehensive local student/employer/university linkages. This puts Michigan NRB nonprofits, and mid-Michigan based NRB nonprofits in particular, at the forefront of interest. It does not preclude the use of a national scope however, as some out of state students may be interested in taking classes, particularly those that have not yet started working the field. In many cases, what is taking place in the national NRB nonprofit sector will also be reflected in Michigan.

Early days in Michigan

The influence of voluntary NRB organizations has a long and distinctive history within the State. With an early foundation in hunting and conservation, such groups began to take prominent hold as early as 1875 with the creation of the Michigan Sportsmen's Association, which sought to educate legislators and the general public on conservation issues (Dempsey, 2001). The Michigan Audubon Society was later formed in 1904, joining The Michigan Forestry Association and a growing number of other such organizations at the very beginnings of the twentieth century. Pioneer conservationist William Mershon was a driving force behind many of these groups, noting in 1910 that:

> The pine forests no longer stretch from here to the straits of Mackinaw. They are gone. The countless flocks of pigeons that you all remember in the early days, that darken our skies no more. Michigan at one time teemed with elk...The Michigan Association...stands for the betterment of life out doors; for the protection of wild things, the increase in wild life (quoted in Dempsey, 2001: 37).

These groups succeeded in conservation efforts chiefly by influencing citizens and organizing with such seemingly unrelated groups as the Federation of Women's Clubs and the Automobile Club of Michigan. NRB organizations continued to grow in both size and number, and in 1937 many of them came together to form the 6,000 member Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC). The Michigan Parks Association was later formed in the1950s, and The Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club took root soon after that in 1964. Typical of the coalition building nature that had become inherent to the sector, the three organizations successfully lobbied for the creation of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in 1970.

Growth and change

Michigan was at the forefront when a change in the conservation movement occurred that same year, signaled by the creation of Earth Day. The movement continued its focus on land and wildlife management, but a new generation became more concerned with the effects of pollution on the State's air and water supplies as well (Dempsey, 2001). Environmental groups with local ties such as the Environmental Defense Fund successfully teamed with state agency director Ralph MacMullan to address the growing threat of pesticide use and the eventual ban of DDT. These grassroots volunteer groups, such as the West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC), began to grow and hire their first professional staff in the early 1970s. Thus started their transformation of these newer entrants from community based volunteer movements to official statewide nonprofit organizations:

> Representatives fanned out across the state, encouraging the formation of other regional councils comprising the League of Women Voters, Jaycees, PTAs, garden clubs, churches, and labor unions. These councils were crucial in convincing elected and appointed government officials that a large, diverse constituency wanted environmental cleanup and was closely watching their performance (Dempsey, 2001:164).

WMEAC proved instrumental in the passage of such landmark legislation as the Michigan Environmental Protection Act (MEPA) in 1970 and the founding of the Michigan Environmental Council (MEC) in 1980 (Browne et. al, 1995). MEC was created as an umbrella organization due in part to the small sizes and limited resources of these newer NRB organizations, which despite their growing memberships still relied on only a handful of volunteers and staff to do the majority of the work. Indeed, data from Snow (1992) shows that the median size of a NRB nonprofit is just 4.5 full time staff members.

The more conservation oriented MUCC was still a strong umbrella organization in its own right, and had been successful in helping to pass Michigan's "Bottle Bill" on returnable beverage containers just prior to the creation of MEC. There were now two effective umbrella organizations in Michigan, representing the interests of both conservationists and environmentalists alike. Their combined prominence in the years of the Reagan Presidency set the tone for the continued battles of today that increasingly pit NRB organizations against the environmental policies of both the State and Federal government. Since that time neither Governor Blanchard nor Governor Engler made the environment a priority in their heavily industrialized state (Dempsey, 2001). Many conflicts hinged upon differences in scientific opinion and local knowledge (Fischer, 2000). The use of normative values and the employment of the "precautionary principle" in matters of technology, risk assessment, and risk management were typical of these disagreements (Ostrander, unpublished paper).

Regional and international environmental concerns also started to become more of a consideration for NRB nonprofits (Rosenbaum, 1998). Foreign species in the Great Lakes, trash imported from Canada, tribal fishing rights, and the effects of the automobile industry on global warming are all areas of concern for Michigan's local nonprofits. At the same time more governmental decisions are being made at the state and local level (Snow, 1992). This has meant that the role of NRB nonprofits has become more important at the local level, while at the same time they have had to expand the geographical scope of the problems they are facing. According to Snow (1992), it is these local nonprofits at the state level that are experiencing the most difficulty in organizing and institutionalization. Many continue to be run by all volunteer staffs that

attempt to lobby and press for change with little formal knowledge of the political process.

In addition to advocacy and lobbying efforts, NRB nonprofits in Michigan employed other strategies during this time as well. Such organizations as the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation and Urban Options looked to directly stimulate the public to restore habitat and make wise energy choices. In 1974 The Nature Conservancy (TNC) opened its Michigan office and began to purchase large tracks of undeveloped land. This mission was much less confrontational than those of many other prominent NRB nonprofits, and the TNC became an active partner with State and private groups who could not afford to purchase land entirely on their own. This has resulted in the protection of more than 75,000 acres through 1999 alone, although not everyone in State government is happy with the results:

> The resistance of...some in the Department of Natural Resources to protection of sensitive lands reflected the century old divide between the 'sustained yield' philosophy of Gifford Pinchot and the belief that wild places had an intrinsic as well as scientific value, first popularized by Jon Muir (Dempsey, 2001: 219).

Rifts within the sector

Such philosophical differences also serve to highlight some of the problems that Michigan NRB nonprofits have faced despite all of their successes. Conservationists and preservationists have often differed on their approaches towards wildlife and land management (with some arguing for no management at all). Recent legal battles pitting MUCC against the Sierra Club over federal funding, MEPA, and the use of aspen habitat serve as a good case in point (Michigan Out of Doors, 2002). Such infighting has been mirrored at the national level, where committees formed by the larger NRB nonprofits

have been able to reach broad consensus but are then afraid to publicly show solidarity due to differences on hunting issues (Norton, 1991).

This rift has also occurred along racial lines (Kline, 1997; Shabecoff, 1993). There has been a growing perception that the more institutionalized NRB nonprofits are unfocused on the needs of minority communities and are run almost exclusively by Caucasians. According to Shabecoff (1993: 233),

> Unlike the national groups, whose staffs are mostly white, well-educated, relatively affluent middle-class professionals, the membership at the grass roots cuts across class, racial, political, and educational lines. Workers who live in the shadow of smokestacks or within smelling distance of waste dumps are the most active members of these groups. Also unlike the mainstream organizations, the local anti-pollution fighters are more often than not led by women. Where the national groups are prone to settle their differences through compromise, the grass-roots groups usually will settle for nothing less than complete victory because the health of their children...is on the line.

In 1990 tensions reached the point where such minority groups formally accused eight of the largest national NRB nonprofits of outright racism in their hiring practices (Kline, 1997). These NRB nonprofits have made efforts to address the problem, although many critics argue that nothing of a substantive nature has changed and that many larger NRB nonprofits are still out of touch and too bureaucratic.

Despite their many victories, the "mainstreaming" of the environmental movement is seen as a potential area of concern for other reasons. Deemed as the price to pay for success by some, others point to a "professionalization" of the sector that focuses too much effort on internal organizational concerns and not enough on their programmatic missions (Rosenbaum, 1998). A former National Audubon Society magazine editor said,

> There's tremendous competition out there for money...And we've gotten top heavy with bureaucrats and accountants and fund-raisers who are all good

> professionals - but I don't think you would catch them sloshing through the marsh" (quoted in Rosenbaum, 1998:38).

Shabecoff (1993: 261) adds that many environmentalists fear that:

> ...the professionalization of environmental groups was robbing them of the passion and moral zeal that had infused them with a sense of mission after Earth Day. They wondered if environmentalism was becoming just another career and its cadre was growing to resemble the corporate executives and government officials with whom they were supposed to be doing battle.

Hjelmar (1996:2) feels this is associated with the extent to which the organizations want to work within the existing system:

> [A movement identity] is conceived here as a form of ideology which aims at challenging the political order by making fundamental social issues the subject of discussion. [A pressure group] is defined as an ideology which accepts the political order and sees the role of the organization as one of seeking influence through conventional channels. These forms of identity can vary, of course, from one historical epoque to another.

It has thus become increasingly difficult for NRB nonprofits to balance such things as ideology with contextual strategy, and driving passions with sound business practices.

This has led to conflict not just among different NRB nonprofits but also within these same organizations as well. A case in point is the split between the National Audubon Society (NAS) and the Michigan Audubon Society (MAS). The result of increasingly divergent philosophical bearings, NAS formally cut off all funding to MAS in 2001 and forced them to file suit for continued use of the Audubon name. Such disagreements can easily occur when nonprofits are comprised of a variety of chapters that must balance central organization with local autonomy (Grossman and Rangan, 2001).

The mastering of such multiple and diverse issues has created a need for strong and effective NRB managers, and the majority of Michigan's most effective

environmental initiatives have had charismatic leaders (Dempsey, 2001). Charisma is not always enough, however, especially when these leaders leave, and the grooming of effective organizational managers is seen as an important consideration for the sustainability of the movement (Snow, 1992; Langton, 1984). Is succession adequately addressed in these NRB nonprofits?

The late Tom Washington of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs serves as good case in point. Largely seen as *the* driving force behind the success of the organization, he never the less paid little attention to how the organization would function after he was gone. When someone once asked him to see MUCC's organizational chart, Washington's reply was "Why the hell do we need that? I am the organizational chart!" (Dempsey, 2001:180). He thus paid little attention to nurturing his successor, although to his credit he did bring former staff member Rick Jameson back into the organization in the late 1980s. Things were still largely considered a one man show however when tragedy struck, and both Washington and Jameson died in the late1990s. MUCC was left in a lurch and crippled for quite some time (Dempsey, 2001). The success of other Michigan NRB umbrella organizations has also been due in no small part to the glue of their leaders. One is left to wonder how such groups as the Michigan Environmental Council or Earth Share of Michigan would fare if such leaders as Lana Pollack (MEC) or Dennis Fijalkowski (ESM) retired or left the state.

Several issues thus threaten the eclectic network of NRB nonprofits in Michigan as the movement struggles to define who they are, what they want to achieve, and how they want to achieve it. Retaining their individual identities and focus while moving forward as a coalition remains difficult, although significant strides have been made. The

Conservation News Network hosted organized meetings of diverse NRB nonprofits from across the state in 2000 and 2001. The Environmental Fund of Michigan also grew into Earth Share of Michigan, serving as an umbrella organization for the joint fundraising efforts of a variety of NRB nonprofit organizations.

Characteristics of the sector and its membership

Recent tallies put the number of environmental nonprofits in Michigan at 100 (Skene, 2000), although it would seem that this number fails to reflect the true number of organizations since the same figures point to 470 affiliated clubs under the MUCC umbrella alone. It also fails to take into account the potentially hundreds of additional small voluntary NRB organizations that have not chosen to formally incorporate as nonprofits. Nationally, it is estimated that over 10,000 environmental organizations exist on the national, state, and local levels (Rosenbaum, 1998). Considering that Michigan ranks ninth in number of total nonprofit organizations nationwide (Skene, 2000), it seems more than plausible that the natural resource rich "Great Lakes State" would have a healthy share of these 10,000 organizations. Although only a rough proxy, a nationwide study (Snow, 1992) that attempted to balance geographic diversity included more NRB organizations from Michigan than 45 other states.

The environmental sector is growing as well, with IRS tax return information showing the number of environmental organizations nationwide increasing at a rate of 55% from 1993 to 1998, the highest increase for organizations required to report (Skene, 2000). What is unclear however is if this growth represents an increasing enthusiasm for environmental causes or a dissatisfaction for the ones currently in operation, as many membership ranks plateaued during the 1990s (Rosenbaum, 1998). This has interestingly

occurred at a time of increasing support for the environment among the general public (Kempton, Boster, and Hartley, 1995), including the people of Michigan (League of Conservation Voters, 2000). Rosenbaum (1998) questions just how deep the general public's support really is however, and warns that the American people may be tiring of a "crisis style" of NRB communication that fails to differentiate between minor problems and real emergencies. This fear may have been realized, as Kline (1997) sees apathy due to a growing sentiment among the public that the major environmental battles have already been won. Shabecoff (1993) on the other hand wonders if the plateauing membership of major NRB nonprofits is due to dissatisfaction among former Earth Day idealists. He sees a disconnect between large NRB nonprofits and an unenergized grassroots, a connection that will have to be restored for the movement to be successful.

Some of the larger groups have realized this, and Shabecoff (1993) outlines how they are attempting to reconnect with the passions of the original 1970s movement. But trying to create passion through the employment of emotional rhetoric has been criticized as well: Ken Sikkema, former leader of the West Michigan Environmental Action Council and current State Senator said,

> You should never compromise your principles, but you have to be willing to compromise nonessentials. I think the environmental community doesn't understand that, or has no nonessentials on its list. They let a philosophical position get in the way of good environmental policy. In the environment of Lansing, nobody can get everything they want (Dempsey, 2001:286)

How NRB nonprofit organizations should package their messages and determine their strategies is something that can not be answered here, but it is clear that finding a solution should be a top priority for the movement. Michigan's NRB nonprofits were seen as generally ineffectual in influencing policy in the1990s (Dempsey, 2001).

The combined assets of Michigan environmental nonprofits are listed at $137 million, relatively meager compared to other nonprofit subsectors (Skene 2000). 1999 figures for Michigan based foundation distributions shows that they gave only 3.5% of their grants to environmental/animal groups. Government grants have not been a traditional source of income for most NRB nonprofits either, so Michigan's NRB nonprofits will probably have to get the majority of their funding through the general public. National figures from 1998 show only 12.4% of total households donating money to environmental nonprofits, representing just 3.2% of total household donations but up from 1.6% in 1989 (Independent Sector, 2001). Increasing this giving level and finding ways to diversity revenue sources will be an important area of consideration.

Looking at volunteer rates (Independent Sector, 2001), 9.2% of people who did any volunteering spent at least *some* of their time with environmental groups, up from 6.3% in 1989. This number was just 3% for seniors over the age of 55, indicating that environmental volunteers are somewhat younger in age. Snow (1992) found the average volunteer leader to be a male, while Shabecoff (1993) felt that that there were more women in the smaller volunteer groups at the grassroots level.

Summary

In summary, both the strengths and weaknesses of Michigan's NRB community lie in its ability to collaborate, form coalitions, and energize the general public. When they have done so they have been largely successful; when infighting has distracted them they have failed. The small sizes of many of these organizations means there is only a small pool of prospective managers in place when leaders leave, making the organizations vulnerable in times of transition. Despite great public support in Michigan

for the environment, most households continue to give a proportionately larger amount of their money and time to other nonprofit organizations. Although highly successful in the 1970s and 1980s, Michigan's NRB nonprofits have been characterized as largely ineffectual during the last decade (Dempsey, 2001). How effective they are in the new millennium will depend greatly on the effectiveness of their managers in leading their organizations.

CHAPTER THREE

STUDY METHODOLOGY

As set forth in Chapter One, the following research question was defined:

> **What form and content should a specialized program in NRB nonprofit management take at Michigan State University within the Department of Resource Development, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources?**

1) Study Design

The first step in the research methodology was a review of the literature. Langton (1982) advocated a long list of skills that NRB nonprofit leaders need, but did not address how they should go about acquiring them. Data from Snow (1992) outlined strategies that NRB nonprofit leaders use to run their organizations, but did not directly address the skills needed to employ them. From a NRB coursework standpoint, no information was found as to what classes would be most useful in teaching these skills.

There was ample literature on the creation of "generic" nonprofit management programs, however. Relevant information on the characteristics of the NRB nonprofit sector in Michigan was also found. Taken together, these findings were used in guiding the design of this research.

Mirabella and Wish (1999), Tschirhart (1998), and Hall (1994) saw a strong need for the content of these programs to be driven by the requisite skills and knowledge bases of the nonprofit organizations themselves. O'Neill and Young (1988:18) stated that

> ...the characteristics of nonprofit organizations [in this case, NRB nonprofits] and the characteristics of nonprofit organization management must be the dominant force shaping any curriculum to meet the needs of these managers.

As such, the curricular content of nonprofit programs can not be determined based solely upon internal University interests. Mary Hall (1994) addressed this issue by creating a nonprofit-driven curriculum at Seattle University. In it she used focus groups with nonprofit managers to identify the "core skill competency areas" of these leaders. Mirabella and Wish (1999), O'Neill and Young (1988), and Levy (1988) also presented compelling reasoning that the input of nonprofits into these programs should be from the *local* level.

Original research is therefore needed to generate data on which to base the design of a NRB nonprofit management program at Michigan State. Mirabella and Wish (1999) and Mary Hall (1994) found the methodology of focus groups useful in the acquisition of data on requisite skills. Beckwith (2001) also employed such a methodology in similar work exploring the creation of a natural resource executive academy at Michigan State University. The use of focus groups in qualitative research has been a commonly employed method for gathering normative data in the academic setting (Morgan, 1988), and has several investigative strengths:

- It can produce a rich body of data expressed in the respondent's own words and context, and offers opportunities for the employment of a constructivist technique that ensures two-way learning.
- There is a minimum of artificially of response (a weakness of many survey questionnaires) and respondents can qualify their answers.
- Data can be collected more quickly and cost effectively than through individual in-depth interviews. Participants can also react to the views of others in real time (as opposed to the Delphi technique).

Taken as a whole, a strong case can thus be made for the employment of a *focus group methodology* in researching the *core skill competencies* of *local NRB nonprofits*, their managers, and employees. Such an approach addresses the lack of local nonprofit

input as identified in the Kellogg Foundation's Building Bridges Initiative, and fits nicely with the strong scholar-practitioner philosophy within the Department of Resource Development.

2) Methodology and Execution

Requisite university approval for the use of human subjects in research was obtained through UCRIHS. The National Wildlife Federation's "2001 Conservation Directory" and the "People of Color Environmental Groups 2000 Directory" were then used to identify potential mid-Michigan based NRB nonprofits, staffs, and contact information. The membership rosters of such environmental umbrella organizations as the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the Michigan Environmental Council, and Earth Share of Michigan were also used. Letters were then generated to seek the study participation of these organizations' executive leaders or employees. A snowball technique was also used to expand the pool of potential participants. Over 40 people were directly contacted for inclusion in the study, of which 18 agreed to participate. Copies of both the recruitment letter and consent form are available in the appendix.

Three goals were chosen in the picking of these NRB organization participants. One was to obtain a broad and diverse set of groups (within this study's definition of a NRB nonprofit; see the preface for details), attempting to obtain a mix based on variations in mission, size, ideologies, and use of volunteers. The second goal was to choose local organizations that represented only the Michigan chapters of national organizations or organizations unique to Michigan. The third goal was to seek two specific types of candidates: either past or present NRB nonprofit executives or the employees of such organizations that had been recent graduates of Michigan State

University from the Department of Resource Development. This was done to ensure a balance between extensive nonprofit experience and the insights of recent students who also had knowledge of the current programs and coursework offerings within Michigan State and the department.

Thus identified, two focus groups concerning issues relevant to NRB nonprofit education were held in February and March of 2002 in Laingsburg, Michigan. A focus group guide was developed for this exercise which looked to explore:

> 1) What *knowledge* and *skills* are necessary for the success of NRB nonprofit employees and their leaders?
>
> 2) What *courses or other teaching methods* could the university offer to assist NRB nonprofits in honing these skills?
>
> 3) Are the critical skills needed by NRB nonprofits *different* than those needed by for-profit, public, or other nonprofit organizations?
>
> 4) Is the *university* a good way for NRB nonprofits to acquire these skills?
>
> 5) What *degree structure* should a NRB nonprofit program have? Should it be a professional degree similar in form to a MBA or MPA? Or should it be a more traditional program that includes academic research and the writing of a thesis?

Both groups were facilitated by the researcher and took place at a local restaurant in a private meeting room. Registration began at 6:30pm with dinner beginning at 7:00pm. A camcorder, a tape recorder, and field notes were employed as recording methods.

Looking at the two groups as a whole, the sixteen final participants included eight males and eight females that were working for, or had worked for, a total of 13 different NRB organizations in operation today. In one case a participant had served on the board of an additional such organization, bringing the total number up to 14. In some cases participants had worked for several groups, and many had additional experience with defunct NRB organizations, non-NRB nonprofits, or community foundations.

Larger organizations represented included the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the Michigan Environmental Council, the Sierra Club, and the Nature Conservancy. The other organizations included groups that were considered too small at the local level to ensure participant confidentiality by listing them here. These included three hunting based conservation organizations (similar to the National United Turkey Federation, etc.), three environmental advocacy organizations (similar to the West Michigan Environmental Action Council, etc.), and four other organizations that were primarily involved in education, land preservation, or environmental fundraising (similar to the Michigan Recycling Coalition, Little Traverse Conservancy, etc.). This represented a good cross section of NRB nonprofits in some ways, both in terms of the size and missions of the local conservation and environmental communities. Race and age were not part of pretrial screening criteria. Ages varied substantially but participants were overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, Caucasian.

Seven participants took part in the first session, not including one no show. Five participants had already graduated from Michigan State University, three with bachelors degrees and two with masters degrees. Two others were still finishing their masters research but were largely done with coursework. Five of the seven were from the Department of Resource Development, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, while two others were from another department within the College or had graduated with a degree in public administration. Except for one alumni from the mid 1990s, all other graduates had received their degrees from no earlier than 1999. The majority of participants had three years or less of experience in NRB nonprofits, although two individuals had worked for longer periods that brought the group average up to six.

Nine participants took part in the second session, not including one no show. Seven of the nine were either past or current executive directors in NRB nonprofit organizations and had an average of twenty years of nonprofit work experience. Degrees represented included two Ph.D.s, three MS/MAs, one MBA, and one JD. Two other participants had completed some masters work.

Both of the formal videotaped portions of the sessions lasted over an hour and a half. Initial impressions were noted and written down at the conclusion of the sessions and added to the "in progress" field notes that had been taken. Videotapes were reviewed in their entirety the following morning, and more detailed notes were produced to compare with the field notes and to identify relevant themes and salient quotations. The content analysis required that the videos be reviewed several times. Once they were analyzed, the videotapes were used again to obtain verbatim transcripts of selected quotes. A preliminary findings document was generated and emailed to the participants for their thoughts and comments. No participants replied back with mischaracterizations.

Findings are considered highly suggestive but not generizable for several reasons. One is that only two focus groups were employed, capturing a significant amount of mid-Michigan based NRB nonprofit organizations but not enough to adequately represent them in their totality. In many cases, there was also only one participant representative of an organization, perhaps qualifying feedback as being more indicative of the individual's views than the nonprofits as a whole. Despite significant diversity of the participants in some categories, agricultural, minority, faith-based, and smaller community NRB nonprofit participation was lacking.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY FINDINGS

The first theme raised by the researcher at each focus group was the skills or knowledge necessary for success in the NRB nonprofit sector. The participants were also encouraged to reflect on whether or not these skills differed from those of other sectors, if college was an appropriate setting to gain these skills, and what courses at the college level might address these needs. Each focus group wound down with an attempt to identify which of the potential courses were most important, and concluded with a discussion on the format such a program might take.

A large amount of data was generated by both groups. In general, the first group brought up more skills and ideas for courses, while the second group brought up fewer ideas but tended to discuss them more in depth. There was very little open disagreement in either of the groups. The participant's body language suggested to the researcher that there was very little hidden disagreement as well.

1) Skills and Knowledge Questioning Results

While there was general consensus on the required skill sets, some skills were seen as more important than others. This was reflected in the fact that the groups spent more time discussing some skills in-depth as opposed to other skills that garnered less attention. While all of the skills described can be viewed as important to the participants, they can be categorized into three sets based on the degree of discussion they generated in the focus groups. The following classification serves as a basis for relative importance but can not be viewed as a definitive guide:

Skill sets 1 represents areas where the majority of discussion occurred:

- Communication skills, broadly defined
- Business skills, broadly defined
- Fundraising skills, broadly defined
- Coping skills, broadly defined
- Real life experiences
- Board recruitment and relationships

Skill sets 2 represents areas where a substantial amount of discussion occurred:

- Membership/volunteer management
- Political and policy skills

Skill sets 3 represents areas where the least amount of discussion occurred:

- Computer skills
- Special event planning skills
- Legal skills

Skill set 1 synopsis

It is interesting to note that in both sessions communication skills were brought up first, followed roughly by business skills, fundraising skills, and board relations. In most cases these categories came to be defined very broadly and encompassed a wide variety of related skills and knowledge sets.

Communication skills included those that were both verbal and written, and applied to a wide variety of audiences. The frequency with which communication skills were used in the sector was highlighted by a participant:

> Especially if you are working in the nonprofit sector, because your are always communicating either with the public, or your membership, or donors, or funders, or legislators. And how you communicate that message, and how that communication effects the person you're communicating with, is very important.

Audience characterization was seen as a very important skill, as was being able to then adapt one's communication style based on the contextual situation:

> [Audience] diversity, and communication methodology, would be the emphasis. I had an experience working with a high level administrator, and I had to have a different framework...I had to understand his perspective. There was a whole

> different set of communication skills than if I was dealing with donors, if I was dealing with the media.

Communication was considered two-way in that it also focused on the need for better listening skills, analysis of what was being said, and understanding differing perspectives. This was also seen in the recognition that trust played an important role in the communication process, and that openness to the viewpoints of others was important for successful collaborations and outcomes when multiple stakeholders were involved.

> Listening skills, I don't think we get enough training in that. There are complex issues that we have to potentially grasp sometimes. How do we hear the multi-dimensionality of an issue quickly and efficiently in a way that makes sense so that we can operate effectively? It relates to collaboration, relates to media relations, it relates to voicing your message as well...how do employees work together as a team...not just between nonprofits, but between government, business, education.

It was also mentioned that learning from one another was important in the creation of "learning organizations" that adapt and change to dynamic environments. This allowed for the creation of networking opportunities outside of the organization with a wide variety of stakeholders (e.g., other nonprofits, government, etc.).

Some saw communications as similar to public relations. Most felt that media relations, including how one talks to the media, were an important and potentially distinct subset of communications. A strong need was identified to be able to write or talk in concise, focused messages in these and other situations. Public speaking and presentation skills were also seen as important, in both small and large groups. There was also agreement that the writing skills of new applicants were getting worse based on the quality of resumes and cover letters they were receiving.

Business skills were another crowded category. The most popular label for this category was "nonprofit management", as many felt it imbued all of the desired skills and a prerequisite systemic/holistic approach:

> [I'd choose] nonprofit management, broadly stated - that being the board development, the finance and budget issues, and that sort of thing. And one of the things I have seen consistently over the twenty-five years or so I have been involved in this is that people do not know how to run an organization or projects...in the broadest sense they are not trained to be institutional leaders. They simply don't know how to plan, to budget, they don't know the personnel issues, they don't know how to deal with the issues that may blow up in their face, that could put their institution in jeopardy, be it financial or legal jeopardy. That would be in my estimation, far and away, the most important thing that a nonprofit program could develop...each of these things that we've talked about is a part.

Similar thoughts were mentioned in the other group as well:

> I think that we're completely lacking business skills. I mean a business plan, having a strategic plan, not just doing what is good for the environment, but being fiscally responsible in the manner that you do that.

There was broad agreement that many leaders in the movement were wildlife biologists who had little or no business training:

> So many of us, right here at this table, three or four of us came out of the wildlife profession, and got our education in wildlife, and were very poorly suited to take on a role, particularly a leadership role, CEO of an organization, with no management skills, no business background, no communication skills with the media.

Being able to develop strategic plans and to follow mission statements was seen as important. An analysis of how and why decisions were being made by the nonprofit community was sorely needed, and an ability to put mission over "grant chasing" was seen as critical as well. A desire to understand how nonprofit organizations "work in general" was cited as needed.

Many felt very strongly that the leadership and the "human side" of business also had to be included, and that human resource skills were needed to create motivated individuals and effective teams. Leadership that created self-sufficient employees and project managers was important as well. Employees needed to be able to handle a project from beginning to end despite the many skills they would need to employ. How to run a meeting and protect employees' time was also seen as important.

Fundraising skills. The ability of a NRB nonprofit to get funds was deemed as critical. Two participants viewed this as perhaps the most important skill. There was agreement that in the past this had centered too much on grantwriting, which was still seen as important but not sufficient in and of itself. How to run capital campaigns, create cause-related marketing contracts, build a dues paying membership, and familiarity with planned giving options were all seen as required. Development officers needed to be knowledgeable in a variety of fundraising techniques and aggressive in their execution.

> Fundraising in the nonprofit world is absolutely integral to anything else that [we've] talked about. In these days and times, probably one of the top three.

It was also important that all employees (and board members) know how to spot a giving opportunity and approach others for donations. It could not be the sole responsibility of just a given few in the organization.

Board skills focused on the recruitment of "good" board members and the need for clear communication between the board and the organization's staff. This was seen as a frequent area of friction for many of the participants. There was also agreement that board members needed to be active, especially in the fundraising arena:

> Learning how to solicit, you don't just want a board member that has a name, you want a board member that is active, you want a board member that knows what fundraising means, and...[has skills like those of] a lawyer and an accountant.

What came to be deemed as "board management" entailed how executives helped to define the roles of the board (and themselves), so that misunderstandings were minimized and accountability could be enforced. Employees wanted to know where they stood. There was a need to better understand governance within the organization and how decisions were made.

Coping skills best define an eclectic but highly interrelated area that deals with burnout and stress. For many this meant better time management, prioritization skills, multiple task management, and crisis management. For others this meant looking to find balance in life with work and personal obligations. This seemed particularly important for three members of the study. Many felt that future nonprofit employees needed to understand the realities of working in the sector in advance:

> You need to kind of acquaint people who are thinking maybe of making careers in nonprofits as to the cycles of mental, spiritual boom and bust...if you expect it's going to be just fighting for good and right everyday, and you're going to be turned on, and its just going to be fabulous because you are a righteous warrior, you're going to have a big disappointment.

Minimizing frustration over roles and other ambiguities within the organization was seen as important as well, especially when it was necessary for people to "wear many hats" in smaller nonprofits. Being able to be a "quick study" was important, as was a need for responding to unanticipated crises. Beyond a focus on the executives there was a need for addressing staff burnout as well.

Real world knowledge. The idea that real world experience was critical to the success of employees in nonprofits was pervasive in both sessions.

> Real life experience...by offering real life opportunities, plugged into a real nonprofit organization while you're going to school, gives you the chance to see the multidimensionality of life in the real world.

This category encompassed internships, student consulting, employer interviews, and an emphasis on the ability to work in the real world. Internships were seen as an important way to gain such experience, and in the first group 4 of the 7 participants received their jobs as a direct result of internships:

> I think internships are just so extremely valuable, and to have as much out of class time as in class time. I'm sure there are a lot of special nonprofit organizations that would love to have internships, but obviously well screened, so that they're not just stamping and mailing, but they're actually able to go to board meetings and see interactions. That is really important, so that they're really out there in the real world.

Skill set 2 synopsis

Membership/volunteer skills were discussed primarily in the first group, in a variety of contexts. The first dealt with how to persuade members to join an organization, a skill that was deemed as more unique to nonprofits than other sectors. It was seen as largely different than customer satisfaction and was not based on a formal product model. It was felt that there was a need for a strong ability to build relationships with members, who are more intertwined with the organization and do not just "buy a product and then go away" as they might in the for-profit world. An organization could literally "kill" itself if it failed to adequately recruit and maintain members.

Members could also become volunteers for an organization, and this required another skill set that drew heavily from human resource management. They needed to be treated differently than regular employees:

> [We] learn how to do [volunteer management] on the fly...volunteers are motivated much differently than paid staff, I mean, you can't rely on them to show up for one thing, they're really under no obligation.

Political and policy skills were brought up in the first session and centered on advocacy and lobbying. These skills needed to go beyond just how the political process was *supposed* to work, but needed to cover the intricacies of how such decisions were actually made in the real world. It was mentioned that this might not be applicable to all NRB nonprofit organizations.

Public policy was an offshoot of this area: what it is, how it is made, and how it is put into practice. There was a need for balance between knowing some policy issues in great depth and having a broad understanding of general issues. There was also a sense that some people were grounded too much or too little in environmental issues versus scientific conservation management, when in reality they are mutually dependent. Skills were needed to understand both since neither existed in a vacuum:

> The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources does something that is very bizarre. Resource Development is very environmentally focused [on land, air, and water]...while the others [are more focused on fisheries and wildlife]...The schools of thought are not together.

Skill set 3 synopsis

Computer skills were brought up in the first session, under the context of membership databases. Computer programs were also mentioned that could manage donor data as well. Programs like Microsoft Excel had to be used since most customized nonprofit software was very expensive. For those not proficient in computer use, they had to rely heavily on the organization's "computer people", resulting in wasted time.

Event skills were brought up in the first session related to volunteer management. One person cited too many instances where they thought they could put together a successful meeting and then had problems with volunteers and audience members

showing up. This could be for a rally or demonstration. It was felt that you had to know what was realistic and in what time frame things could be accomplished.

Legal skills were touched on briefly in the first group in regards to the legal constraints that nonprofits operate under such as knowing how much one can lobby. It was also brought up very briefly in regards to organizational and crisis management in the second session.

2) Course Questioning Results

While questions regarding skills and classes were asked separately, in many cases these areas of discussion bled into each other during the course of the sessions. People jumped ahead to needed courses while discussing skills, and coursework was justified by referring back to requisite skill sets. In some instances, linking skills to courses was done in a basic fashion where everyone agreed that course "XYZ" was needed to teach skill "XYZ". In other areas more detailed discussion occurred over how those courses should be held, how many courses should be held, who should teach them, etc.

After participants were finished generating potential courses they were then asked to name "their top two or three". Participants could choose classes that they actually had taken, hypothetical classes, or classes the group had not previously discussed. Attempts were then made to keep a running tally of which were viewed as most important, although this process met with several problems. Participants expressed difficulty in choosing, wanted to change their minds, or wanted to pick more than was allowed. There was general dissatisfaction with the process, and many indicated that most of the classes were equally vital to the success of NRB nonprofit organizations. Some felt that some

courses were so interrelated that you could not have one without the other if one wanted to understand the entire picture.

Communications courses. The needed communications skills were quite diverse and it was agreed that they could not be addressed in just one class. Suggestions were made for media relations, public relations, and audience characterization as being discreet courses. Speech writing/giving was seen as something that needed to be covered in a course, as was the ability to write concise reports and memos. How to deal with multiple stakeholders needed to be addressed as well, and the discussion surrounding it brought up the need for a negotiation or conflict management class. When participants were asked to give their wish list for the two or three most important courses, one gave public speaking and another gave a general communications course that included media relations.

Business courses. Many business related areas were given as suggestions for courses. The vast majority of these included general nonprofit management. This was due in large part to one session where it became very difficult to separate strategic planning, mission development, and project management from each other. One person in particular was very adamant that it was not difficult to choose between the various business skills, but that in nonprofit management a holistic and all encompassing approach was necessary to create leaders that could do more than operationally manage. General nonprofit management, thus broadly stated and synthesized, came out as the clear favorite overall in the business related skills. Project management and strategic planning still came in with several individual votes as the most important classes, as did an accounting and economics course that blended both classical and natural resource economics. This reflected a desire to understand economics under a natural resources

umbrella while understanding the classical economics that drive other stakeholder decisions.

There was general agreement that nonprofits had not focused on these business skills in the past. Much of this had to do with the challenge of melding the passions of nonprofits with the more steely business practices of typical capitalistic corporations. It was also seen as a reason why business courses taught in a nonprofit program might have to be different:

> We're in this [nonprofit] world because we believe in what we do. Many people in the environmental world are very connected to what we do, and many people in the business world are not...In the economics class I have taken, their bottom line or how they get their numbers is a lot different than if you were to take a natural resources economics class. So I think that it is important to realize that maybe there are some things that you couldn't get, or that you would want an alternate perspective from, then if you took just a straight business class.

Fundraising courses. Two people held general fundraising as one of their top potential courses. "[I'd pick] fundraising, fundraising, fundraising, until you told me I had to stop." Determining how many different courses this should entail was difficult, as conceivably an entire course could be spent on just grantwriting alone, which all agreed that by itself was not sufficient.

Board courses. Few specifics were given on a course for this skill other than that one was needed to cover both the recruitment and retention of good board members. How to define the roles of board members and how to communicate with boards was also important. Role-playing was seen as a potential teaching method:

> I think it would be very helpful to have an introductory course into just the dynamics of an organization, dynamics of a board/governance organization, from the nonprofit sector, and being able to do role playing, and role establishment, so the person going into that knows what managerial skills are going to be required of them, and also what fundraising skills are going to be required of them. Everybody knows what their role is going in.

Coping courses. As mentioned, much of the discussion revolving around a course to provide students with coping skills had to do with letting students know what it was "they would be getting themselves into" in the NRB nonprofit world. Many felt that their introduction to nonprofit employment had been a trial by fire, and they wanted students to find out if nonprofit work was right for them before they got a job. There was some talk of an initial broad "survey" class that would expose new students to the myriad of hats that they would have to wear at the beginning of the program, giving them a chance to change their mind.

Other ways that coping could be addressed was through the offering of a comprehensive nonprofit program that students could take at a university, such as the one under consideration at Michigan State University. Burnout was often cited as a result of frustration over being unprepared, and many felt that with the proper education this could be minimized. Others saw courses being offered on time management, prioritization, and multiple task management to help set goals and reduce ambiguity.

Finding balance in one's life was also seen as important, as was stress reduction. One person used the acronym SCOPE to describe a course on teaching a "system creating organizational and personal effectiveness":

> Stress, the number one killer in our country...somewhere in that curriculum, a class needs to be given as to how people keep the balance, how people actually become effective...how a person keeps their job, how they stay alive, how they make the organization vibrant, thriving, and successful...it's a tweaking of time management, it's events management [but also something more].

Coursework that might address this included self-directed (class directed) learning, similar to some Bailey's Scholar programs offered at Michigan State. This would help in

self-realization and personal effectiveness, as well as increasing comfort with ambiguity and differing personal values.

Real life experience. Internships rivaled business skills as the most popular teaching option for prospective nonprofit employees. Many of the recent students in the first group thought that they should be mandatory, although they also wanted to make sure that they would be doing more than making coffee. This reflected a genuine interest to not just work and network within the nonprofit but to truly learn from it. Some suggested spending an entire semester working twenty hours or forty hours a week in lieu of formal classes. Some were not sure if this was overkill, and one person in particular felt that they could not personally afford to do any internships if they were not paid. There was a desire to work for both small and large nonprofits, and even some for-profit organizations, to see how they varied. In addition to internships, other real life experiences included in-depth interviews of staff and the keeping of a "learning journal" in lieu of formal academic research. These papers could be kept on file for others in the program to read and to help them in choosing where to do an internship. Learning from real issues or developments in the local area was preferable to cases and made up scenarios. There was also a desire among recent students to have some courses taught by adjunct faculty who had worked in the real nonprofit world, and not by professors who were only willing to teach theory.

This was also mentioned by the second group, who expressed an interest in teaching at such a program themselves, and who mentioned that "internships go both ways". There was also broad agreement that they wanted to hire people with internship experience. Some problems needed to be resolved, however. Experience with bachelors

students had been poor as some lacked the maturity and skills to be assets to the organization (the experiences with masters students were more favorable). The ability to pay for an intern was also nonexistent at most nonprofits, regardless of size. If the students needed to be paid, they needed to somehow be subsidized so the nonprofits could compete with the paid for-profit internships. They also wanted to immerse students and make sure they did not do just clerical work. However, there was a problem when good students left, as it was akin to losing an employee. They needed to know that there would be continuity from semester to semester, but even then there was a significant learning curve getting the new student up to speed. Some of this could be alleviated with loose contracts and memorandums of understanding between the university and the nonprofit.

> We get dependent upon internships...the intern leaves, and who picks up the pieces? That type of a scenario is very real, and I think what any organization has to do is to go into an internship program with a long range vision and a workable memorandum of understanding with the nonprofit organization and the agency or university...not a three semester deal and they're out - I mean it would be almost continuous, and there would be a joint responsibility of fundraising to help maintain the salary issue. In other words, their development people over there would also be committed to trying to jointly raise funds to fund that position.

Political courses. One person voted for a public policy course as one of their top choices, although specifics were not given other than that it should be broad. There was also a desire for advocacy classes, taught by actual politicians or lobbyists:

> I graduated with a really good background in how government worked - like textbook how government worked...there is no class out there that trains you in how politics really works...you need to understand how polls work, what they means, how to utilize them, what to do with the results, how to create a groundswell for an issue, how to pick your issue.

Ethics and values courses. Although this area had not been brought up during the time spent on necessary skills, it was mentioned as a hypothetical class during coursework feedback. It could deal with how to interact with unscrupulous people, and how to ensure that ethics were practiced in the face of pressure for worthwhile organizations to succeed. Examples included whether or not to report declining membership numbers when applying for grants and if organization should exaggerate claims when working with the media. One method of creating awareness on this issue was to have students take mock ethical surveys, where they were placed in difficult situations and asked to think through their decisions. One person voted for this as one of their top considerations.

Other courses and considerations. Other skills that were raised but generated little discussion in regards to specific coursework, included membership management, volunteer management, computer skills, events planning, and legal issues. In some cases it was simply mentioned that such a course was need to address a certain skill, but no one voted for any courses related to these areas as one of their top picks. When this was mentioned at the end of the rankings to see if they were unimportant or if they had just been overlooked, all participants agreed that they were still vital skills to the success of NRB nonprofits. One person said that volunteer and membership management would definitely be one of their top choices, but that they had just forgotten about them with so many to choose from. In fact, they suggested that volunteer management should be one if not several courses. One person selected environmental education as a top pick, but no specifics were given and it failed to generate additional discussion.

One skill that the researcher expected to be raised in the focus groups was marketing. It was not mentioned, however, as a discreet skill or discreet course in either group. When this was pointed out in the first session they all agreed that it was an important skill and that it was highly related to member recruitment, public relations, etc. Even when the second group was baited and told that marketing had been highly rated in the first group, they still did not feel it that it had intentionally been overlooked. They instead felt that it was already represented as a thread that ran through fundraising, strategic planning, and many of the other courses. What relevance this has as to the importance of marketing as a discreet skill or course is unclear. It is possible that this is good news, in that nonprofit organizations no longer see marketing as a necessary evil that is to be kept distant from their organization. Regardless, it is interesting that it was not used as a discreet category.

3) Additional Questioning Results

Sector Specificity. The results from both focus groups indicated that participants felt strongly that nonprofits faced challenges different from those of the for-profit and public sectors. Where they existed, most felt that areas of similarity occurred more frequently with governmental jobs than with private industry. Some saw many NRB nonprofit leaders as having come from the public sector, but still supported the need for a specific nonprofit program at the university level.

> It's got to be designed around the nonprofit organization. It's business management for nonprofit organizations, that covers everything we've talked about, from communications, finance, budgets, volunteers, fundraising...it has to be keyed to the nonprofit world.

Membership management was one important area where the sectors were seen to significantly differ. There was a sense that environmental nonprofits were more in a partnership with their members than were customers or the public at large in other sectors. These members therefore placed more demands on the nonprofits, demands that the nonprofits had difficulty responding to because of monetary and political constraints. This was seen as an important area of concern in light of the financial importance of the members and their actions as volunteers.

Board relations were thought to be different for nonprofits as well. The organizations' grass roots bases meant that their volunteer boards were more "hands on" and domineering than CEO driven for-profit companies. At the same time, these grassroots board members were often lacking in the type of professional skills possessed by corporate board members. Trying to bring them up to speed and modifying board structures once they were in place was extremely difficult.

Many of the NRB nonprofit participants felt that their small size required them to "wear more hats" than someone in the corporate world or a governmental agency. This went beyond just multiple duties within an area, but meant having to be able to do almost everything in the organization. Much of this had to do with the extremely small budgets for staff these groups had, where differences in fundraising were critical to how many employees could be hired. The role of passion and values was seen as a related differentiation as well.

> [MBA Programs] aren't geared for a nonprofit. I mean, we don't have very many staff, you've got to run everything by yourself. First off, you come into the environmental group with a passion for what it is you are doing, and now you have to...be the public relations person, the manager, communicator with the board. You've got to wear all those hats at the same time.

Another participant agreed in part:

> And it's not really size dependent, either. If you come from [a large organization], you're not going to see your CEO touch a box or unload a truck...the head of our board [came from a large corporation]. He's trying to run our company just like he ran his financial services. He's finding out that he's hitting a loggerhead because the people he's got to talk to - when you talk to a rancher [for example]...He has the passion, but he approaches it business like, and that is not working at times with some of the other people because they are dealing strictly from their heart. So, a really strict business education is great, and it will help, but I don't think it serves you all the time. I think there needs to be that specialization, where you incorporate, you integrate that heart, and that feeling, and the understanding of what makes nonprofits work, while still understanding how to make a business work. Because if you forget you are a business, no matter how big your heart is, you are going belly up.

Discussions were held in both groups as to how much they wanted to mirror the business world. Some felt that they were not running their organizations in a fiscally responsible manner. This was seen as unsustainable and detrimental to the cause in the long run. At the same time, others wanted to make sure that programmatic missions stayed the main focus of the organization. Sometimes risks needed to be taken for the cause that might not be taken in the corporate setting where dollars were the main measuring stick. Some felt that taking business courses similar to what an MBA student might take would be fine, but for others there needed to be a blending of the two sides to ensure that the passion employees brought to work was not extinguished by business practices. One person wanted to be exposed to best practices so that they could choose what they wanted to learn from the business world and discard the rest. Daily operations, human resources, and how to manage people were seen as examples where there was more of a potential for overlap. Even here, however, it was pointed out that nonprofit employees were underpaid and overworked compared to their for-profit counterparts. Money was not available to just give them raises, so other, more creative ways were

needed to reward them and keeping them motivated. This could include flextime, more autonomy, the lack of a time card (being treated like a professional/adult), and greater vacation days.

It was mentioned that even where universities taught courses that nonprofit students could benefit from, many of them would not know what those skills were at the time, or they might not be aware that those courses were offered because they were hidden in other programs. There were no nonprofit templates for them to follow. Even if there was, they might also have enrollment problems (i.e., courses only open to MBA students). Having tracks created that helped them in choosing which classes to explore was important, as was interdepartmental cooperation that would allow nonprofit students to access them.

University appropriateness. Whether or not the university was an appropriate place for nonprofit employees to acquire needed skills was discussed. There was general agreement that it was, although it did not preclude the use of other opportunities (e.g., conferences, internal initiatives, etc.). Typical comments included:

> I think you're right on with this. There are a lot of universities looking at these nonprofit programs because the predictions are that in twenty years one out of six Americans will be working for a nonprofit, so they are all seeing an opportunity there...I think you have to teach [management skills], and I'll tell you, if I was ever in the position of starting a new organization and hiring the first staff person, I would definitely not want a wildlife biologist, or some such natural resources professional, or a forester. No, I would want somebody who has some skills in management...managing projects...fiscal responsibility...human resource skills.
>
> We can't teach the passion, and those are the people we want to attract. But then once we get them they don't have skills. The schools can teach them, but it has to be nonprofit oriented.
>
> I know there is some really good training out there, but we're not doing it early enough...and the movement could really be enhanced by having this happen at the collegiate level.

> There are certain things that you're not just going to learn until you are on the job, but you can be taught a whole host of a lot more things while you are still in school.

Some people were unsure of how some skills could be taught in the university setting, such as coping skills and stress management. How to meld the "head and heart" of business and passion was also seen as a potential challenge. But in both cases there was general agreement that these were needed courses:

> One of the things I want somebody to teach me is how do I deal with my job and all of the other things that are going on in my life, and how do I make them mesh without one thing totally affecting the other...honestly, it would not be a bad thing to talk about to people who are thinking about coming into this field.

There was also agreement that most environmental nonprofits did not have the budget to send their people to get additional training once they were on the job. This fell on the employees' shoulders for the most part, and the more skills a student could get *before* going into the nonprofit sector the better.

Some environmental nonprofits have been creating free "leadership institutes" of their own, such as one created by the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund. These are usually a few days to a week in length, and are created expressly for training selected members of other environmental organizations. While extremely beneficial, participants felt that they simply could not teach all that was needed in such short timeframes. They also required extensive travel and entire days off of work. They did serve in making employees realize just how much more they needed to know.

In general, there was high interest in the possibility of Michigan State creating such a program in both sessions. When the session ended for the second group, many stayed to ask "what would be happening next with the development of the program" and

to express an interest in internships and adjunct teaching. No one in either group voiced any negative comments about the creation of such a formal program at the university level. Participants who had been relatively quiet were probed to see if their silence indicated a lack of interest. This was not the case, but more a matter of "Everything just is hitting home, real hard."

Degrees offered. Whether or not such a program, offered at the masters level, should be a traditional academic degree (requiring a plan A thesis/plan B paper) or a professional degree similar to a "nonprofit MBA or MPA" was also discussed. The overwhelming response from both groups was that a professional degree should be offered along with the other options, and that the professional degree was preferred.

> I have done both, and maybe it's just me, but I didn't like research...this to me sounds more like a plan B program or a terminal program. A person, if they're going into research - they might go on to get a Ph.D. or something - I don't think would be the kind of person who would be in this program.

Participants in the second group, who were more in a position to do hiring, felt that they would rather have employees who had taken more coursework and spent more time doing internships than those who had spent time doing academic research. All other things being equal, they also did not want an employee who might be distracted by going on to pursue a Ph.D. Real world experience was so important to one participant that even bachelors students who had done internships were preferred over those that had additional schooling:

> Nonprofits are much more likely to take somebody who they know has some skills with a nonprofit...if I had a bachelors student with two years of interning experience during their undergrad, and a masters, and no real word experience, I'm taking the B.S...pretty much everyday of the week and twice on Sunday.

Another said:

> It's just not very practical often times, in order to get your research done, and get it done in a timely fashion, especially for people that are already working in a professional field. Then you have to piggy back on some professor's work nine times out of ten...you just do it and you're not really invested in it. And you already know how to do research [from other classes]...I'd get so much more out of getting an advanced degree if I didn't have to worry about if all of my classes were supporting my thesis...I already know [the subject area of these classes I'm forced to take].

This translated into a strong preference towards practical projects over academic research, especially when some drew strong distinctions between practical research (needed for everyday purposes) and the type of academic research that was needed for Plan A or Plan B papers. This disdain was mentioned as a reason for the large amount of "all [coursework] but [no] dissertation" students who had left academia. One person considered switching majors to a public policy program that did not require a thesis because they viewed published research as irrelevant and a waste of time.

One person thought that there needed to be a change in what constituted academic research, and wanted to know why simply reflecting on what one had learned could not be considered adequate research for an academic thesis. Another agreed that it should be an option, but that a regular thesis could still be "OK" if it was on an applied subject and not too theoretical. The same person later stated that "the MBA model is a good one", and it appeared that flexibility was their chief concern.

Participants who had only pursued bachelors degrees indicated that they would have also wanted access to these classes as an undergraduate, raising the point that such a program might be offered at a variety of levels.

4) Study Analysis and Summary

Analysis of the data thus revealed a large amount of information on the skillsets, coursework, and experiential learning opportunities that members of the NRB nonprofit organizations perceived to be of high importance for the success of their sector. Communications skills, business skills, fundraising skills, coping skills, and board related skills received the most discussion, although volunteer management skills and political/policy skills received considerable attention. The need for practical, real world experience received through internship opportunities was also stressed.

Taken together, this represented a strong focus on both the internal management of NRB nonprofits (e.g., business skills, board relations, and volunteer management) and the external management of their environment (e.g., communication skills, fundraising skills, political skills). There was also an emphasis on developing the individual as an effective organizational manager through leadership skills, coping skills, and experiential learning.

The differences of the NRB nonprofit sector, particularly compared to government and business, was emphasized not just through the technical differences in terms of a legal framework but also through the importance of values, passions, and ethics. It was perceived that just employing general business courses would not be enough to meet the unique needs of the sector. The small size of the local NRB nonprofits was also frequently mentioned as a reason for effective NRB nonprofit leaders to possess a broad set of skills and knowledge. In many cases these managers were forced to be a jack of all trades, as were many of their employees.

Very little attention was given to skills that had to do with the programmatic missions of NRB nonprofit organizations. In fact, skills in NRB science were seen as almost inconsequential. This could be due to a variety of reasons, most notably that the individuals were focusing on areas that they saw sector deficiencies in and not in areas where they felt the NRB nonprofit organizations were strongly prepared (e.g., ecology, biology, etc.). This could be due to sufficient baccalaureate education or extensive NRB nonprofit experience.

It could also be that recruitment letters were overly specific in giving direction to the conversations. That is, that the "purpose of the focus groups were to explore issues relating to NRB nonprofit programs" as opposed to just exploring requisite NRB skillsets. Many of the participants had been aware of the proliferation in nonprofit *management* programs across the country, and this could have also caused them to focus more on organizational skills as opposed to programmatic ones. Without further data one can not preclude that NRB nonprofits take their programmatic training for granted however. It should also be noted that policy skills and environmental education were mentioned, which obviously have a strong relationship to the missions of many NRB nonprofit organizations.

Coursework feedback closely mirrored skill set discussions. Informal voting on the most important courses pointed primarily to nonprofit management (broadly defined to include leadership), general business skills, fundraising, project management, communications, strategic planning, environmental policy and education, and internships, although many more were mentioned. A number of additional themes surfaced that have potential relevance to NRB nonprofit curricula as well. These included:

- Skill threads / holistic approach
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Role playing
- Program flexibility
- Pragmatic focus

Skill threads, identified in the first group as areas that *all* employees in an organization needed to proficient in, included marketing, public relations, fundraising, and advocacy. Aspects of them needed to be found in a variety of classes and not just taught as isolated courses. This was very similar to the comments in the second group that nonprofit management was a holistic synthesis of a wide variety of skills that could not just focus on any one area. The popular idea of a project management course, where students have to be able to handle all facets of a project from A to Z on their own, seem to point to this as well. This may also mean that a capstone course of sorts is needed to show that the relationship among discreet skills has indeed been learned. A typical comment:

> Piggybacking off of what [another participant] said in terms of communications, how every single person in the office should be able to eloquently feel confident enough to relay what your purpose is, what your function is...the same thing applies to fundraising. Every single person should have some understanding of grantwriting, reporting on those, what it takes to fundraise outside of those grants as well...how to do capital campaigns...how to go to an individual that just seems like they might have the capacity to donate, be it $50 or $50...and to be able to cultivate them.

Teamwork was another constant in many of the discussions. Working in collaborative teams and groups seemed to be essential, and many recent students found that the skills they had learned in doing group papers and projects was extremely helpful, even if it seemed like a "pain in the butt" at the time. Being able to work with others, and deciding how people with eclectic skills and values can then best work together was very

important. This put an emphasis on results and the mission of the organization over individual employee needs.

Role-playing was brought up as an important course tool, especially when multiple stakeholders were involved:

> A class that would be phenomenal, would be where...you're the developer, you're the engineer, you're the environmentalist, and you're the politician, and you're all in a workgroup, take on this role play and come to a solution. The problem is we [students] are all role playing from a relatively similar background, and a similar set of values. It would be much more realistic of what happens in the real world...if you role played with people who have had different indoctrinations.

Students from different majors or actual developers, politicians, etc. could be brought in to interact with the students. Role-playing was mentioned as a teaching tool in understanding board relations as well.

Flexibility in coursework was generally preferred, although some felt exposure to certain learning opportunities should be mandatory (internships, business skills). Some felt there should be flexibility based on differing missions and sizes of organizations, and that the program should be able to transcend different disciplines and departments. It was also mentioned that some people would already be proficient in some skills or be at different stages in their careers, and that they should be able to pick and choose what courses they needed to take from a program. In addition, some of these people would have skills that other students could learn from:

> In the masters program, you have people who are already involved in the nonprofit sector, so how do you provide an environment where you can learn from people that are out in the field...we miss that opportunity with our teacher centered approaches in the classroom.

This pragmatic focus went beyond just wanting teachers that had real world experience. The focus on internships, practical skills, real world projects, and relevant courses was a constant throughout most of the discussions.

The results of both groups' opinions regarding degree structure were consistent with these findings as well. Students wanted flexibility in how the program's "capstone" should be designed. Practical alternatives were explored and an overwhelming preference for non-academic research emerged. Feedback on bachelors programs was mixed, a masters program was endorsed, and the relevance of Ph.D. programs were questioned:

> I really don't see the practicality of getting a Ph.D. and working in a nonprofit. I really don't. I think even if you are going to become an executive director or the board of directors at any nonprofit, research is not as important as the hands on experience.

The need for certificate and/or internet courses was not specifically probed for and did not emerge in any conversations.

In summary, the findings of the two focus groups were in basic agreement with the literature review findings. They saw unique differences in their organizations which made wholesale business or government classes impractical. They also identified a strong need for "external environment" skillsets, an area that was sometimes lacking in other programs. This seems appropriate based on the historical strategies of NRB nonprofits and the advocacy role many of them play. There was in general a high degree of enthusiasm for a NRB nonprofit management education program, both housed in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and at the graduate level. No participants indicated that they would rather enroll in a MBA or MPA based nonprofit program, although this was not a primary study question.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the results of the literature review and focus groups, this chapter focuses on two issues. The first is whether or not the current study supports the creation of a NRB nonprofit management education program housed in the Department of Resource Development at Michigan State University. The second is the formulation of a curriculum model for such a program.

1) Rationale for Proceeding with a NRB Nonprofit Initiative

Whether or not the nonprofit sector warrants specific educational consideration at the university level is a question that has been largely resolved in the literature. It is also evident that the educational needs of advocacy based nonprofit organizations, such as those of NRB nonprofits, have been largely ignored. These findings are also supported by the evidence from this study.

The question then becomes one of deciding the appropriate focus of a program and the best location to house such an initiative within the university. As Cohen notes:

> There is no agreement about whether nonprofit management can be defined as a generic field of professional study, like public management or business management, or whether its uniqueness can be captured by a cluster of courses that cover the most significant nonprofit management subjects, which are then incorporated under existing graduate programs (1989: 42).

Are the new "stand alone" centers that teach "generic" nonprofit management the answer? The success of many of these programs dedicated exclusively to nonprofit management (e.g., the University of San Francisco, Case Western Reserve) has been impressive (Young, 1999).

Not everyone shares this view, however. "Generic" nonprofit management education has been criticized for creating cookie cutter programs that fail to address the values of the sector and the programmatic coursework that is (at the very least) of equal importance to the managerial success of nonprofit organizations. Arguments have been made in the literature with titles as ominous as "Nonprofit Management Education: A Field Whose Time Has Passed?" (Salamon,1998) that the real focus of these programs should be on philanthropic values and the creation of professional citizens. A case is then made for government and nonprofit students to be trained side by side in the same schools. In "The End of Nonprofit Management Education", Milofsky (1996) references Yale University's Peter Dobkin Hall, who also asserts that nonprofit programs should be housed in other departments. He contends that true philanthropic research can not be conducted in explicit nonprofit schools who derive their funding (and owe their existence) to nonprofit organizations and their self serving agendas. This would seem to run counter to much of the previously cited literature that advocates that nonprofit management programs *be explicitly designed* to meet the needs of the nonprofit community. However, it does point to the fact that the central question of what Mirabella and Wish (2000) have coined as "The Best Place Debate" has not been resolved despite the success of the larger stand alone nonprofit centers.

This issue becomes even more contentious in the case of subsector nonprofit management education. Those in favor of stand-alone centers have made the argument that training for "generic careers" in the nonprofit sector is advantageous (see Chapter Two). However, assertions that this is beneficial in light of the short career ladders of many nonprofit organizations are unpersuasive. Many students are already at work in a

field whose mission they love when they decide to come back to school. That is why many are employed in nonprofit organizations in the first place. This is shown in the profiling of typical NRB nonprofit executives (Snow1992:42):

> The CEO sees his [or her] work in conservation as a lifelong career...He traces his interest in the environment back to the early years of his life....a deep ethic [was instilled] about the principles of conservation, ecology, and environmental protection. It is this ethic – not careerism or the quest for power...that leads him into his work and continues to refresh him...he has worked professionally in a government agency, and perhaps in a for-profit business as well. But work in the [nonprofit] setting is what appeals to him most.

Some switching no doubt does occur, particularly among other NRB organizations, but NRB employment would appear to be kindred to a life's work and not just another job. And while some students may have a predilection for "societal good" and want to see what opportunities a "generic" nonprofit graduate education might afford them, it also seems likely that the vast majority of them would have made most career decisions prior to applying to a masters program. "I didn't want to go back to school – and pay money – unless I knew there was something very specific that I was trained to do", said a student quoted in U.S. News and World Report's story on cutting edge masters programs (Hartigan, 2002).

Being pigeonholed to a specific field thus appears to be a weak argument for generic management education in the case of NRB nonprofit leaders. But if they are not the answer, would those housed in MPA, MBA, or MSW programs be any better? They may be less generic, but are instead tinged in a manner equally unsuitable for NRB nonprofit students (see Chapter Two). Should NRB nonprofit students get an education in an MBA based program that fails to emphasize the organizations' external environment? Should they be based in an MPA program that prepares them to work in a

large, bureaucratic agency and not a small, entrepreneurial organization? Should the majority of their advocacy skills be oriented towards health and human services rather than natural resources, as would be the case with an MSW degree?

The answer is clearly no. Those that want to go into administrative roles in health and human services organizations undoubtedly have a strong predilection for MSW degrees, just as those who have an interest in the arts go to programs of art administration and those with an interest in leading churches go to seminary schools. A potential NRB nonprofit student should not be any different in their desire for a subsector focused education. The best location for a program in all of these cases lies in the consideration of three key issues. These can be posed as a series of questions that look to address "in which department are"...

1) the *organizational requirements* of nonprofits best met (i.e., courses in management, fundraising, etc.), oriented to the needs of a specific subsector?

2) the *philosophical basis and values* that underlie nonprofit employees practiced and most evident?

3) the *specific professional knowledge* required for the execution of successful missions and programs housed?

Any department that is able to fulfill all three needs would be considered ideal, particularly in the case of smaller nonprofits who can not afford to hire separate organizational and programmatic managers.

If any one of these considerations is not addressed, the initiative is likely to be sub-optimal. These could alternatively produce discipline based managerial experts who can manage a balance sheet but not their programs, ideological zealots who have the passion but not the skills to succeed, or detached professionals who are quite capable but do not have the necessary orientation towards public service. A successful NRB

program must be able to produce leaders who are adequately trained and inculcated in all three.

This is obviously no small order, but a compelling case can be made that the Department of Resource Development, Michigan State University, is up to the challenge. Housed in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, current students already have access to a broad base of natural resource coursework including forestry, fisheries and wildlife, and natural resource policy, just to name a few. The department has also built strong partnerships outside the College, and many of its faculty have the strong interdisciplinary perspectives that many nonprofit students found attractive (Mirabella and Wish, 2000). With a strong orientation towards being scholar-practitioners, they are well connected within the community. The Department also explicitly calls for the incorporation of values "up front" in their decision making criteria (Bawden, 2002). The main ingredient that is missing is an availability of specific nonprofit oriented coursework. The department has traditionally been a University leader in this area, although only two nonprofit courses (RD 874 and RD891) have been offered in 2001 due to budgetary constraints. In fact, many older courses related to leadership have been previously offered and are still on the books. The Gordon Guyer Chair could be used to provide the resources to reinvigorate these classes. As such, two of the requisite ingredients (programmatic coursework and values) are well established, and a third (nonprofit oriented courses) is already there but needs to be expanded. The Department of Resource Development would therefore appear to be well positioned to further pursue the creation of such a program.

Creating such a program within the Department of Resource Development would also be easier than trying to create a stand-alone center from the ground up. Particularly at their early stages, stand-alone nonprofit centers have been the hardest to create (Young, 1999, 1998). Many nonprofit programs have instead been started by using a "foot in the door" strategy, as shown by the results of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation's "Building Bridges" initiative (see Chapter Two). By doing so, such programs are able to first address a clear-cut need on a smaller scale, and then determine if larger initiatives are either needed or wanted. Particularly when they are housed in existing departments, the initial fixed costs of startup are not as prohibitively substantial compared to entirely new programs that might need their own buildings and new faculty. It may also be easier to get the professors of one department behind a new initiative than it would be to try to generate simultaneous interest across a variety of schools in the creation of a large interdisciplinary center.

Further discussion into other factors associated with the creation of such a program can not be adequately addressed here. University politics is an important issue (Young, 1998), but falls outside the scope of this paper. Whether or not the Gordon Guyer Chair receives full funding is unknown, as is the extent of student demand for such a NRB nonprofit program. Hartigan's (2002) article in U.S. News and World Report does shine some light in regards to this last question, however. It advocates that newer "smart degrees" programs that combine scholarly theory with career oriented practice are the latest trend in higher education. Such programs have been advanced in other areas at Michigan State, such as new initiatives in professional-science masters programs that look to train scientists to work in industry (Hartigan, 2002). If a NRB program needed to

be expanded to increase demand, the Department of Resource Development is well positioned with grounding in other advocacy based nonprofit subsectors (e.g., food security, international aid, urban studies).

Compelling cases in both the short and long run can thus be made for the creation of a NRB nonprofit education program in the Department of Resource Development at Michigan State University. Initial explorations into the appropriate form and content of such a program should now be started.

2) Curricular and Program Considerations

The results of the literature search and focus group research were both utilized in the creation of the NRB nonprofit management program proposed below.

Key literature findings

The literature review of nonprofit management initiatives clearly points to the need to include input from the local nonprofits themselves in the creation of such a program. A number of additional considerations emerged from the nonprofit literature that would need to be addressed in developing such a program. These are:

- the differing organizational needs based on the sizes of nonprofits
- the uncentralized, multisite nature of many nonprofits
- the incorporation of values into a nonprofit program
- the dearth of externally focused and volunteer oriented courses
- the emphasis on a masters level education

Most NRB nonprofit organizations are small in size when compared to those of large universities, public health and human service organizations, etc. Even the larger, national NRB nonprofits tend to be decentralized and geographically spread. They will thus have far different managerial needs than those of many larger, centralized businesses. Indeed,

Hjelmar (1996) sees organizational form as a key characteristic in determining the types of actions that many NRB nonprofits can take. Form and mission must be in congruence for maximal effect, and may need to be changed in tandem. Managerial competencies will need to extend beyond discipline based proficiencies to include the philanthropic values inherent to the nonprofit sector and their individual missions. Additional coursework to address these and other needs must also include more externally focused classes (e.g., advocacy, organization, lobbying, etc.) as well as those related to volunteer recruitment and management.

There was a wide degree of variety both in terms of where nonprofit oriented programs were housed within the university and the degrees that they offered. Bachelors and Ph.D. level opportunities were by no means ignored, but masters level programs tend to predominate (Young, 1999). The majority of these were roughly two years (some longer) in duration, and many initiatives also offered concomitant certificate programs.

The literature exploring the Michigan NRB nonprofit sector also pointed to several factors that need to be considered. These include:

- the need for proficiency in government and industry sector interrelationships
- the importance of internal and external collaboration in the nonprofit sector
- the diversity of the NRB nonprofit sector
- the importance of fundraising
- a primary use of political, advocacy, land acquisition, and public education organizational missions
- an increasing emphasis on cross-border (e.g., state, federal, international) environmental factors
- the small size of many Michigan based NRB nonprofits
- the need to balance professionalism and passion

The importance of collaboration was perhaps the most important finding that came out of

the NRB nonprofit literature review. Collaboration included being able to successfully work with the government and industry as well as with each other and non-NRB nonprofits. Although there is great ideological diversity within the NRB nonprofit sector, few if any organizations can successfully advance major issues on their own. Being able to partner with other nonprofits, particularly those dealing with health, minority, and faith-based organizations, is also critical.

Fundraising is also important due to relatively low levels of governmental, foundation, and household giving. The need to grow the sector's ranks of dues paying members is therefore critical to the success of the movement and their ability to succeed in their political, advocacy, and public education efforts. It is also an important consideration for organizations typical of the small size of Michigan's NRB nonprofit sector, which can easily become dependent on just one source of revenue for the operation of their organization. This small size also dictates than an emphasis must be placed on the cultivation of managerial successors who have a deep understanding of the organization and how it is run. They and other leaders must often be jacks of all trades who have a broad skill base in a number of professions and disciplines (Snow, 1992). They must be wary that in the process they don't lose the passion and value's centered approach that is the hallmark of nonprofit organizations.

Focus groups: core competencies

The focus groups provided a wealth of information pertinent to the creation of a NRB curriculum. Skill sets viewed as important to mid-Michigan's NRB nonprofits were:

- Communication skills, broadly defined
- Business skills, broadly defined
- Fundraising skills, broadly defined
- Coping skills, broadly defined
- Real life experiences
- Board recruitment and relationships
- Membership/volunteer management
- Political and policy skills

Clearly, a wide variety of skills need to be considered for inclusion into coursework. Participant feedback also emphasized that small size necessitates that leaders and employees possess a broad array of skillsets in order to succeed. In addition to skills, the groups identified characteristics that should either be directly or indirectly addressed in individual classes or the program as a whole. These included:

- Holistic approaches due to small size (jack of all trades)
- The employment of teamwork and role playing in coursework
- The inclusion of values and ethics in coursework
- Flexibility in required coursework and "capstone" requirements
- Pragmatic focus (adjunct faculty, real world projects)

The pragmatic focus also extended into the structure of the degree program. The need for academic research was downplayed, and a masters level program was preferred over bachelors or doctoral degrees.

One of the other identified needs was to have an overview course in the beginning of the program so that students would more fully realize what work was like in the NRB nonprofit sector, so that they knew "what they would be getting themselves into". There is merit here, especially in giving students an overview foundation for them to build upon as they progress through the program. This would begin with a big picture approach and then proceed by allowing them to focus on more specialized areas of study. Keeping the number of classes limited in a two-year degree program will be at a premium, however, and having one class designed as nothing but a "program survey" would be potentially

wasteful. Instead, the program will be designed in such a manner where the first semester's classes accomplish this overview objective in the process of teaching other skills. The overview material would define who nonprofits are (i.e., sector diversity), their values, and how they are organizationally structured. Intensive program screening would be used to make sure that students understand the rigors of the sector prior to being admitted to the program.

Some identified needs conflicted with each other to a certain extent. There was a desire for flexibility in coursework. At the same time, feedback also indicated that the small size of organizations called for a jack of all trades approach and a need for all employees to have solid marketing, communications, and fundraising skills. Should such courses then be required? They also stressed the importance of building relationships and work together as teams. Although the use of cohort groups in admission practices was not discussed in the focus groups, this would seem to be one way to achieve this goal. At the same time, it would also cut down on the flexibility they had deemed as important. Many also called for mandatory internships or outreach, which also runs contrary to program flexibility.

These conflicts can be addressed in several ways. Cohort groups can be used for all required courses, but not for electives. The number of required courses can also be adjusted based on whether or not enrollees are new students or mid-career professionals. Further flexibility considerations, in regards to internships and outreach, can be addressed by providing a diverse mix of community partners and allowing mid-career professionals to use their own nonprofit for experiential learning opportunities. In some cases tradeoffs will still have to be made between flexibility and universal needs.

One last consideration from the focus groups has to do with the relative lack of programmatic skills (e.g., scientific knowledge, mission specific technical knowledge) mentioned by the participants as important. The focus groups also felt that biologists did not make good NRB nonprofit managers, downplaying the importance of this knowledge for leadership positions. Many hypotheses (see Chapter Four) were advanced as to why this may have occurred. The results of Snow's (1992) work were mixed in this regard. Newly hired professional staff was graded highly in technical skills 89% of the time, while they were more often graded poorly in environmental policy (27%), knowledge of conservation history (24%), and scientific knowledge (23%).

This is an important issue, as a major concern of nonprofit programs is that they graduate students who are effective programmatic leaders as well as just proficient organizational managers (see above). Hjelmar (1996:6) added,

> The role of science is of particular importance for the authority claimed by environmental organizations. Unlike many other social movements, the environmental movement claims a scientific basis and that gives the movement a decisive advantage over other types of movements. Science is a strong partner in political struggles.

How well the general public continues to believe in the credibility of environmental scientists will be important, as many feel that NRB nonprofits sometimes twist their findings (Kempton, Boster, Hartley, 1995). There is also a growing perception that activist scientists are providing "junk ammunition" for NRB nonprofits to use in an irrational or deceitful manner. Langton (1984:9-10) also saw science, and how NRB nonprofits *communicated* scientific findings to the general public, as an important yet difficult issue:

> It has been and will continue to be a principal mission of the environmental movement to assess the impact of science and technology...[yet] it is unrealistic to expect any environmental group to be able to develop competency in more than a few areas of environmental concern...[also], the environmental movement must be as concerned with advocating realistic and positive solutions to environmental problems as in warning about environmental hazards. This means that environmentalists will have to gear educational efforts toward constructive discovery and advocacy as well as towards dedicated opposition. Without the former, the credibility of the latter will be minimized.

Langton (1984) offered several suggestions to achieve this balance, primarily by increasing the collective knowledge base of the NRB movement and creating a "division of labor" amongst the groups. Other collaborative efforts will be needed with university professors, scientists, and economists as well.

The Natural Resource Nonprofit Management Program (NRNMP) at MSU should address these scientific and technical issues, as one of the main strengths of housing a NRB nonprofit management program *in* a NRB college is that it can concomitantly offer both organizational and programmatic skill sets. It can do this primarily by making sure that elective classes are available to address these needs. These are currently largely available within the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, although attempts should be made to make sure that more nonprofit relevant courses are offered. The content of these courses could be addressed tangentially in nonprofit courses, but discreet classes in these areas will undoubtedly also be warranted. The content of such classes will not be addressed here, but examples for illustrative purposes might include environmental science overviews, detailed policy and economics, the history of the NRB nonprofit movement, communicating science to the public, real estate acquisition and land trusts, international development, and ecotourism. Students could then take

electives based on the individual needs of the types of NRB nonprofits they wanted to work for.

3) Curricular and Program Recommendations

Some assumptions will have to be made in the creation of this prototype curriculum. How much money is available, how much staff can be used from other departments, and how many students would enroll at a time are all important questions that affect the breadth and quality of such an effort. These can not be adequately addressed here, so an attempt will be made to create a program that is of "high quality", yet is also "realistic". What constitutes such qualities is of course open to discussion, but the researcher's interpretation of these forms the basis of the curriculum provided here. Changes based on actual conditions would have to be made, providing of course that the University does indeed go ahead with such a program. This curriculum is by no means definitive, and serves only to illustrate what such a program could look like based solely on the assumptions and results of this study.

The Natural Resource Nonprofit Management Program would be housed within the Department of Resource Development (RD), and offered as a separate "major specialization" that would be recorded on students' transcripts. It would have a curriculum unique from the rest of the department's coursework, although electives could be chosen from a wide array of campus courses. Enrollees would be exempt from other required courses within RD proper. In most cases, students from outside the NRNMP would be allowed to take NRNMP courses (exceptions would be the capstone courses and outreach). For simplicity's sake, classes are categorized here as "NP 801", etc., for course catalog purposes.

The program would be at the masters level and would require 36 hours of credit for graduation with a Masters of Science in Resource Development. Students would only be accepted for enrollment starting in the fall and would be admitted as a cohort group that would take the *majority* of their classes together. It would be designed to accommodate three types of students based on their career stage in the workplace:

- Bachelors graduates seeking an immediate masters level education
- Bachelors graduates who have been working in the nonprofit sector and wish to return to school (i.e., nonprofit mid-career students)
- Bachelors graduates who have been working in other sectors and wish to return to school (i.e., other mid-career students)

Course sequence

Course sequence and course descriptions are outlined below. Students without substantial prior nonprofit work experience would be required to follow the course format exactly. For those with major nonprofit experience (or those from the private or public sector who are deemed to be particularly qualified in an area), NP 810-821 could be waived in lieu of additional electives on a case by case basis. NP 801-804 and outreach would be required courses in all cases.

Fall Semester One
NP 801
NP 810
NP 820

Spring Semester One
NP 802
NP 811
NP 821

Fall Semester Two
NP 803
Elective
Outreach

Spring Semester Two
NP 804
Elective
Outreach

NP 801 *Collaboration 1: The Nonprofit Sector & Public Advocacy*
NP 802 *Collaboration 2: Governmental & Private Sector Interaction*
NP 803 *Leadership 1: Personal Effectiveness, Growth, & Vision*
NP 804 *Leadership 2: Strategic Planning & Project Management (capstone)*

NP 810 *Management: Human Resources, Governance, & Organizational Change*
NP 811 *Management: General Business Skills & Tax Law*

NP 820 *Marketing Orientation 1: Grants & Fundraising*
NP 821 *Marketing Orientation 2: Promotion & Public Relations*
NP 822 *Local Nonprofit Outreach*

Course Descriptions

NP 801 *Collaboration 1: The Nonprofit Sector & Public Advocacy*

This course would include a brief overview of the nonprofit sector and its history, with a particular (although not exclusive) focus on NRB nonprofits. What does the sector stand for, what are its values, and what does it want to accomplish? It would also stress the collaborative nature of the NRB nonprofit sector with the general public and other nonprofits. It would look to find areas of common ground with these varying groups, identify their differences, and explore the reasons behind these differences (ways of knowing) both within and out of the NRB nonprofit sector. Risk assessment and risk management would be explored in this context, as would coalition building within the nonprofit sector. Advocacy would be introduced as a concept. The aim of the course would be for individuals to understand why they view the world the way they do, why others view the world the way they do, the need for mutual understanding, and the effectiveness of coalitions both within and outside of the NRB nonprofit community. It would serve as a way for students to get to know each other, to learn to both tolerate and appreciate differences, and to network together to function as a team. Role-playing and real world guests would be employed.

NP 802 *Collaboration 2: Governmental & Private Sector Interaction*

This course would look to expand and solidify the tenets of NP 801. Ways of knowing, risk assessment, and risk management would be expanded to include the views of government and industry. Negotiation and conflict resolution management would be taught here. Advocacy would be expanded to include lobbying and the basics of the political system. The roles of both collaboration and confrontation would be explored. An aim of the course would be to open the eyes of students to the plethora of allies and opportunities available to them outside of their own worldview, and to learn methods to help in creating those relationships. Students would also prepare for what nonprofit partner they would be working with in the next semester (see NP 822). Role-playing and real world guests would be employed.

NP 803 *Leadership 1: Personal Effectiveness, Growth, & Vision*

This course would expand on the self-awareness of the students that was begun in NP 801 and 802. At this stage they should start to think of what leadership role they would like to play in NRB organizations and the nonprofit sector. The concepts of what it takes to be an effective leader will be explored, including creating vision, communicating vision, and leadership to achieve vision. Mission statements and public speaking will be given emphasis. Factors addressing time management, multi-task management, ethics, and stress reduction through life balance will also be explored. An aim of this course is to produce the beginnings of confident, refreshed, and focused leaders who engender trust and inspiration. Real world guests would be used.

NP 804 *Leadership 2: Strategic Planning & Project Management (capstone)*

This capstone course will take leadership to the next level by offering students an opportunity to synthesize all that they have learned and to showcase how their leadership would be applied in real life. Both short and long term organizational planning would be taught in conjunction with effective project management. A major part of this course would take place in conjunction with the outreach efforts that students would be concurrently making in NP 822 (outreach). This would include class dialog on the issues both they and their partner organizations were facing during the course of their outreach. They would also be required as part of the duties of NP 804 to write a synopsis of the outreach project from NP 822 and present it to the students taking NP 802. This would allow for a student transition with the outreach projects.

NP 810 *Management: Human resources, Governance, and Organizational Change*

This class would be based on the assumption that organizational form often dictates what a nonprofit is able to do and how well it performs. The function of the board and how it is structured would be a primary emphasis, as would the role of proper board members. In addition to regular employees, volunteer and membership management would also be discussed. This comprehensive "structural picture" would then be analyzed to see if it was in congruence with the organization's mission and strategy. How the organization could change to meet changing missions would also be explored. An emphasis would be place on the needs of small organizations, entrepreneurship, and multi-site factors. How to run effective meetings would also be

taught. Computer programs relevant to membership management would be employed. Guest speakers and role-playing would also be used.

NP 811 *Management: General Business Skills & Tax Law*

This class would teach the *basics* of the accounting, finance, and statistic skills necessary to effectively run a nonprofit organization. This class could be waived for experienced students who wanted more in depth skills, and an elective taken from the school of business could be used instead. As an example, a comprehensive nonprofit accounting course is already offered at Michigan State. The tax law taught here would also be at a basic level, essentially teaching students what forms they need to file and who to turn to for more detailed advice. The importance of why it is important to be fiscally responsible would be stressed, as would employee liability for breach of fiduciary trust. Real world guest lecturers could be used.

NP 820 *Marketing Orientation 1: Grants & Fundraising*

This course would be designed to teach students the importance of a marketing orientation in their organization, which includes a mission and client focus. The writing of a successful grant often depends on how well the writer knows their organization and what it does, so how to perform a marketing analysis will be taught. Good writing skills will also be emphasized. Foundation grants will be discussed as one source of revenue, and actual grants may be written, either for a student organization within the department (see below) or real world nonprofits. Brenda Wrigley (2000) is a Michigan State faculty member with experience in the use of real clients in classes, as is current Resource Development Visiting Professor Norm Brown. Revenue streams outside of grants and

the importance of diversification (e.g., workplace giving, cause related marketing, capital campaigns, etc.) will also be explored. The computer will be used to explore foundation databases.

NP 821 *Marketing Orientation 2: Promotion & Public Relations*

This course will expand on what was taught in NP 820 and will teach students how to produce brochures, advertisements, and web pages for member recruitment and other purposes. It will also delve into public relations as a tool for the proper dissemination of scientific knowledge and organizational mission to the general public and other target markets. Media relations will be an important aspect of the class, and students will have to prepare press releases and be interviewed on camera. As in NP 821, efforts will be made to have students partner with and work on real world nonprofit projects with outside partners. Guest speakers will be employed.

NP 822 *Local Nonprofit Outreach*

Outreach would be a necessary component of the program, both due to its ability to teach from a real world perspective and to help fulfill the mission of a land grant university. At this point in the program students will have acquired the requisite skill base to be of genuine use to these nonprofits. Students will perform their outreach in teams of at least two people to further ensure a high level of quality. In the cases of mid-career students who are currently working for a nonprofit, they would have the option of using their own organization as a partner.

NRB organizations would be selected based on their willingness to partner with the university, their level of need, and their ability to enter into long term contracts of

mutual understanding on how the outreach will be conducted. Both these organizations and the University would have responsibilities for ensuring opportunities for quality interaction, professional students, and (perhaps) fundraising to support the NRNMP. In the last semester, the outreach course would be integrated into the leadership capstone course, where students would report on what was transpiring with their NRB partners. Organizations would aid in the grading of the students, and an unacceptable grade would result in non-graduation from the program. Both the capstone course and outreach would need to be retaken. A diversity of NRB programs at the local level will be used.

This outreach would only represent a 3 credit hour course per each semester taken, and would require "working" at the nonprofit for the equivalent of one full day a week. However, three factors would make this arrangement attractive to nonprofit organizations that are more used to the structure of traditional intern programs. The first would be the fact that the students are providing assistance in teams, so they would be gaining more than just one "temporary employee". Secondly, there would be an assigned faculty member whose job it was to work with the teams, providing guidance and real-time quality assurance. Lastly, the same teams would stay with an organization for the whole year (both semesters). With this much time they would not only be able to help in the crafting of solutions, but also in their implementation. These students would thus be grounded in the organization and the nonprofits would not have to worry about meeting new faces every semester. Organizations would be assigned to the students at the end of the prior year, and it would be the responsibility of the current students performing outreach to provide a "learning paper" and presentation to the next group of students who would next be working with the organization.

Other considerations

The NRNMP, as thus constructed, would address the skills and knowledge necessary for preparing students for successful employment in the nonprofit field. The importance of values and ethics would be taught in all courses, in context with the class material, rather than as an explicit "ethics" course. This assures that this important area is not treated as an afterthought and instead permeates the entire program.

In addition, many of the skills that would be taught in these courses have been previously identified as areas of deficiency in bachelors graduates from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University (Heyboer, 2000). While these findings could be interpreted as areas that the bachelors programs need to address, they could alternatively be viewed as areas that need to be addressed at the masters level. If they are not, students will have the same deficiencies when they graduate with their masters as they will with their bachelors.

Formal academic research that mandates the writing of a Plan A or Plan B paper would not be required for graduation. This does not mean that a capstone experience is not required, however, as the student's performance in NP804 and outreach would be used in the place of research. "Learning papers" from their outreach would be required, grounded more in pragmatic experience than theory.

Snow (1992) had a series of non-curriculum related suggestions for a NRB nonprofit program that should also be considered. Most have been addressed, but two warrant specific attention. First, increased communication between the university and the NRB nonprofits should continue beyond the initial stages of creating a NRB program. These could include discussions on the hosting of conferences, bringing in outside

speakers, dialogs on research needs, and a distance learning certificate program. Secondly, student organizations devoted to NRB issues should flourish on campus. This is largely already the case at Michigan State, but it could be improved by creating a student organization for the program that is set up and run as a formal nonprofit distinct from the university. Students could "learn by doing" in running this organization.

Lastly, the NRNMP could have applicability beyond the Department of Resource Development. In this sense it could be used as a pilot program (to evaluate demand, etc.), and its experience expanded to other schools. The core courses would already be established, and with adjustment could include the subsector specific needs of other small nonprofit advocacy organizations. As mentioned earlier, this could be started within the Department of Resource Development itself in such areas as urban development, food security, and international development. Caution would need to be exercised, however, so that the end result was not just another "generic" nonprofit program similar to what is already available on the market.

Future areas of study

The results of this study should be viewed as only the beginnings of a work in progress. As an example, this study identified a clear need to include feedback from NRB nonprofits and their leaders in the creation of the NRNMP, but other stakeholders should not be ignored. Additional input through focus groups, interviews, or surveys should be sought from university administrators, faculty, students, and funders. NRB nonprofit volunteers and board members should also be included, as this study used paid staff members as its primary participants.

This study was conducted under the auspice of being a management program for NRB nonprofit *leaders*. Considering the size of NRB nonprofits, many of their staff employees have also been forced to operate as "jacks of all trades". Although some non-executive director staff were used in this study, it would be interesting to explore if the NRNMP could serve as a defacto NRB *professional employee* program, and not just a management program per se.

Many factors that would affect the creation and sustainability of such a program also need to be explored. What are the political issues within the university that need to be addressed? How are staffing issues dealt with in a professional nonprofit program, particularly in research based schools that base tenure on more than just teaching? How can the importance of values and ethics be used in a manner that both drives and differentiates the program, yet does not attempt to indoctrinate into its students what their values should be? Assessment criteria for the program should also be established concomitantly with curriculum development. Does a skill-based curriculum actually translate into organizational success? Are there some requisite skills that simply can not be taught at the university level?

This thesis looked in detail at only one of the many nonprofit subsectors – the NRB nonprofits. But there are many other subsectors that do not have adequate educational opportunities at the university level, especially non-health and human services based advocacy groups. Most research has instead focused on creating "generic" programs, or has attempted to answer the "great place debate" within the narrow confines of existing MBA, MPA, or MSW programs. As such, more subsector specific research needs to be conducted.

APPENDIX

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear_____

We are conducting an investigational study at Michigan State University that is looking to see what form and content environmental nonprofit education should take at MSU.

We feel that environmental nonprofit organizations could provide us with valuable insight, and we would be interested in having you participate in a focus group with 7-9 other people to share your opinions. Your thoughts and ideas would be important in determining if a special environmental nonprofit program is needed at Michigan State, and what form it might take to be the most useful to its graduates and their employers. There will be no formal payment for participation in the study, although dinner will be provided.

The focus group would be videotaped, although results would be kept confidential and no one outside of the investigators would have access to the tapes. At no point would individual names of participants be used for publication or in any other correspondence. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you are interested in participating please contact me at (517) 353-9501 and we can check with schedule availability and you can be sent a study consent form.

Sincerely,

Greg Ostrander

Graduate Student
Department of Resource Development
Michigan State University

CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Thank you for your interest in participating in the focus group on the educational needs of environmental nonprofit organizations. Participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate for any reason. If you choose to participate in the study, please sign and date the form below where indicated. After signing the consent form you may still drop out of the study at any time for any reason. This includes any time prior to the actual focus group or even at any time during the focus group session itself.

X_____(PRINT)
X_____(SIGN)
X_____(DATE)

THIS FOCUS GROUP WILL RUN FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR. THERE WILL ONLY BE ONE SESSION AND NO OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR INDVIDUALS WHO WISH TO PARTICIPATE.

The focus group will be videotaped. However, results would be kept confidential and no one outside of the above investigators would have access to the tapes. At no point would individual names of participants (or their organization, if any) be used for publication or any other correspondence. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have further questions regarding the study or your consent please contact either of the study investigators:

Greg Ostrander
310 A Natural Resources Building
DeWitt, MI 48820
(517) 353-9501

Jo Ann Beckwith, Ph.D.
310 A Natural Resources Building
East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 432-7733

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject please contact Michigan State University:

Ashir Kumar, Ph.D., Chair
University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects
(517) 355-2180

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