**Honors Experiential Learning Project Proposal**

**Basic Information**  
Full Name: Kevin Leugers

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College: Lindner College of Business

Major: Marketing

Title of Project: The Role of Business in Charities and Community Service

Thematic Area: Community Engagement

Expected Project Start Date:

Expected Project End Date:

**Project Information**

1. Provide a detailed abstract of your proposed honors experiential learning project.

I will begin my experience with studying. I shall read multiple articles discerning the economics of poverty and the dissenting solutions among different authors. These shall include Capitalism and Freedom, The Economics of Poverty and the Poverty of Economics: A Christian Perspective, Good to Great and the Social Sectors, Out of Work: What Happen when Traditional Approaches Fail, and other applicable works. I have chosen these specifically to understand the transfer of money and allocation of resources within poverty stricken communities (and markets) and what each author proposes as an effective solution to reducing the poverty level. I wish to research the economics of poverty because I wish to understand what forms of aid and its distribution is useful and maximizes the potential benefit. The purpose of this understanding is to then apply it in my future place of work as businesses are becoming the primary source of funding and donations to charities.

I will also research different companies and the organizations to which they donate so as to analyze their methodologies and their style of creating change. The second leg of my experiential learning endeavor is to visit, study, and interview the charities and organization that I will visit so as to understand their processes first hand and witness the outcomes of their work. The interview process will begin by emailing administrators/leaders of the community engagement sector of the companies and ask questions like: why they feel responsible to give, percentage of profit given, existence and strictness of monitoring systems over the beneficiaries of the donations, employee service, company’s view on effectiveness of donations, goals, reasons for donating to specific needs or to combat the source of poverty (education, health, housing, nutrition, etc.), personal beliefs and scientific backing as to the success of their individual method in reducing poverty, etc. I will be visiting companies in New York City because of the extreme economic disparities and the prevalence of poverty within one of the world’s richest cities. There are hundreds of charities within the city and I would like to discover why companies donate to specific organizations as I believe it will grant me with insight into the most efficient methods of social work. I will also then identify the role that the company plays within the charity that it donates to and the impact that the contributions and community service have in the identity and values of the company.

Third, I shall review and work within the charities to which company money is given. I will first conduct similar interviews as I had done with the companies asking: what are the charity’s goals, what economic principles is the organization using, how effective is the company in meeting needs, how does the organization identify and define the exact needs to be met and the amount of money to be allocated to specific projects, differentiating factors and individual/unique processes, sustainable change, satisfied clients (the poor), and other questions regarding their success and their strategy. I wish to study and interact personally with the charities so that I may create my own judgment on whether it is best to remedy the consequences of poverty or to fix the causes of poverty and then what steps are best in contributing to that area. I wish to understand which organizations are most effective in combating the need they address, which area of focus (education, health care, etc.) leads to the largest decrease in poverty within their communities, which areas are neglected, and which organizations are producing the greatest results. The purpose of learning about the individual charities is so that I may formulate an educated opinion on the type of service work that is most effective in reducing the poverty level. The results shall be determined by interviewing the recipients of aid, referencing multiple charity rating services, objectives achieved by the organization, quality of service, sustainable and progressive change, percentage of revenue directed towards activities/programs, and ratings by their donors.

I shall visit ABC, Ernst & Young, J. Crew, the NFL headquarters, J.P. Morgan Chase, and the Robin Hood Foundation and each company’s respected charity organizations while staying in New York City for one week. Six out of the seven days will either consist of visiting two companies or visiting two charities while the seventh day will be devoted to the Robin Hood Foundation because it is a business designated for investing in charities. I shall create a video documentary of all the interviewees that will consent and at each charity that I interact with. I will also write in a journal each night to depict exactly what happened so that I may use it to keep track of my experiences, thoughts, and the methods used to combat poverty. Approximately 20 hours will be spent on preparing myself for the trip through reading books and articles on poverty.

To better understand the severity of poverty, I shall juxtapose my life with the typical lower class man by living in a hotel and buying meals for the first two days and then living in a shelter and eat meals given to me for the last five days. I will then write and reflect upon the differences and lifestyles so that I may better understand the life of a poverty stricken person and so that, through experience, I will feel a stronger sense of empathy and hear the call to take action against the cycles of poverty. Throughout the trip, I will be visiting Catholic institutions between studies to better understand my call to action as a religious man.

**Clearly and thoroughly address how each of the following elements will be exhibited in your work:**

1. Connection to Learning Outcomes within the Honors Thematic Area (identified above)
2. I will *participate in the community and understand my own role as citizen of community*. I will participate in the community by designating several days to community service once the interviews are completed. After I complete my necessary work for my study, the remainder of my time will be spent helping at the organizations I will be in. Second, I will better understand my role as a citizen because the prolonged contact with the poor will make me realize my responsibility to those who are worse off. I will begin to sympathize with the people in poverty so that I will understand their needs and how to best aid them and I will also empathize and develop a responsibility to help the people I meet. My definition of “my community” should grow after this experience to encompass the united Sates because I call this nation home, there are poor people all throughout the country, and I will have the call as a human and citizen to help my fellow Americans.
3. *Possesses awareness of purpose of service, including need for reciprocity, understanding of social issues, and ability to see those issues from multiple perspectives*. The purpose of living the same lifestyle as those in poverty is so that I may feel for them after enduring their troubles and then realizing that I have an alternative to the bare minimum. With gratefulness for my own wealth, I will become moved to spread what I have been given with others, and my most effective tool to benefit others is my work and intelligence which I plan to eventually use to influence my future employer to create sustainable and efficient change through donations to the best methods and to the best organizations. My call to service will be based on the understanding that we are blessed and that which we do not need should be given to those who require it. I also feel called spiritually to help others and I believe that it is morally right. During my time in New York City, I will also visit Christian charities to better understand my call to act. Finally, I will attain a variety of perspectives on issues through studying economics before the trip and through the interviews with the company administrators, charity directors, and recipients of aid.
4. Connection to Goals and Academic Theories (include reference list, as appropriate)

Your project must be related to your development (personal, academic, general education, or professional interests). *How does this project contribute to your future academic, professional, and/or personal goals?*

1. This project will develop me academically because I will have a better understanding of economics, knowledge on the role of business on charities, and the workings of a charity. It will allow me to have more experience with nonprofit businesses as well as the effect of giving upon business. It will also give me an insight into potential positions as manager of donations or service work within companies and the positions available in charities as I am interested in pursuing a career in such organizations. I will also grow personally as I will be forced to live with little to nothing for a majority of my trip and so I will learn what I believe is valuable to myself and eliminate obsession and excessive want from my life. I will also gain an appreciation for those living in poverty as I will live with them. Furthermore, I will gain a better understanding of their needs and what approaches would be best to solve these problems. I will come to understand their struggles through the interviews and daily interactions and then feel a need to will the good of the people I meet. Finally, as a citizen, I will become more educated in issues on the ballot regarding the poor and their consequences while also developing a responsibility to reach out and spread the reality of the troubles of their lives.
2. The Economics of Poverty and the Poverty of Economics: A Christian Perspective is an essay that provides a religious perspective on the issue of poverty and thus by choosing this work, I will strengthen my understanding of my duty as a man of God while learning about the economics of righteous action and its potential consequences. Not only will I explore my responsibility through the experience, but I will also discover possible ways as to how I can best coordinate effective methods with religious duty. I will also incorporate the findings in Out of Work: What Happen when Traditional Approaches Fail to understand the different and more efficient strategies when attempting to produce positive change in communities. This book will be one of my main references for implementing the best methods to reduce poverty.
3. Initiative, Independence, and/or Creativity

Initiative in my project is exemplified in the creation of the proposal as well as incorporating my desire to learn more about the calling of my faith through a study of companies and charities. I will be working alone and living the same way throughout my endeavor so that I can focus my attention on formulating ideas and giving all of my effort to my study. Creativity is shown in adding several other experiences to my study such as the overnights in homeless shelters and working/serving within the charities so that I can fully comprehend the lives of the poverty stricken.

1. Reflection

Reflection will consist of a daily journal that will house my thoughts on the day, unexpected experiences or findings, notes from the interviews, growing database of different economic theories and applications, personal perceptions as to the most effective method, and all other significant ideas/events/thoughts. I will then type my journal online and present it as a blog so that others may view my experiences. Additionally, I will create a collage of meaningful photos that I take on my trip that summarize significant points of the experience. Finally, I will create a video library of all the people who consent to be videotaped during an interview and t show the living conditions and reality of suffering in poverty. This will then be posted on my website and on YouTube.

1. Dissemination

I will post my findings on a blog and then videos on YouTube but I will also give talks to Economics classes should professors be interested in sharing my findings with their students. I believe that it is important to study the economics of the poor because those in poverty are equal to half the population of the world and we must know how they interact and how we can improve their lives. Also, I believe it will be interesting and possibly inspiring for other students to hear about the economics of the poor and for the off chance that one may be interested in a career in non-profit work.

1. Project Advisor (list the person’s name, title, and contact information)

Professor Lenisa Chang

1. Budget (if applicable)

Gas: $120

Food: $50

Technological Equipment: $80

Prerequisite Readings: $75

+Housing: $250

Total: $575