

# **LEARNING ONE-ON-ONE: CREATING A BENEFICIAL DIRECTED STUDY EXPERIENCE**

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this paper is to give insight on how to design a directed study experience that is beneficial to both the student and the instructor. While preparing for a directed study with an undergraduate student, I found very limited literature on this topic, especially in the field of marketing education. The purpose of this paper is to further develop guidelines on how to run a successful directed course, and understand how to create an enriched experience for the student. Enhanced knowledge in this area may increase participation in faculty-mentored research projects, improve satisfaction from students with their directed study experience, and adhere to the requirements of high-impact educational practices in universities.

## **Introduction**

Many reports have been released in the past 10 years regarding the importance of high-impact educational practices in universities (Albertine & McNair 2011; Brownell & Swaner 2010; Kuh 2008). Research has shown that campuses that engage in such practices have increased rates of student retention and student engagement (Kuh 2008). One of the essential high-impact practices is undergraduate research, where the goal is to involve students with empirical research opportunities to answer important questions.

A directed study course allows students to pursue independent research for academic credit under the guidance of a faculty member. Students participate in a directed study in order to further explore topics that are not ordinarily covered in the core curriculum. Directed study programs allow students to work individually with a faculty member on a topic that a student is interested and fits with the professor's area of expertise. Together the student and professor design a study plan appropriate for course credit.

The purpose of a directed study is to give a creative option for students who wish to explore a certain topic in more depth. The guidelines for the course are intended to foster students' intellectual development, enabling them to create and execute projects of their own conception. Thus, these studies allow students to acquire a level of proficiency in research and writing beyond that required by the regular courses in their major.

Although an integrate part of a student's college experience, directed study curriculum has not been thoroughly discussed in the marketing education literature. Many studies have discussed students' attitudes and satisfaction in a traditional classroom experience (Gremler & McCollough 2002; Appleton-Knapp & Krentler 2006), but little has been presented in regards to satisfaction in directed studies. Further research needs to determine how student's expectations, instructor's efforts (McPherson 2006), student's own efforts, rapport between the instructor and student (Granitz, Koernig, & Harich 2009) and learning outcomes affect satisfaction at the completion of a directed study course. If student expectations are met or surpassed then the student would view the directed study as a quality experience (Molly, Smith, Velliquette, & Garretson 2004; Yucelt 1998).

## **Overview of Directed Study Assignment**

In the Fall 2013 semester, I conducted a directed study course with one of my students. Before the semester began, I had the student create and submit a research study proposal that identified her topic, area of interest, and research questions. In the initial conference with the

student we discussed this proposal and created a research plan. We created a timeline for the course, and together we collaborated to create a clear design for completion of the project.

Assignments for this directed study course included:

- 1) Weekly Readings in the Marketing Research textbook, and journal articles on the topic of interest.
- 2) Writing assignments such as journal entries, literature reviews, and the final research paper
- 3) Midterm and Final Exams on the textbook concepts
- 4) Fieldwork—focus group, collage interview, in-depth interview, and surveys

### **Course Objectives**

The objectives and desired outcomes of this directed study course were to:

Objective 1: Improve research and analytical skills.

Objective 2: Allow student to communicate their understanding of concepts learned in prior courses, and integrate these ideas to solve a real problem and research questions.

Objective 3: Improve in the areas of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

### **Methodology**

Survey Student (beginning of semester):

1. What do you hope to learn in this directed study?
2. What do you feel are challenges in doing a directed study? Any thoughts on how these challenges can be overcome?
3. What part of the research process do you feel you need the most guidance on?
4. Why are you interested in the topic that you chose? Why do you feel it is important to the field of marketing?
5. What are your future goals (ex. Job, industry, grad school etc.)?
6. What would you like this directed study experience do to help you in your future goals?

### **Findings**

At the beginning of the semester I administered a survey to the student to find out what her goals, interests, and fears in conducting a directed study. The student expressed that one of the most important things to her was to learn the full marketing research process. She also wanted to learn how to manage, organize, and assess data while improving her personal understanding of marketing in general. As a faculty mentor, it is important to ask your student in advance what their goals are so that you can tailor a program to fit their needs. Being able to customize the curriculum of the course to fit the needs of the student is the main advantage of one-on-one learning.

Although the student was very excited for this course, she realized that there were some challenges that she must face in the process. Since this was her first time undertaking a directed study, the whole experience was new and there were a lot of unknowns. She believed that the most challenging part of doing a directed study might be learning how to be self-motivated and be responsible for a project. Knowing her levels of uncertainty, I was able to

understand how to be a better mentor and motivate her in this process. This understanding revealed the best way to lead her in this study, giving her the proper guidance while building her confidence.

To overcome challenges in the course, it is very important to have open and frequent communication and guidance of the mentor. The faculty member's guidance is crucial so that the student can be motivated and informed about necessary steps in the process. Especially in research projects that involve a lot of data collection, such as this particular course, it is important for faculty member to provide thorough instruction on how to properly conduct interviews and develop questions for the survey and focus group sessions.

To provide additional support it's essential for the faculty mentor to ask the student "why are you interested in the topic that you chose?" When working with a student it helps to know why they are passionate about this topic so you can help to motivate them when the process is difficult. The topic this student chose was how the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) affects Generation Y. FOMO was an interesting topic to her due to the fact that it is a relatively new and important phenomenon affecting her generation. High social media usage causes some people to feel left out which leads to FOMO. She believes that this topic is important to the field of marketing since consumers tend to purchase goods online, and marketers try to utilize social media as a tool to influence consumption. A further understanding of this consumer behavior will enable marketers to make their brand more desirable to these consumers who do not want to miss out.

Part of the initial survey also focused on the student's objectives and how she hoped this directed study could assist her in achieving her goals. After graduation, she plans to gain some work experience in the field of fashion marketing, working either in fashion PR or fashion advertising. She then plans to go to the graduate school to get Master of Business Administration. She hopes that her experience and knowledge gained from this directed study will help her in her future career and application to graduate school. Aside from helping her with these goals, I also wanted to assist her in creating a project that would give her a feeling of achievement and sense of pride.

To close the loop, at the end of the course I also gave her a survey to find out more about her experience. This survey asked questions to determine her level of satisfaction in the process and finished project. This questionnaire also is to discover any frustrations or negative aspects of this study, and insight she has for improvement. This feedback can all aid to create a better directed study program in the future.

#### Survey Student (End of semester):

1. What did you find most satisfying about working on your Directed Study?
2. What did you find most frustrating in the process?
3. Do you feel your faculty director provided ample guidance, resources, etc.? Explain.
4. How has/will your Directed Study benefit you in the future?
5. Please provide any advice/insight on how we might improve the Directed Study courses in the future.

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates the possibilities associated with conducting a directed study. A successful study can enhance student confidence, while promoting subject learning and research skills. This directed study course promoted four essential elements of learning: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Furthermore, after both professor and student evaluation, the objectives for this project were all met:

Objective 1: Improve research and analytical skills.

Objective 2: Allow student to communicate their understanding of concepts learned in prior courses, and integrate these ideas to solve a real problem.

Objective 3: Improve in the areas of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

References Available upon Request