



Powered by the U.S. Embassy

MBA/Masters Consulting Program Overview

The Connect to Success (C2S) MBA/Masters Consulting Program is a dynamic way to provide students with real world practical experience while simultaneously offering Women Owned Businesses (WOBs) an opportunity to get a specific business challenge addressed by teams of MBA and Masters students (consultees) over the duration of a semester.

Student consulting groups may, for example, assist a WOB to: create a business plan, devise a strategy for the introduction of a product or service, identify potential acquisition candidates, create and install a new business processes, develop a marketing strategy, evaluate operational practices, and/or build a strategy to attract investment.

“Our experience with C2S’s MBA/Masters Consulting program was very insightful, leading to an internal analysis of my company and, therefore, improvements in its functioning. Thank you to the Connect to Success Team for providing us with this opportunity.” – Mariana Morgado Pedroso, Architect Your Home Portugal, Consultee, Porto Business School

When we found out that our project had been selected for the MBA/Masters Consulting program, we could not foresee how beneficial this would be for our company, both strategically and systematically.” – Vera Colaço, Manifesto Moda, Consultee, Católica Business School

The Connect to Success MBA/Masters Consulting program afforded me hands-on practice at finding solutions to challenges facing small scale business in real time.” – Sheila Adoma Boakye, Consultant, Porto Business School

"I am currently working at a startup, and one of the main reasons I got the job was because of my experience in the Connect to Success Program. So, I am very thankful to the program, probably without that experience I would not be working where I am right now." Juan Enrique Mogue Ruiz, Consultant, School of Economics and Management of the University of Porto (FEP)

	Consulting student groups	Consultees
Benefits	Students are provided with real world opportunities to apply their knowledge and help support entrepreneurs to realize their full market potential and provide them with valuable insight to assist them in accelerating the growth potential of their enterprises.	In addition to direct access to expert knowledge from MBA and Masters students, the consultees will benefit from the University students’ expertise, ideas, and practical strategies for operating in today’s business environment.

Participant Criteria	Consulting student groups	Consultees
<p>Roles & Responsibilities</p>	<p>The consulting student groups take on this project as an elective course for a semester.</p> <p>After each university has evaluated proposals from participating entrepreneurs to determine which students would serve as the best pairings based on their interests, expertise, and competencies, the university's role is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee the students meets with their consultee when appropriate either in person or via telephone or email throughout the program • Ensure the students visit the consultee's business site, if appropriate <p>Prior to the start of the project consulting team members and WOB are encouraged to sign nondisclosure and confidentiality agreements.</p> <p>The scope of purpose and expected outcome of the final deliverables are realistic in light of the allotted time frame and are detailed and agreed upon in writing by the WOB and the consulting team.</p> <p>Consulting student group's role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students recognize that their suggestions and solutions are being relied on by real, not theoretical, businesses • Students can request access to all necessary data and staff • Listen actively • Act as a trusted personal business consultant • Act as a valuable source for business information and sounding board for ideas, strategies, and plans • Provide an interactive exchange of information and knowledge • Advocate on behalf of the consultee as appropriate • Continually monitor results and progress to insure the specific business challenges are addressed • Students may be expected to present their work to their academic leadership and fellow student teams midway and/or at the end of the semester 	<p>Expect to dedicate time to work directly with the student consulting team.</p> <p>The relationship and project will conclude at the end of the semester. Consultees will request feedback and final reports at that time.</p> <p>Prior to the start of the project, consulting team members and WOB are encouraged to sign nondisclosure and confidentiality agreements. The scope of purpose and expected outcome of the final deliverables are realistic in light of the allotted time frame and are detailed and agreed upon in writing by the WOB and the consulting team.</p> <p>Consultee role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WOBs are respectful of the fact that the student consulting teams are being graded on these projects and that they provide timely responses to all consulting team requests • WOBs work in partnership with students through face-to-face meetings and/or electronic communications as appropriate, to address the specific business need • Listen actively • Drive the relationship by identifying the goals and objectives and communicating them to the consulting student group • Take advantage of this opportunity to learn • Maintain confidences • Set realistic goals and have realistic expectations • Be open • WOBs secure the necessary support to integrate consulting team suggestions and solutions • Present project findings to university faculty and students • WOBs may be invited to attend student presentations to their classroom, which provide an opportunity for additional feedback.

	<p>To be successful, we recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punctuality • Mutual Confidentiality • Mutual Engagement & Active Participation • Shared Learnings • Open and Honest Communication • Finite, Realistic and Written Mutually Agreed Upon Goals and Objectives and Performance Measures to be Defined at the Kick-Off Meeting 	<p>To be successful, we recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punctuality • Being Prepared and Respectful* • Mutual Confidentiality • Mutual Engagement & Active Participation • Shared Learnings • Open and Honest Communication • Finite, Realistic and Written Mutually Agreed Upon Goals and Objectives and Performance Measures to be Defined at the Kick-Off Meeting. <p>* Remember, your consulting team chose to take this special elective for a semester, so make the most of each meeting!</p>
<p>Suggested Consulting Process</p>	<p>A poorly-planned and unstructured consulting relationship can be a waste of time for both parties involved. Below is a suggested process that can help consulting student groups and consultees have a more effective and productive experience:</p> <p>Kick-Off Meeting Schedule a first in person session with all participants to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities • Overview of WOB - we recommend WOBs come to the first meeting with a company history, and a financial timeline of the company • WOB challenge(s) and specific, reasonable objectives WOB would like to achieve • Clearly Define Finite, Realistic and Written Goals, Objectives, Performance Measures, Milestones and Timelines Proposed strategy based on WOB key challenges • Unambiguously Document the Project End Date • Q&A <p>Relax and remember that becoming acquainted is a critical step that will lead to positive results all around.</p> <p>Ongoing Communication Students perform much of the work off-site with frequent communication with the WOBs. The number of on-site or in person communications will depend on the project.</p> <p>To keep your program energized, continue to communicate throughout the life of the program – email updates are a good way to do this.</p> <p>Track MBA/Masters Consulting Program Metrics Monitor, track, and measure the results of the program against the program objectives. Sample metrics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anecdotal evidence • Surveys of participants half way through and at the end of the semester • Written evaluations by consultee pre-and post-program <p>Success! Conclude the program with a final presentation from the consultee that includes accomplishments to-date through participation in the MBA/Masters Consulting Program, and planned next steps. Clearly communicate the success of the consulting program.</p>	