ANDERSON SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Practical Project Management

Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

The Practical Project Management (PPM) program offered by the Career and Professional Development (CPD) Program's division in the Anderson School of Management (ASM), at The University of New Mexico (UNM) has a strong record of providing quality instruction for working professionals. This success is based on face-to-face instruction. In response to the current health pandemic, COVID-19, the PPM program made a transition to synchronous online learning. The ASM is aiming to provide the same rich quality of face-to-face instruction, so the program administrator sought to enhance the program's online degree of engagement, by developing a framework to stimulate collaborative activities, improve the sessions' structure and pacing within a manageable timeframe and organize the course content in the program's OneDrive file source.

This evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the interventions development, based on the Administrator's intent. Deliverables were based on a needs analysis, utilizing session observations from September through November 2020. By connecting aspects of social presence to the program, approaches were designed to enhance and develop participants' professional collaborative skills through a humanized online learning experience. This program intervention and evaluation ran from February to April 2021. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered, comparing pre and post intervention observations of sessions, participant surveys, and instructor interviews.

The evaluation results show increases in participant engagement in the online environment. Cohesive group unity and acceptance of the intervention were observed as the activities' structure humanized the environment, showing higher degrees of interpersonal communication with participant expressions of satisfaction like "I love the group sessions." Instructor interviews confirm social presence techniques successfully engaged participants. "I think it has improved, some of the tools and techniques have actually made it more effective", and the new OneDrive file organization, is perceived as an "excellent" addition to the program.

The discussion and recommendations include recognizing that instructors' feel comfortable in the online environment as an important factor in promoting social presence, continued use of assigned teams for the length of the session and developing diversified teams to promote higher degrees of participant interaction, and utilizing participant role assignments for group activities to promote inclusiveness. To yield productive access to course content, continue use of weekly file labeling in the program's OneDrive. For technical continuity, coordinate resources with stakeholders so instructors can activate online tools in sessions to promote a collaborative learning environment.

This evaluation report and recommendations may be utilized by the Administrator for continued use in the PPM program, and as a model for other online CPD Programs.