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Change can be a challenge, or change can be an opportunity to grow. In April 2020, our department was alerted that due to pandemic struggles for our corporate partner, we would have to change direction for the capstone project of Business Presentations (C104) – the case competition. As the case lead, I saw this as an opportunity to shift gears and make this project more meaningful.

C104 is taken by over 3,000 students annually, usually in their first year. There is no better time to introduce students to topics that allow them to explore their place in the world and the impact they can make. Luckily, we have an incredible resource within Kelley, the Kelley Institute for Social Impact (KISI). By partnering with KISI for the case, students are connected early in their academic career with an organization that fosters social change, providing resources and internship opportunities beyond our course.

Having a virtual case competition expanded the possibilities of who our client could be. The goal was to introduce students to a global business with a mission. We were thrilled that Global Mamas, a long-standing partner with KISI, agreed to be our client. Global Mamas is a Ghanaian nonprofit organization whose mission is to “create prosperity for African women and their families”. I worked closely with them to write a case that both met the objectives of our course while providing them clear solutions. In conjunction with fellow C104 instructors and campus partners, I developed a scaffold approach, making the project achievable - inform, connect, and strategize.

I revamped our Informative Team Presentation to explore topics relevant to Global Mamas including gender inequality and a cross cultural comparison of the US and Ghana. The Kelley/SPEA library contributed greatly – from providing search terms on the assignment to creating a tab in Canvas directing students to relevant databases! The research process allowed students to confront their own biases and discover new topics through an academic lens. After each presentation, there was time to digest and unpack the content which provided robust conversations in the classroom.

With the help of UITS, I organized a Q&A webinar with Global Mamas in Ghana that was moderated by the director of KISI. Students provided questions and connected live with Global Mamas as they clarified their needs and even showed us around their shop! This was instrumental in our students building loyalty to the client which motivated them as they completed the project.

A good strategy takes planning. I created a “storyboard” assignment to encourage students to start putting the basics of their ideas into words and images. By inviting Kelley Peer C104 Coaches into my class, each team was able to share their storyboard and verbalize their

strategy. The accountability of sharing this with a peer encouraged proactive planning and made the coaches approachable to ask for assistance as they got closer to the competition, resulting in better presentations.

The pandemic drove us to change, but through adaptability and innovation a greater student experience grew. According to a few of my students, “I learned a great deal through this project. I learned that small businesses have to be nimble and always be thinking of new ideas to grow. I learned that businesses are not only driven to be profitable but also to create positive social change” and “I learned that we can make an impact on the world”. I am extremely proud of this project and the mark it has left on everyone who it touched.