FirstPerson Board Fellows Program

Our mission is to provide mentors and fellows with the opportunity to create a platform for shared learning. Academic rigor meets hands-on experience in the Butler MBA FirstPerson Board Fellows Program. Our objective is to train and empower leaders through engagement with local nonprofit leaders.
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

/iks-peer-i-en-shǔl/ /lərnɪŋ/

noun

1. Learning by experiencing a situation or a simulated situation, as in role playing, and then reflecting on that experience.

This 2018 Butler MBA FirstPerson Board Fellows Program Annual Report showcases work-integrated learning experiences for both MBA Fellows and Mentors.
Industry experience that accelerates careers.

The FirstPerson Board Fellows Program encourages experiential learning through passionate business-to-education collaboration. Our impact goes beyond the classroom by incorporating personal mentor-mentee relationships with community nonprofit leaders. These organizations offer engaging learning environments where they showcase their expertise while presenting sustainability projects and campaigns to students.
GROWTH

“\text{A stage of increasing, developing or maturing.}”
Paul Ashley
Mentor

As a four-time mentor, almost no one knows the scope of impactful benefits the Butler MBA FirstPerson Board Fellows Program can provide better than Paul Ashley. As a member of Outreach Inc.’s Board of Directors, he was initially attracted to the Program because it seamlessly combined his two passions of serving the nonprofit community and experiential education. Paul reflects on all of his partnerships as incredibly valuable experiences.

One collaboration that stands out to Paul is when he guided one of his Board Fellows through the process of conducting a research and feasibility study on the potential development of an endowment for the nonprofit. The Board Fellow assessed the pros and cons and the level of desire financial donors had to be involved in the implementation of an endowment in the near future.

The completed project gave the Outreach Inc. team valuable data and the knowledge they needed to ensure that they approached the development process in a way that met both the needs of the nonprofit and their financial supporters. All three of the other projects that have been completed by Board Fellows under Paul’s mentorship have similarly directly benefited Outreach Inc.’s mission of serving homeless teens and young adults in Indianapolis.

The nonprofit is not the only entity that benefits from a partnership with Butler. Aligning with FirstPerson’s mission statement of “providing mentors and Fellows with the opportunity to create a platform for shared learning,” Paul remarked that with each experience he has found that he learns as much (if not more) from the Fellows than they do from him. In addition, Paul has enjoyed participating in the Program as it has provided him opportunities to grow his network while making meaningful contributions to the community in which we all work and live.
/tēmwaːrk/

“the collaborative effort of a team to achieve a common goal in the most effective and efficient way”
As the current Assistant Director for the Institute of Research and Scholarship, MBA Board Fellow Kanti Crain manages and oversees all the research compliance committees and boards at Butler University. Kanti found herself attracted to the Program because as a board manager, it offered the rare opportunity to serve on a board from a different perspective. Identifying her interest and passion for education, the FirstPerson instructors paired Kanti with At Your School (AYS), a nonprofit that specializes in providing children high-quality, educational and safe after-school care.

The AYS staff asked Kanti to assist them in accomplishing their strategic goal of meeting the requirements set by the Council on Accreditation Standards for Private Organizations. In order to complete this task, she first conducted an internal review of AYS’s existing processes and procedures. She then used the compiled data and performed a gap analysis to determine the steps AYS needed to take in order to achieve organization-wide accreditation.

Kanti considers her experience in the Program a success both inside and outside of the classroom. The self discovery exercises she completed in class helped Kanti discover her “why” and her “what” in terms of her nonprofit passions. Additionally, the Program expanded her skills, networking connections, and allowed her to gain further appreciation for the board and committee members that she oversees at Butler’s Institute for Research and Scholarship.
LEAD.ER

/ˈlɛdər/

“An individual who energizes and inspires others to strive for a better future.”
While exploring all of the educational paths available to aspiring MBA students, Samantha Wodecki found herself attracted to the Program due to its focus on nonprofit organizations and the unique experiential learning opportunities that it offers.

After committing to the Program, Samantha was paired with The Villages—the largest nonprofit child and family services agency in Indiana. Serving more than 3,000 children and their families every day, The Villages staff works tirelessly because they believe that every child has the right to a safe, permanent and nurturing home.

As is common for many nonprofits, The Villages relies on volunteers in order for their programs and services to survive and succeed. Recognizing this, Samantha worked with staff, community members and volunteers to develop a new Volunteer Service Board.

Samantha valued her time at The Villages because she was challenged to fully immerse herself in an industry in which she had no prior experience. As a result, she expanded her skill set by working with various groups of people, gained real-world experience and was introduced to the impactful nonprofit sphere within the local Indianapolis community.

Additionally, Samantha found that the unique classroom experience was equally as beneficial to her growth, because it increased her desire to learn and lead, as well as guided her towards the type of fulfilling career she had been searching for.
P.A.S.S.I.O.N

/ˈpaSHən/

“The driving force behind success and happiness”
Lisa always had an interest in nonprofit involvement, but, because of her commitment to her educational endeavors, she could never contribute the time that was fully needed to explore her curiosities. That is, until she decided to follow the recommendations of a few Program alumni. Lisa discovered that the Program offered the perfect opportunity to gain real insight into the world of nonprofits and further her education.

Her time in the Program was spent working with the Center for Leadership Development (CLD) - a nonprofit dedicated to fostering the advancement of minority youth in Central Indiana as future leaders by providing a variety of services. When she arrived, the CLD staff were beginning to tackle the issue of the organization outgrowing its current space due to rising enrollment. With the goal of expanding their school, they were busy preparing for a large capital campaign to take place in 2019.

One of the benefits of the Program is that the partnerships made and the work that is completed impacts not only the Fellow, but also the mentor and the nonprofit. The CLD staff put their trust in Lisa by assigning her a project that was critical to the success of the organization. With an aim to recruit and engage participants, CLD alumni and donors, Lisa created short, medium and long-term marketing plans that included tactical solutions to increase awareness and involvement.

Through her time in the Program, Lisa gained much more than a simple introduction to the nonprofit sector in Indianapolis. She made industry connections, strengthened her project management skills, learned more about serving on a board of directors, how to collaborate with a board and staff simultaneously, and discovered what her personal passions are regarding nonprofit work—all while giving back to the community.
“It was extremely rewarding to serve as a board intern at Second Helpings under the mentorship from Jennifer Vigran, CEO. Throughout my time there, I aided a team in launching a new young professional group, First Course. As a direct result of Board Fellows, I was recently nominated and voted onto the Advisory Council to the Board of Directors, which I will begin in August. I’ve enjoyed growing my volunteer experience from chopping vegetables in the kitchen to sitting in the boardroom.”

Emily O’Neal, MBA ‘17
HR Consultant - University Recruiter, Roche Diagnostics, Board Fellow Program Alumni
Former Fellow Natalie Leniski greatly values her time spent in the Program. Her experiences helped her discover her goals and values and find a nonprofit organization that aligned most with those visions and beliefs. The Program proved that she did not have to wait for a certain time in her life or career to join a board. Inspired to get started on her board service journey, she had joined the board at the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra (ICO) by the end of the year.

Due to her worthwhile experience, Natalie decided to give back to the Program by serving as a mentor. She was eager to establish this partnership because she was aware of how much both the Fellow and the nonprofit gain from the relationship. The Fellow gets to expand their skills and learn more about nonprofit board service, and the organization greatly benefits from the time and energy the Fellow dedicates to their assigned project.

Natalie guided her Fellow, Vanessa, as she developed a community outreach program targeted at connecting the senior communities of Indianapolis with the ICO. Through their collaboration on this project, the women proved just how much of an impact a partnership with the FirstPerson MBA Board Fellows Program can make on a nonprofit.

Under Natalie’s mentorship, Vanessa dedicated her time, efforts and talents to narrow the scope of the project into tangible steps that could be followed after her time at the ICO. Natalie remarked that without her Fellow’s assistance, it was unlikely that the project would have been able to move forward so quickly, offer the ICO much needed guidance from an outside perspective, and generate the visible results that it did.
/ˈsɜːv/ "A valuable action, deed or effort to fulfill a need"
The Butler MBA FirstPerson Board Fellows Program partners students with local Indianapolis nonprofits, learning first-hand about the organization’s mission and impact, governance, operations, and sustainability plans. Our Program prides itself on creating meaningful relationships that foster impactful experiential learning experiences. Butler University’s high level of brand awareness allows us to pair mentees with nonprofits that are truly making a difference.

Students work with mentors one-on-one throughout the semester honing their skills and flourishing in a real-world environment. The impactful relationship built with mentors results in the creation of important and community-centered projects showcasing diverse roles within a company setting. This allows students to integrate themselves in multiple areas of a nonprofit’s operations.

Local nonprofits contributing to past mentorship opportunities include the Shepherd Community Center, Outreach Inc., the Villages of Indiana, At Your School, the Center for Leadership Development, and Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra. These nonprofits are making a profound impact on the Indianapolis community. The MBA students participating in the Program have access to their organization’s massive network and experienced employees. Applicants are paired with nonprofits based on interests and skills. Our selection process guarantees a perfect fit for the utilization and growth of student abilities. Mentors facilitate the Butler MBA learning environment outside the classroom and within the Indianapolis community through rigorous experiential curriculum.
IM.PACT

/’im,pakt/

“Positively influencing or affecting others”
GROWTH
With the addition of six nonprofits, the Program continues its growth in the Indianapolis Community.

SERVICE
After the Fellows completed 360 service hours, the Fellows recognized their loyalty to the community.

PASSION
100% of all fellows in the Program completed community-focused projects in the area.
LEADER
Upon graduating from the MBA Program, three graduates were motivated to return as mentors for the next generation of Fellows.

TEAMWORK
Partnership is the catalyst for collaboration. For each nonprofit, there are two fellows working together for one cause.

IMPACT
The Fellows have one impact that empowers the community to cultivate healthy environments, strong connections, and vibrant learning experiences.
Six years ago, Butler University and FirstPerson teamed up to provide a more in-depth, connected experience for the MBA Board Fellows Program. Because Butler and FirstPerson have always been aligned in their beliefs about the importance of individual engagement, volunteerism, and community leadership, it was a natural partnership.

“When this opportunity arose, I knew we could help with the program’s sustainability and expansion,” explains Bryan Brenner, FirstPerson CEO and Founder. “Students were being connected with organizations, but the connections weren’t necessarily deep enough. The Mentor mindset we’ve established ensures a more personal, one-on-one connection between our Mentors and our Fellows. It helps Fellows clarify their goals so they can create a strong personal understanding of what they want to accomplish professionally and personally - without having to do it by trial and error.”

The Program’s impact extends beyond just the Fellows, as the community benefits from more people being introduced into the nonprofit pipeline at an earlier age. “The MBA Fellows Program really helps with engagement and diversity at the community level,” says Brenner. “We get passionate people involved with the right nonprofit organizations earlier in their lives.”

Butler is known as a place where students are not singularly focused on getting a great job after graduation. They are invested in leaving their community better than they found it. “Butler and its students believe in giving back. This program enhances the Butler brand by preparing its graduates to make meaningful community contributions.”

As the program continues to flourish, Brenner sets his sights on potentially enhancing the undergraduate experience with a complementary offering. “Giving undergraduate students earlier insight into how the nonprofit world works - and how they can contribute - only strengthens the individual, university and community connection.”
Values of Going Beyond the Classroom

GROWTH
TEAMWORK
LEADER
PASSION
IMPACT
SERVICE
Spring 2018 Board Fellows

Ben Hasser
*Shepard*
Mentor: Ed Torres

Corrine Hendershot
*Outreach, Inc.*
Mentor: Paul Ashley

Samantha Foley
*The Villages*
Mentor: Abbi Achetrberg

John Miley
*Elevate Indy*
Mentor: Don Palmer

Kanti Crain
*AYS*
Mentor: Chrystal Struben

Katherine Alexander
*Families First*
Mentor: Ginger Lippert

Katie Orlwoski
*MCCOY*
Mentor: Evan Thomas

Katlyn Shergalis
*The Oaks/OneZone*
Mentor: John Myrland

Lisa Glaven
*Center for Leadership Development*
Mentor: LaTanya Smith

Vanessa Parris
*Chamber Orchestra*
Mentor: Natalie Leniski

Jocelyn Zenk
*Salvation Army*
Mentor: Ross Wells

Andrew Farmer
*Alzheimer’s Association*
Mentor: Natalie Sutton
In Memory of Vanessa Parris
1981-2019

Vanessa Parris served as a Board Fellow in the Spring of 2018 for the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra. Vanessa passed away in January of 2019. She modeled servant leadership both inside and outside of the classroom. Her beautiful spirit touched the lives of many.