

# Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

## Teams Collaborate Over an Entire Term on Legal Analysis of Business Plan

### Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

In this applied learning activity, students use their knowledge about business law to develop and analyze a business plan from a legal perspective. This semester-long group project begins with the development of a business plan and culminates into a final analysis paper and presentation. Early in the semester, the instructor asks students to think about a type of small business they would like to start. Students must submit a short description of their business idea. The instructor then presents the different ideas to the class and asks students to submit a list of the top five businesses in which they would be most interested. The instructor uses this information to group students into teams of three based on common interests, and each group collaborates to develop a business plan for their assigned idea. At the beginning of the project, students are given time in class to discuss how they will work together, keep track of their work, and communicate with each other throughout the project.

As the teams develop their business plans, they must consider three important legal concepts: torts, contracts, and intellectual property. The class covers each of these topics throughout the semester, and students work on the respective elements of their business plan as the semester progresses. The instructor allocates some class time during each module so that students have time to discuss each

topic as it relates to their plan. Notably, students also spend time outside of class engaging in research to learn more about the topic as it relates to their specific type of business. To ensure that each student contributes to the project outside of class, the instructor requires the students to upload their research and contributions to Blackboard. This tool allows the instructor to create an individual wiki page for each group and track each student's individual participation.

The project is incremental, and students develop each part of the paper throughout the course of the semester. Ultimately, each team submits one comprehensive analysis paper that outlines the business plan and discusses how the team addressed each legal issue. The paper submission process happens in two steps—a draft and a final paper. Each team submits a draft for instructor feedback then has an opportunity to make edits before the final submission. After submitting their papers, each group prepares and delivers a corresponding 7-minute slide presentation. This project accounts for 20% of the course grade, with the paper and presentation each accounting for half of the project grade.