COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECT

THE STRUCTURE OF POVERTY GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY

The project will consist of two parts. For Part I, you will receive a group grade. For Part II, you will receive an individual grade. The project is worth 30 points – each part is worth 15 points. In conjunction with the project, you will conduct three interviews: client interview, provider interview, and stakeholder interview. For each interview, you will need to turn in a two-page, single-spaced summary of your interview. Each interview will be worth 5 points.

Part I: Resource Manual on Community Providers

You will be assigned to one of five groups. Each group will do research on a community provider which provides financial literacy education services and supports an IDA program. These five agencies work in collaboration with the United Way. The goal is for the students to collect this information to compile a resource manual for QOPC and its clients. QOPC would like to refer its clients to these agencies in an effort to expand the services it offers to its clients, especially in the area of poverty alleviation. However, before it can do so, it needs to understand the services offered by these agencies, barriers that QOPC clients might face in accessing these services, whether these agencies have the capacity to serve additional clientele, etc.

As part of this, each student group is required to contact their assigned agency and arrange an interview to gain as much information as possible. I will provide you with an overview of the organizational assessment. While you may gather additional information, please cover all points on the assessment and compile the data as outlined on the assessment sheet. This will facilitate comparison between agencies. You should do as much background research on your provider as possible before you arrange the interview.

Below are the five agencies in the United Way collaborative:

- Better Family Life
- Beyond Housing
- Catholic Charities Housing Resource Center
- International Institute
- Redevelopment Opportunities for Women (ROW)

You should also become an expert on Queen of Peace Center (QOPC) before you conduct your interview. Find out as much as possible about the population it serves and the services it offers. This will help you evaluate whether your assigned agency is a good fit for QOPC clients. You will also need to communicate this information to your assigned agency, so they can determine whether QOPC clients could benefit from their programs.

Ideally, the United Way would also like to use this opportunity to foster collaboration amongst its partners and facilitate the sharing of information. This could be an important networking
Part II: Policy Analysis

The second component of the project is designed to focus on the policy process and policy advocacy. Basically, you are to analyze what national and state policies promote and inhibit asset-building approaches to poverty alleviation, and based on this analysis, what are the best policy proposals and suggested policy changes. In the U.S. we have many policies that support asset-building activities. However, most of these policies are regressive and exclusive – they tend to favor the rich and middle class over the poor. I want you to focus on asset-building policies and proposals that focus on poverty alleviation, can be targeted at low-income families (regressive in nature), or are inclusive/universal (everyone can take advantage of the program). This includes a wide array of proposals. So, I am suggesting some policy areas to narrow your focus. (Retirement could potentially be another category, but I would prefer you focus on one of the following.) I don’t expect you to analyze all policies in a given issue area. This is just a guideline. Keep the clients of QOPC in mind when you select your issue area.

1.) Savings and Investment
   a.) Create incentives to save and remove barriers to savings - Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), Children’s Savings Accounts (ASPIRE), and Asset Limit Reforms
   b.) Expand access to quality financial services, promote financial education, and strengthen asset protection laws
   c.) Tie tax refunds to asset-building initiatives – EITC, Child Tax Credit, tax preparation assistance (VITA)

2.) Post-Secondary Education – 529 College Savings Plans, Pell Grants, Perkins Loan Program, American Opportunity Tax Credit, TRIO, LEAP

3.) Homeownership – Federal Housing Administration, HOME, SHOP, HOPE, Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS), First-Time Home Buyer Tax Credit

4.) Entrepreneurship – Microloans, PRIME, CDFI

We have developed a resource manual to help you identify your issue area, familiarize yourself with existing policy, and provide you with a detailed list of web resources to get you started. You all need to thank Jennifer McDaniel a graduate student in Public Policy for all of her help!

For the area and policies you select, you need analyze federal policy, Missouri policy, and one other state which has a “successful model”. You need to identify what asset-building policies are effective in poverty alleviation and what policies inhibit asset-building activities. In addition to analyzing existing policies, you must also suggest policy reforms or new proposals. For Part II of the project, you are required to conduct a stakeholder interview with a local politician or advocacy organization. These interviews are designed to help you make policy
recommendations and gain insights into existing federal and state policies. Your final project should include the following:

Research Project:

1.) Scope of the Problem – include data on poverty levels in U.S., Missouri, and St. Louis

2.) Literature Review
   a.) Rationale for Asset-Building Approaches
   b.) Effectiveness of Asset-Development regarding poverty alleviation
   c.) Best practices regarding asset-building activities

3.) Federal Policy on your issue area
   a.) existing policies- content and evaluation of policy
   b.) proposed legislation and/or new policy proposals

4.) Missouri Policy on your issue area
   a.) existing policies- content and evaluation of policy
   b.) proposed legislation and/or new policy proposals

5.) “Successful Model” Program – this can be from another U.S. state or international model

6.) What policy reforms/proposal would you recommend to work toward poverty alleviation in this issue area?

7.) Appendices – Summaries of three interviews

8.) Bibliography

Background on QOPC:

To give you more background on QOPC, it is a comprehensive substance abuse treatment program for women and their children. An overwhelming majority of QOPC consumers are low-income, unemployed, homeless, single mothers with poor social supports: 80% are homeless at admission, 90% have suffered trauma, 70% have co-occurring disorders, 51% are uninsured, and 49% are Medicaid clients. In 2007, QOPC served nearly 1,200 women providing residential and outpatient treatment, group counseling, group education, individual counseling, life skill and parenting training, day care, family counseling, transportation, transitional housing, skills training for employment, health care access, case management, legal assistance, and referral services. QOPC offers comprehensive, family-based treatment services through four programs: Comprehensive Substance Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation (CSTAR), Peace for
Kids (a day care and child development center), St. Philippine Home (a transitional housing program serving women and their children), and Shelter Plus Care.