

2019-2020 ACTION LEARNING PROJECT (ALP)

The Jones Graduate School of Business (JGSB) proudly offers the Action Learning Project (ALP). This is a thirteen (13)-week, team-based consultative project, where student teams from our Full-time MBA program tackle a company's tough challenges and provide detailed, actionable recommendations.

Typical Projects

ALP project topics have varied widely, but all have been robust, high-impact projects. The best projects are closely tied to critical issues that are driving the company and its industry. However, "validation" projects will not be accepted (situations where the project has already been worked and the company is seeking independent validation of their answer from student team).

Projects typically include multiple topics from the examples listed below, but the program is not limited to these topics:

Strategy

- *Industry/Competitor Analysis*
- *Competitive Research*
- *Corporate Strategy Design*
- *Product Portfolio Design*
- *Product Lifecycle Mgmt*
- *Go-to-Market / Market Entry*

Marketing

- *Market Research & Analysis*
- *Marketing Strategy*
- *Pricing Strategy*
- *Brand Analysis*
- *Marketing Plans*
- *Marketing Communications*

Finance

- *Valuation*
- *Capital Budgeting*
- *Macroeconomic Analysis*
- *Lease-Buy Decision-Making*
- *Financial Process Improvement*

Operations & Supply Chain

- *Global Supply Chain and Network Strategy*
- *Make-Buy Decision-Making*
- *Inventory Optimization*
- *Process Improvement*
- *Sourcing*
- *Supply Chain Planning / SIOP*

HR and Org. Behavior

- *Talent Management & Recruiting*
- *Organization Design*
- *Change Management*
- *Performance Measurement and Management*
- *Knowledge Management*

Other Topics

- *Investment Theses*
- *Real Estate*

Benefits to the Company:

- Provides a detailed, actionable recommendations at the strategic and tactical levels
- Taps both student and Rice-JGSB faculty expertise to develop the recommendations
- Demonstrates capabilities of talented MBA professionals to your company
- Builds your company's long-term relationship with Rice University and JGSB

Timeline: The ALP is only offered during the spring semester of each year

- October 18: Applications Due
- October 29: Company Day
- December 6: Project Selections Complete

- January 22: Kickoff
- March 23-27: Mid-Point Presentations
- April 24-30: Final Presentations

Company Commitments: The investment of your company's time is critical to the teams' ability to develop rich, detailed, and relevant recommendations that can be adopted. Specific commitments include:

- Company Project Liaison: This crucial role will interact with students on a regular basis and facilitate access to the company's resources and information. Your liaison will also communicate with the project faculty advisor on status, issues, and content details. An alternate liaison is also recommended to be identified as a backup.
- Weekly Review/Status Meeting with Team: Having a regularly scheduled weekly meeting (in-person, videoconference, or conference call) is one of the biggest factors impacting the success of a project, including driving company/student communication, improving quality of their work, and accelerating resolution of issues.
- Timely Access to Data and Personnel: This is one of the other biggest factors impacting success of a project. For instance, they may analyze financial information, interview employees and customers, attend internal meetings, observe business processes, etc. Maintaining confidentiality of your proprietary business information is critical to our work. Non-disclosure agreements are signed by the student teams and faculty.
- On-site Resources (as necessary): Appropriate on-site workspace, computers, telephones, copying, and other needed equipment for the student teams.
- Reimbursement of Reasonable Student Expenses: These could include printing of documents and final reports, airfares and/or vehicle mileage, out-of-town accommodations and meals, telephone and fax charges, and other project-related expenses. Because students typically work with tight personal budgets, the company should discuss and negotiate any specific expense reimbursement policies and procedures with them and the project's faculty advisor at the beginning of the project.

Application Process: Companies interested in proposing a project for the ALP should prepare an ALP application and submit this to the ALP Faculty Director. He will work with the company to finalize the project objectives and scope. The application can be obtained from the Faculty Director, if needed. Please submit separate applications for each project that you propose.

If you have any questions or want to discuss the program in more detail, please contact David VanHorn, the Faculty Director of the Action Learning Project.

David VanHorn
Professor in the Practice of Management
Jones Graduate School of Business, Rice University
(281) 788-3051
david.vanhorn@rice.edu