2026 PROGRAM VIEWBOOK

Executive Program in Social Impact Strategy

PROGRAM LENGTH
8 Months

TWO PROGRAM FORMAT OPTIONS

BLENDED
Online, mostly asynchronous with a synchronous virtual orientation January 14, 2026 and a required in-person 3-day convening March 18-20 at the University of Pennsylvania. Enroll by November 7, 2025 for early tuition discount.

ONLINE
Online, all certificate requirements asynchronous. Three start-date options, kicking off with synchronous virtual orientation September 11, 2025, January 15, 2026, or May 14, 2026. Enroll 6 weeks before orientation for early tuition discount.

Both programs feature optional virtual community days with the teaching team and active cohorts.

CERTIFICATION AND COURSE CREDIT
The Executive Program in Social Impact Strategy is a non-credit, non-degree, master's level certificate program. At program completion, students who have completed all program requirements will receive a signed certificate from the School of Social Policy and Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. Alumni of the Executive Program for Social Impact Strategy are eligible to complete the Master of Science (MS) in Nonprofit Leadership (NPL) in an accelerated format.

Impactful work is needed now more than ever.

Our goal is to make cultivating the skills to tackle the world's challenges affordable, accessible, and effective. In business and society, modern leaders need tools, training, and community. We've combined expertise in social impact strategy, design, and business models to create a world-class executive program that meets global changemakers where they are. We believe in the principle that the best learning experiences stem from a diverse classroom. We invite students from all walks of life with different perspectives, skills, and culture. So far, we've trained over 1,400 students, each unique and brilliant, from more than 40 countries. Join a global network and make authentic, lasting connections with a community of givers that care as much as you do.

Ready to learn more?

Let's dive in.

Executive Program
in Social Impact Strategy

"In times like these, we require the collective power of community more than ever, and we need to approach problem-solving in thoughtful and creative ways. It was these two things that enabled us [Cafe Momentum, a local nonprofit based in Dallas, TX] to pivot our operations when restaurants had to shut down. In the span of a couple of days, the team secured partnerships and sponsors, and shifted from a restaurant and training facility into a food hub, distributing 25,000 meals each week to families experiencing food insecurity. Looking forward, it is these exact skills that we will draw on as we work to build programs nationwide."

Alexandra Ostrow '17
COO, Momentum Advisory Collective
Founder, WhyWhisper Collective
Executive Program in Social Impact Strategy Alum

A program designed to help you deliver on what matters.

We cover a lot of ground, training you with 50+ tools to think strategically and creatively. Choose either the Blended or Online program format and begin an 8 month journey where you'll take 6 online classes, join group discussions, and either attend an intensive 3-day in-person convening on the University of Pennsylvania's campus or complete an additional course to learn new mindsets and approaches to creative program solving with design thinking.

**Executive Program
in Social Impact Strategy**

STRUCTURED LEARNING

Fresh content is released online every Monday, so you can review it at any point during the week, on your own time. Weekly content includes video lectures, readings, tools and discussions that take 4-6 hours a week to complete.

APPLIED ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments invite you to integrate tools into your own work and discover new possibilities. Many students even develop and launch new initiatives during the program, either on their own or through their existing work.

ACCESS TO COMMUNITY

Throughout the program, participate in group video calls for constructive feedback from a dedicated teaching team and your peers. Whether you're feeling "stuck" or want to bounce around ideas, your colleagues are just a video call away.
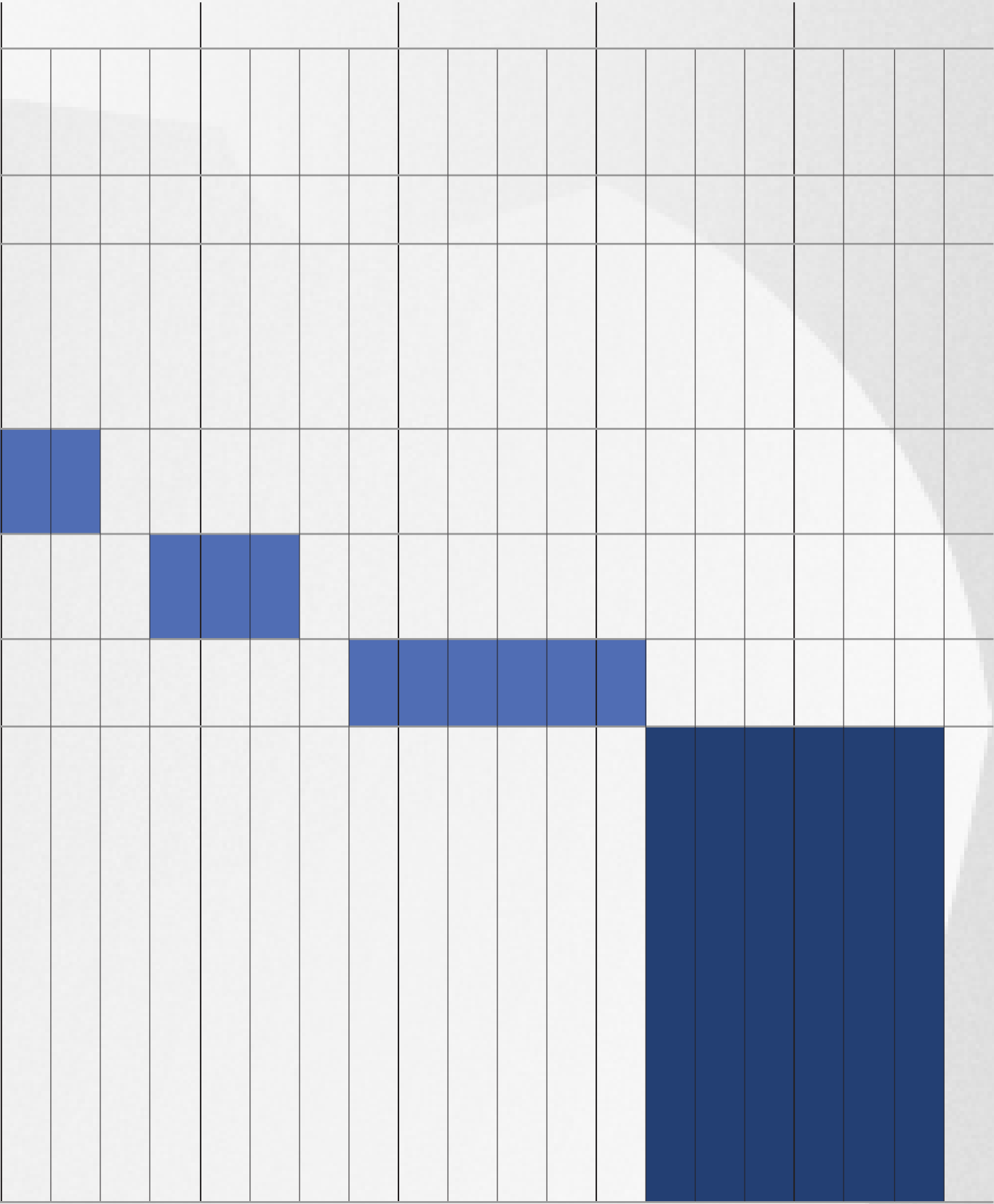
IVY LEAGUE EDUCATION

You'll learn relevant, powerful tools that you can apply immediately. Graduates receive an Ivy League education and a signed certificate from the University of Pennsylvania, a credential that's known and respected around the world.

Program Highlights

Program Timeline

Virtual Orientation Sessions
BLENDED - January 14, 2026
ONLINE - Sept 11, 2025, Jan 15, 2026, May 14, 2026

Social Impact Strategy
Online Course, 6 Weeks

BLENDED Learners will attend an in-person Convening at Penn, March 18 - 20th, 2026
ONLINE Learners will have an additional asynchronous online course on social innovation design

Community & Collaboration
Online Course, 3 Weeks

Integrated Marketing for Social Innovation
Online Course, 3 Weeks

Business Models for Social Enterprise
Online Course, 6 Weeks

Program Electives
Online Courses, 6 Weeks

Complete two electives. Students may also audit as many electives as they wish. In prior years, elective offerings have included:

- Data Science for Social Innovation
- Digital Media for Social Movements
- Ethical Decision-Making in Organizations
- Impact Management
- Research Design
- Unleashing Large Scale Social Movements
- Volunteer Managemen

*See pages 9-12 for course descriptions.

Your work is personal. The learning that supports it should be too.

Our students finish the program with new skills and an expansive community. Over eight months, you'll regularly work alongside and with your peers and teaching team through engaging online meetings.

Executive Program
in Social Impact Strategy

BLENDED PROGRAM TRACK

If you enroll in the Blended program, we'll gather on Penn's campus and engage in a series of interactive sessions and workshops for three days in March. Students will:

- Hear from Penn faculty and other field leaders
- Practice advanced concepts in social innovation and human-centered design
- Build partnerships and connections with classmates

ONLINE PROGRAM TRACK

If you enroll in the Online program, there will be an additional course on Social Innovation Design plus an optional one-day Community Day online. Students will:

- Complete the program completely virtually
- Learn social innovation and human-centered design as an additional course
- Meet virtually with full online program cohort to build connections and community

JAMOUTS

Each month, the teaching team will host optional video calls that are open to everyone for both the Blended and Online Program. The purposes of these calls are:

- To get to know each other and learn from one another's work
- To discuss the curriculum and how peers are applying it
- To work on your homework alongside your classmates

P.A.K.S. GROUPS

Each student is placed in a small Peer, Accountability, Knowledge, and Support group called (P.A.K.S.). These groups provide:

- A safe place for programmatic support and accountability
- A consistent environment where trust and context can be built engagement

Inviting those who believe in a better world

Students in our prior cohorts represented all sectors, career stages, and stages of project development.

The unifying factor in our cohort is students' commitment to driving positive social change through their work. Otherwise, ideal applicants are individuals who are driven by passion and big ideas. Quality applicants for the Executive Program come from all industries. All are committed to improving the world around them in a way that aligns with purpose and values.

Executive Program
in Social Impact Strategy

Our Alumni Network

The Center for Social Impact Strategy has trained more than 1,400 impact-driven leaders from more than 40 countries. Our alumni have gone on to support one another's work, visit each other across continents, and even start new initiatives together. Alumni also benefit from continued learning and networking engagements, including free courses and annual alumni gatherings hosted by the Center for Social Impact Strategy online and at the University of Pennsylvania.
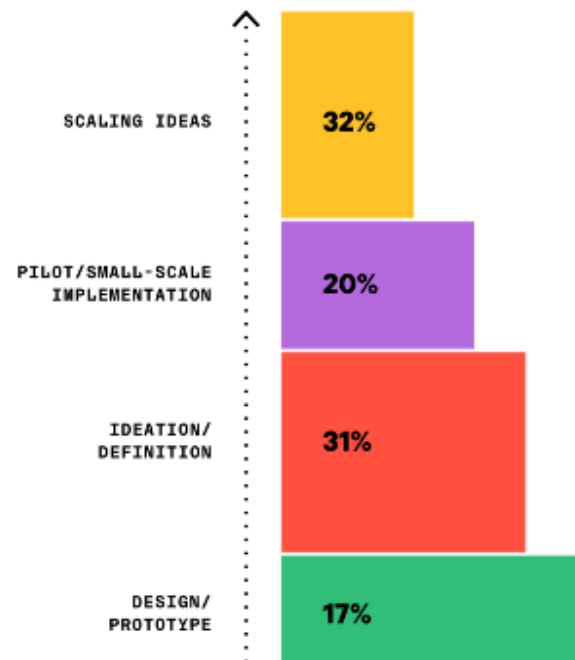
From all sectors

49% NON-PROFIT
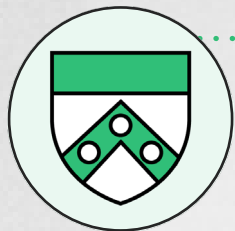34% FOR-PROFIT
13% OTHER
4% GOVERNMENT

At all stages of project development

SCALING IDEAS — 32%

PILOT/SMALL-SCALE IMPLEMENTATION — 20%

IDEATION/ DEFINITION — 31%

DESIGN/ PROTOTYPE — 17%

At all career stages

24%
EARLY CAREER
(0-5 YEARS)

64%
MID-CAREER
(6-19 YEARS)

12%
PEAK CAREER
(20+ YEARS)
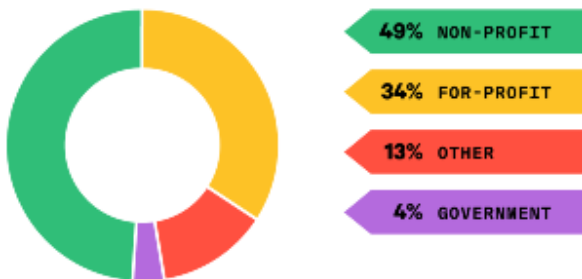
Admissions

Cohort Options	Program Start Date Live Orientation	Early Tuition	Early Tuition Enrollment Deadline	Regular Tuition
Blended	January 14, 2025	$4,950	November 7, 2025	$6,450
Online	September 11, 2025	$3,950	August 15, 2025	$4,950
	January 15, 2026		November 7, 2025	
	May 14, 2026		April 3, 2026	

	Additional Certificate requirements
Blended	The Blended program features a convening on March 18-20, 2026 at the University of Pennsylvania, on-campus.
Online	Both programs feature optional monthly virtual community days with the teaching team and active cohorts

Tuition includes six online courses and, depending on the program format you choose, an additional in-person convening hosted at the University of Pennsylvania or an additional course on social innovation. Graduates will receive a certificate from the School of Social Policy and Practice at the University of Pennsylvania upon completing 4 core classes, 2 electives, a capstone assignment, and attending the in-person convening (SIS Blended) or an additional course (SIS Online).

A non-refundable $950 deposit is required to enroll in the program.

Financing Options

We are proud to say that the Executive Program in Social Impact Strategy is among the most affordable executive programs available today. While scholarships are not available, interest-free payment plans are available for admitted students.

Executive Program
in Social Impact Strategy

and Next Steps

Email an admissions advisor

email to: admissions@csis.upenn.edu

Attend an information session

csis.upenn.edu/executive-program/sis/#info-sessions

Start your application
- Blended
- Online

csis.upenn.edu/executive-program/sis/#apply

*While we would like to admit everyone who is qualified, we do have a limited number of spots. Accepted students who pay their deposits on time guarantee their spot in the 2026 cohort, until the class is filled.

About the Center for Social Impact Strategy

The Center for Social Impact Strategy is a research and action center based in the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy & Practice. Our mission is to make tools and resources for social impact available to anyone, anywhere. We believe in providing cutting edge content with immediate real world application.

OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Provide training and tools to people who seek to make change around the world.

2. Deepen understanding of the distinctive strategies adopted by world changers as they seek to innovate and generate social impact.

3. Create a thriving global community of leading social innovators who are committed to the growth and success of the entire field.
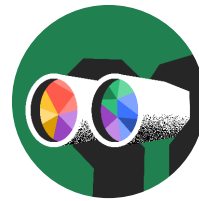
Penn Social Policy & Practice | The Center for Social Impact Strategy
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

OUR VALUES

Establish Intention
Our actions and words are informed by the aspirations we set for ourselves.

Listen In
When in conversation, we don't wait for our chance to speak, but rather actively listen.

Believe in a Better World
Though some days may feel grim, we anchor ourselves not in problems, but possibilities.

Build Community
We know we can't do it alone; we open ourselves to others for support and guidance.

Authorize Yourself
Our worth is inherent and internally-sourced; we may have to take risks to make the right choice.

Lead with Empathy
Our work is driven by compassion and generosity; we assume the best in others.

Make It Happen
We are driven by action; we don't think to build, but rather build to think.

Create Every Day
Our creativity is cultivated through a daily practice; our days are up to us to create.

People Matter
We remember that to affect many, we must affect some and to affect some, we must affect one.

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Core Courses

Social Impact Strategy / 6 weeks

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- How to define the value and mission of your work

- Approaches to programmatic models that account for impact, sustainability, risk, and generative governance

- An understanding of your competitive environment and how best to compete and collaborate

- Tools to measure organizational performance, manage risk, and negotiate with others

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Peter Frumkin is the Mindy and Andrew Heyer Chair in Social Policy, Director of the Master's in Nonprofit Leadership Program, and Faculty Director of the Center for Social Impact Strategy, all at the University of Pennsylvania. His research and teachings focus on nonprofit strategy, philanthropy, and social entrepreneurship. He is the author or co-author of six books, including Strategic Giving: The Art of Science of Philanthropy; On Being Nonprofit; and Serving Country and Community.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING

"The logic model, strategic triangle, and theory of change tools (along with expert instruction) were worth the price of the entire program. A mistake I often make (until now) is "starting with the beginning in mind." These tools are really valuable for "starting with the end in mind" and reverse engineering to what needs to happen every day to make the greatest possible impact now and in the future."

BT Irwin
Founder, BT Irwin & Co.

Community & Collaboration / 3 weeks

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- Resources to help you get to know your community and how it works

- Multiple perspectives on community assets and how our ventures can fit into the existing fabric of those communities

- Tools to identify and use communities' strengths as opportunities for self-help and for partnership

- Strategies for clarifying goals of partnering and assessing potential partners and creating a common agenda with collaborators and evaluation

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Maria Rosario Jackson is an expert in the fields of urban planning, comprehensive community revitalization and arts and culture. She is Senior Advisor to the Kresge Foundation and consults with national and regional foundations and government agencies. In 2013, President Obama appointed Dr. Jackson to the National Council on the Arts. She is adjunct faculty at the University of Southern California where she teaches in the Arts Leadership Program. She is also the James Irvine Fellow in Residence at the Luskin School of Public Affairs at the University of California, Los Angeles and has taught in the Urban Planning program.

WHY WE OFFER THIS CLASS

"Understanding our communities and their challenges is the #1 obstacle to developing a successful, appropriate, effective, and sustainable intervention. Understanding our communities is the first and ongoing step in ascertaining the demand and the strength in our communities."

Ariel Schwartz
Managing Director, CSIS

Executive Program
in Social Impact Strategy

Marketing for Social Impact / 3 weeks

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- Frameworks to understand challenges and opportunities from the perspective of the customer rather than the organization

- Techniques to clearly articulate a value proposition that can help guide marketing and strategic decisions

- Evaluation tools to assess the alignment of programs, pricing, promotion, and channels to affect consumer behavior and achieve goals

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Jim Rosenberg is the founder of Workbench Services where he works with mission-driven organizations on innovation, strategy, and new ventures. Jim has extensive experience in both nonprofit and commercial organizations, including startups, mission-driven nonprofits, and Fortune 500 corporations. Jim was a Vice President at National Arts Strategies from 2005 to 2013 with responsibility for market strategy and new business development. He holds an M.B.A. from Stanford University Graduate School of Business, and a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING

"Over the last few years, I've witnessed a growing number of grassroots organizations looking for a way to evolve out of the traditional development (donor-dependent) model. For the first time, I can confidently say that I have a set of tools to support their ambitions. The concepts are transforming my relationship with my clients/constituents, and helping them transform their marketing relationships with their primary audiences."

Damilola Walker
Senior Advisor, UNICEF

Business Models for Social Enterprise / 6 weeks

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- An understanding of the fast-changing world of social enterprise finance

- An overview of revenue sources that can finance social impact, including earned income, donations, and public support models

- Tools for understanding the financial engine of social enterprises

- New and emerging financial models that drive social enterprises today

- Exposure to financial components of for-profit, non-profit social enterprises and hybrid social enterprises

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Suzi Sosa is the Co-Founder and CEO of Verb. She has been involved in the social entrepreneurship space for more than 10 years and has advised hundreds of start-ups, non-profit and for-profit companies. Prior to Verb, she led the Dell Social Innovation Challenge at the University of Texas at Austin, where she also taught social entrepreneurship and was the Founder and President of the MPOWER. She holds a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING

"This course helped me understand the macro view of embedding impact within my organization's mission and making sure that my activities and financial gains remained aligned with the impact I was seeking. It also taught me the importance of recognizing business models as an evolutionary process, one that requires you to ideate, test, evaluate, and ideate some more."

Mohammed Abdulla
Founder, Good Faith Energy

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Elective Courses

Data Science

INSTRUCTOR: EZEKIEL DIXON-ROMAN, PHD

This course introduces students to statistics, with a focus on how they are commonly used for organizational management, planning, and decision- making. Students will learn to use numerical and graphical tools to describe a single variable, and to summarize the distribution of a variable. Further, students will learn how to use bivariate graphical displays/correlation and regression to describe the relationship between a pair of variables and to examine the effect of two or more variables on an outcome of interest. Students will also learn how to interpret and report data both in tables and written narrative. Finally, the course will cover what are the key questions that should be explored and examined in order to realize the powerful information that exists in one's data.

Digital Media in Social Movements

INSTRUCTOR: ROSEMARY CLARK-PARSONS, PHD

Digital media platforms and their users are changing the way social movements mobilize. While activist organizers continue to face many of the same obstacles that have challenged movements for generations, the internet has raised both new opportunities and questions for today's change-makers. Building successful movements in the digital age requires a thorough understanding of digital media and their affordances and limitations as organizing resources. Drawing on case studies of movements from around the world and cutting-edge social science research, this course will equip you with an actionable toolkit for strengthening your digital media practices. On completing this course, you will be able to: understand how digital platforms are transforming social movements and community organizing; assess and balance the opportunities and challenges of using digital media to support campaigns for change; and cultivate a digital mobilization practice that supports your initiative's mission and values.

*This class comes with bonus material taught by Sherrie A. Madia, PhD

Introduction to Social Media Strategies: If you take Digital Media for Social Movements, we will also offer introductory material on developing strategies to craft the voice of an institution and enact a strategic plan to organically and authentically engage your communities. This segment is an introduction to strategic use of social media for social ventures. This sort of use of social media is significantly different than the way you would use it in your personal life. We hope, as you move through this segment, you will wonder: what does it mean to craft the voice of an institution? What is it like to speak in the voice of an institution, instead of my own? And how could one get started developing a plan to organically and authentically engage a community?

Unleashing Large Scale Social Movements

INSTRUCTOR: JOE MCCANNON

There is no shortage of compelling ideas and effective interventions for making the world better, but very few great ideas spread. Aspiring leaders of big social change rarely succeed in reaching and mobilizing the many. There are exceptions to this pattern, and this course seeks to explain what sets apart the initiatives that become successful large-scale movements. These efforts reliably address three questions in order to achieve big impact: How can we secure a genuine commitment from others to join us in the hard work ahead? How can we set a strategy that gives us leverage and reach, making the most of our finite resources? How can we take action, day in and day out, in such a way that we meet our aims for growth and impact, optimizing rapid learning and improvement by everyone in our movement? This class offers a blueprint for spreading ideas, innovations and programs that work, allowing you to engage the most people possible to change behavior and social outcomes at scale explored and examined in order to realize the powerful information that exists in one's data.

Ethical Decesion Making in Organizations

INSTRUCTOR: FEMIDA HANDY, BSC, MA, MES, PHD

This course will introduce ethical issues that arise when pursuing social goals, and discuss the best ways to promote ethical conduct within nonprofits. We begin with a review of the forces that may distort judgment and the various ethical frameworks in which to understand the dilemmas and propose solutions. Using specific case studies, we will analyze a variety of ethical issues that arise in a variety of settings such as: finance, governance, accountability, fundraising, paid and unpaid labor when dealing with multiple stakeholders and balancing multiple bottom-lines. Each week will conclude by suggesting some practical ways that organizations can prevent and correct misconduct, develop a spirit of ethical behavior, and institutionalize ethical values in the organization's culture.

Impact Management

INSTRUCTOR: JED EMERSON & SARA OLSEN

Learn to identify and articulate the underlying assumptions that must be met in order for your theory of change to move from mission to impact and strategies to develop appropriate metrics so you can assess whether you are truly making that happen. This elective defines social performance measurement and its relevance, offers strategies to engage stakeholders in conversations around value and performance, and explores practical tools to drive impact. This elective will challenge you to: define who and what is meaningfully affected by the work that you do, capture and analyze this information in a regular and cost effective way, and explore ways the information can be used to improve decisions, enhance social impact, define brand, boost income, and reduce risk.

Research Design for Social Impact Leaders

INSTRUCTOR: ALLISON RUSSELL, PHD; ARIEL SCHWARTZ, PHD; ROSEMARY CLARK-PARSONS, PHD

This course is designed for social impact leaders looking to familiarize themselves with the research process and learn how to engage in feasible, stakeholder-centered research. It will help you to determine if and when to engage in research; to understand the difference between academic and social impact research contexts; to develop a sensible research question, based on your initiative's theory of change; to involve community perspectives at different stages of the project, from design to data collection to implementing findings; and to cultivate an ethical and actionable research plan that will help you and your organization assess whether your work is creating impact. If you have ever wondered whether research was necessary for your organization, and how to make the best use of your time and resources to generate the most useful information for your organization and stakeholder communities, then this elective is for you!

Volunteer Management

INSTRUCTOR: LUCAS WELTER, PHD

Nonprofit organizations and social ventures utilize millions of volunteers each year to deploy programs and interventions, reach clients, spread the word about their work, and, ultimately, support their mission and purpose. According to the UN 2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report, an estimated 1 billion individuals volunteer worldwide. That's a lot of volunteers! Perhaps you already work with many volunteers in your initiative. Or, perhaps you're beginning to think about how volunteers will fit into your venture. This course will provide you with tools and insights to think about how to work with volunteers effectively. After completing this course, you will be able to: understand and explain the need for volunteer management; identify the elements of a successful volunteer journey and how to design and manage the different components; assess and evaluate your current volunteer journey (or start one from scratch); analyze best practices so volunteer managers can understand how to do their jobs more effectively and use volunteers more strategically; and develop trainings and tools that will make volunteer activities more successful.

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