

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Business Faculty Publications and
Presentations

The School of Business

2019

Using Learning Outcomes to Engage Community and Drive Iteration

Jacen Greene

Portland State University, jacen@pdx.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/busadmin_fac



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Citation Details

Greene, Jacen. "Using Learning Outcomes to Engage Community and Drive Iteration" in *Preparing Students for a Rapidly Changing World: Learning Outcomes for Social Innovation, Social Entrepreneurship, and Changemaker Education*. Ashoka U. February, 2019.

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Business Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

CHAPTER 8

Using Learning Outcomes to Engage Community and Drive Iteration



In this Chapter Jacen Greene, Director of the Impact Entrepreneurs program at Portland State University's School of Business, shares learning outcomes for PSU's Certificate in Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship. The chapter is based on an interview Ashoka U conducted with Greene in May of 2018.

Consider how Greene and colleagues use outcomes to build community, achieve alignment, and shape educational design and measurement.

As Director of Impact Entrepreneurs at Portland State University (PSU), Jacen Greene has used learning outcomes as a tool for preparing students to engage in social entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship effectively and ethically. He has also used them as a tool for broader engagement, creating an inclusive educational design and iteration process.

"It is important to remember that learning outcomes are one step in a larger feedback loop – one that must make space for students, community members, and other stakeholders," explains Greene (2018).

SOCIAL INNOVATION & SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP OUTCOMES

"PSU's Certificate in Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship is focused on... preparing students to pursue social change through venture development" Greene explains. "But for us, the definition of 'venture' is pretty expansive. We discuss social entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in our courses.

And we see these learning outcomes as being applicable to running a stand-alone nonprofit or business as well as to working in internal programs at existing nonprofits, businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies” (2018).

The coursework, which includes three online courses and a field study, takes place over one academic year. Each course is designed to prepare students for important aspects of venture development.

The learning outcomes that were developed to guide Portland State University’s Certificate in Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship can be found below:

**PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY:
Certificate in Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship Learning Outcomes**

COURSE 1 – MGMT 421/521

Design Thinking for Social Innovation:

Outcomes for this course focus on (1) foundational knowledge of social innovation and (2) processes for engaging as a social innovator. Students develop research and systems-thinking skills as they work to understand the social challenge of their choice, then engage in design thinking skills as they develop potential solutions.

- “Understand foundational definitions in social innovation and social entrepreneurship and how they relate to your concept.
- Analyze a social or environmental problem of your choice through expert interviews, secondary research, and stakeholder engagement.
- Create and evaluate a proposed solution to a social or environmental problem using best practices in design.
- Develop and demonstrate improved self-awareness, clarity of purpose, ability to seek and respond effectively to feedback, and empathic leadership skills” (Portland State University, n.d. b, para. 9-12).

COURSE 2 – MGMT 422/522S

Money Matters for Social Innovation:

Outcomes in this course focus on business modeling and management skills necessary for launching a venture. Students cultivate skills in business design and management.

- “Apply lean entrepreneurship tools, including the Business Model Canvas and Customer Development Process, to design a business model for your venture.
- Evaluate legal entities (nonprofit and for-profit) and develop a hypothesis as to which one you should adopt; develop a plan for managing your intellectual property.
- Estimate the market size and social opportunity size of your proposed social venture, incorporating risk analysis and the competitive landscape.

table continued →

- Create forward-looking financial statements and understand which sources of social venture funding may be a fit for your model.
- Reflect on and apply self-awareness, social awareness, and ethical leadership skills” (Portland State University, n.d. c, para. 8-11).

COURSE 3 - MGMT 423/523S

Storytelling and Impact Measurement for Social Innovation:

Outcomes in this course focus on cultivating knowledge and skills for communicating the aims and effects of social entrepreneurship efforts.

- “Identify a leadership competency based on personal and career reflection; practice and improve that competency.
- Craft your personal story and organizational story into a pitch to communicate your venture’s value proposition to a specific target audience.
- Develop an effective impact measurement outline using leading frameworks for social and environmental impact analysis and reporting.
- Adapt and deploy strategies to successfully scale or amplify the impact of social and environmental ventures” (Portland State University, n.d. d, para. 7-10).

(Portland State University, n.d. a)

“Students begin with problem analysis and design thinking, including working to understand a challenge and work toward a solution. From there, students move into venture-focused skills, like understanding legal entities, setting up a budget, managing a start-up, and so forth” (Greene, 2018). Concrete learning outcomes focus the curriculum and pedagogy for each experience.

The explicit learning outcomes for each course focus on more concrete knowledge and skills. A focus on the changemaker mindset, Greene explains, is infused across coursework through content selection and pedagogical design.

DEVELOPING LEARNING OUTCOMES

To develop the learning outcomes guiding the certificate program, Greene led a human-centered design process that convened stakeholders from across Portland’s social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Inspired by IDEO’s Human-Centered Design practices (IDEO, n.d.), Greene and his colleagues at the School of Business convened faculty, staff, students, and community members, including social entrepreneurs, for a series of design charrettes held over the course of a semester. Design charrettes provide a format for fast-paced, collaborative design and iteration. Each design charrette brought a different group of stakeholders together to collaboratively map critical social innovation and social entrepreneurship learning outcomes.

“ Inclusion must be a core aim of social entrepreneurship and social innovation. But it is also critical to the process. We cannot achieve a more equitable, a more just society unless the changemaking communities working toward this end are inclusive ones.”

Jacen Greene, Director of Impact Entrepreneurs,
Portland State University (2018)

Stakeholders then whittled the outcomes identified through the design charrettes to a core set of outcomes through a facilitated aggregation and prioritization process. What resulted is a framework that draws across disciplines to equip future social entrepreneurs with a broad spectrum of critical knowledge and abilities.

“From coordinating charrettes to aggregating results, the process was challenging at times,” Greene explains, “But absolutely worth it. Bringing our community together allowed us to learn from many, and account for a diversity of experiences in our outcomes” (2018).

PUTTING LEARNING OUTCOMES IN ACTION

Learning outcomes are a tool to strategically guide the educational experience. For the learning outcomes that Greene and his colleagues developed to be meaningful, they had to become more than words on a page. The outcomes had to be embedded in and become a driving force for a continual feedback loop in the certificate program.

The next step in this feedback loop, after developing the outcomes, involves educational design and facilitation. PSU's certificate program was designed with the intention of helping students achieve the learning outcomes that the stakeholder community had scoped. Decisions “from the number of courses in the certificate to specific course content, assignments, and pedagogical approaches” (Greene, 2018) were determined according to how they would help students progress toward these learning goals.

The third step in the loop focuses on feedback collection. Beyond reviewing assignments, Greene and colleagues built in several additional feedback collection mechanisms to better understand the effects of the certificate experience for students. Greene explains, “Embedded in the courses is an anonymous student survey halfway through each term that specifically asks about ways to improve delivery, content, and inclusion and representation... In addition, we have a standardized interview for every graduate of the certificate asking about recommendations for improvements... Finally, our student changemaker skills survey helps us evaluate student progress against changemaker skills embedded in the learning outcomes... in the same way that assignments help us track performance against (other) skills” (2018).

The final step in this process, integrating feedback, brings the cycle to a close. After collecting this data,

the team facilitating the certificate reviews and integrates feedback into the program design for future iterations. Sometimes feedback even catalyzes iteration of the learning outcomes themselves.

ITERATING FORWARD

Though the process to develop outcomes for the Certificate was extensive, Greene insists that continued iteration is critical. “One of the biggest challenges to making learning outcomes actionable is the lack of continuous feedback and improvement mechanisms” (Greene, 2018). This feedback loop is an opportunity to continue inviting and embedding a diversity of perspectives in the Certificate and improving upon the learning experience.

This iterative approach is critical because learning outcomes matter to student impact. “Students interact with learning outcomes as a part of the syllabi, in course reading, and course activities. They think and talk about outcomes in terms of the skills and abilities they are gaining” (Greene, 2018). That means, Greene emphasizes, that outcomes must also be central to how educators develop, facilitate, and improve upon the learning experience. “To help students grow as changemakers, and to cultivate a changemaking community, you have to be focusing on and embodying changemaking skills yourself. You need to constantly be asking yourself – ‘How can I connect with others? Engage empathetically? Demonstrate critical thinking?’” (Greene, 2018). In doing so, learning outcomes become a powerful tool for educators to grow alongside their students and the changemaker community they are cultivating.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Feedback loops are critical to understand the progress students make and to support continual course iteration and improvement. Articulating educational goals through learning outcomes is the first step in this process.
- Bringing a diverse community of stakeholders together to determine learning outcomes offers an opportunity to strengthen relationships and ensure that resulting outcomes will be representative of many different perspectives and experiences.
- Articulating sometimes implicit outcomes offers a way to ensure that they are a visible priority in the educational space and for students.
- Designing learning experiences to help students achieve outcomes and measure progress over time illuminates educational efficacy and opportunities to iterate and improve.