



## **CMM 222: Small Group Communication\***

*\*Materials complements of Professor Robert Duran, Communication*

### ***Social Action Project***

The Social Action Project was conceived to address two course objectives. First, it was designed to provide students in the Small Group Communication course with a meaningful and engaging group activity that would enable natural group dynamics to emerge. As such, the project serves as a stimulus for students to experience, observe, and analyze small group concepts and theories (e.g., stages of group development and structure, cohesion, conflict and conflict management, leadership, procedures for decision-making, pitfalls of groupthink and other sources of faulty decision-making, procedures for running meetings, group presentational skills, etc.). At the conclusion of the project, students write a paper analyzing the process and group dynamics they witnessed and experienced during the course of the assignment.

Students are placed in groups of five to six members and given approximately six weeks to complete the project. Students are required to give a twenty-five minute, oral, multimedia presentation to the class. The content of the presentation is to include compelling documentation of the need for the proposal, an analysis of the causes of the problem, a detailed plan, which includes a discussion of previous attempts to address the issue, as well as a thorough analysis of the *costs* of implementation of the proposal, and a discussion of the advantages and *'benefits'* of the proposal. Students are also required to provide a written copy of the proposal that reflects the differences between oral and written presentations. Finally, students prepare an executive summary of the proposal which is submitted to the appropriate university departments (e.g., O&M, Public Safety, Dean of Students, etc.).

The second purpose of the social action project is to provide students with an opportunity to effect change in their environment, the University of Hartford. Through the years, many of the proposals from the Small Group Communication class have been adopted by the university. The following are some examples of social action projects: picnic and volleyball area (in front of Lincoln Theatre), shuttle bus cover (in front of the Hartt School), handicap access door (Mortensen Library), food cart (Dana Hall), televisions (Sports Center), numerous lights around campus for security, scrolling signs announcing university events, and snack bar (Sports Center). There have been many other proposals that have been positively received by various departments but were deemed as too expensive. Students take great pride in their projects and experience an incredible sense of accomplishment when they are adopted.