

# BUSINESS+IMPACT

At Michigan Ross

## Board Fellowship Program

*Information for Students*

The Board Fellowship Program prepares University of Michigan graduate students for responsible community leadership, while developing a cadre of young professionals to become future nonprofit board members.

Since 2003, over 500 Board Fellows have been placed in 200 nonprofit organizations. These students have assisted with various projects, from marketing plans to performance measurement. Through the Board Fellowship Program, organizations benefit from fresh perspectives and talents and develop a lasting affiliation with the University of Michigan. In return, students gain practical board experience, a familiarity with the nonprofit sector, and development of skills.

Board Fellows serve as *non-voting* board members of nonprofit organizations in Southeast Michigan for an academic year (from mid-October through April), gaining insight into the challenges facing their organization and the complexities of nonprofit management. Students work closely with the board and executive director of their assigned organization, attend board meetings, serve on committees, and learn about the issues facing the board and staff. In addition, Board Fellows are expected to complete a board-level project for the board over the course of their placement.

### Criteria

Graduate students are invited to apply in the fall. Board Fellows must possess:

- A record of academic and professional excellence
- Knowledge and skills relevant to particular nonprofits, their boards, and the defined project
- Sensitivity to issues of community needs, financial concerns, and confidentiality
- A commitment to the nonprofit sector

### Board Fellowship Timeline:

- **August** – Student applications are available on Business+Impact website.
- **September** - Students attend one of the two mandatory Board Fellowship information sessions. The list of nonprofits and project details will be shared with attendees.
- **September** – Submit completed application via email to [businessimpact@umich.edu](mailto:businessimpact@umich.edu).
- **Late September** – Select students invited to interview with staff, who then recommend matches to nonprofit organizations based on student skills and interests, as well as needs of the nonprofits.
- **Late September** – Nonprofit organizations connect with recommended student, and confirm fellowship. Board Fellows are then announced.
- **Early October** -- Mandatory orientation for selected Board Fellows and nonprofit partners.
- **Mid-October - April**: Students serve as Board Fellows.

**Business+Impact**

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[www.businessimpact.umich.edu](http://www.businessimpact.umich.edu)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What types of projects do Board Fellows undertake?

Projects assigned are board-level projects, not staff-level work, and are designed to be manageable in light of the student's other academic demands. Examples of student projects include:

- Board assessment (review of past board assessments or development of new process)
- Performance measurement (developing a balanced scorecard or creating an evaluation system)
- Strategic plans (developing a strategic plan for growth, fund development or web development)
- Marketing plans (developing a strategy for public relations or branding)
- Fund development (analyzing current fundraising efforts to increase donations)
- Finance (conducting a cost/benefit analysis)

### What type of training and support is provided to Board Fellows and organizations?

At the beginning of the fellowship, students and nonprofit partners are provided an orientation of the Board Fellowship Program. The majority of the content and training for students is done through a series of workshops offered during October - January. The workshops are taught and/or facilitated by faculty, nonprofit experts, and prior board fellows. The topics range from the basics of board governance, project scoping, fundraising, and are intended to provide avenues for students to compare learning, issues, and experiences. In addition, nonprofits and students receive ongoing support from the Business+Impact staff such as additional project resources or communication channels to establish clear expectations.

### What is the time commitment for Board Fellows?

Board Fellows voluntarily commit a similar amount of time per month as a full board member (typically 6-10 hours a month), including attending board meetings, committee meetings, and completing their project. It is strongly encouraged that the Board Fellow and their organization discuss expectations at the beginning of their term.

### What is expected from Board Fellows?

- Attend all board meetings and serve on one board committee
- Complete a project or set of projects within the board and committee work that leverages your graduate-level skills
- Help with and attend special events
- Seek support and mentoring from a sponsoring board mentor and staff mentor
- Maintain consistent communication with mentors and the organization
- Attend trainings and workshops hosted by B+I, as well as maintain program commitments

### What are the benefits of serving as a Board Fellow?

- Meaningful participation in the management of a nonprofit organization
- Professional knowledge and skills in board governance
- Skills for effective collaboration with community leaders
- Opportunities to integrate tools learned in the classroom with the board fellowship experience

### Who should I contact with questions or concerns?

Please contact Business+Impact staff at (734) 763-4214 or email [businessimpact@umich.edu](mailto:businessimpact@umich.edu).

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