Team Report Presentation—Cooking Classes at MIT

AUDIENCE—The Board of Campus Dining and Living has the responsibility of providing dining facilities that satisfy student needs, and doing so at a reasonable price. They also have a stake in the status quo, since it is a product of decisions already made. Being too critical of existing services will antagonize this audience. You might have used two-sided argument to build the problem that required your solution, but skipping to the solution is probably valid here. With so much discussion of new dining plans already under way, you really do not need to prove that some new way of doing things will be welcome to students. This audience will want to know how much it will cost, and how much extra work there will be for them to do; other issues should be kept to a minimum so as not to blunt your arguments.

STRATEGY—Your strategy was present cooking classes as a way of encouraging students to do more meal preparation themselves. This might relieve the existing dining facilities of some demand, and at the same time give Campus Dining a way to answer students who are unsatisfied with planned improvements in student dining. Since student satisfaction is the measure of Campus Dining’s success, your extensive use of the survey was mostly effective. You were also effective in emphasizing that this would be a pilot program and that it would involve extra work for Campus Dining. These are critical elements to gaining assent from such a group. As noted above, your lack of direct criticism of existing dining facilities was also a good strategy; even though Campus Dining is very aware improvements are needed, they would not enjoy having an extended critique from you. What you are proposing does not replace existing dining facilities, so there are no “mistakes” to be corrected. The best way to deal with a negative issue is to avoid it when you can!

STRUCTURE/DEVELOPMENT—Your audience had neutral bias. They are keenly aware of the need to keep the students happy, but resistant to radical change. Your credibility is based upon being built on student opinion, which you have harnessed in an extensive poll. The poll allows you to use direct structure, because you are essentially reporting the opinions of the students polled. Campus Dining must be receptive to students’ wants and needs, so putting your recommendation first works for you here. However, your actual use of the survey was not as effective as it should have been. The statistics are fine, but you needed more on the significance of the statistics. Had you dwelt a bit on the gender discrepancy, for example, you might have set up your location decision better.

The emphasis on this as a pilot program was effective. This was a good use of “foot in the door”. Your goal with this audience was a bit hazy, since you were presenting a proposed course rather than a dining facility, but they could see where you were heading, so I will let it pass. You might have used foot in the door again to say you wanted to get Campus Dining’s support before proposing this as course to some department.

Your methodical analysis of costs and staffing needs would also have been effective with your audience.

On the negative side, there was too much time spent on determining the level of the course, how long it would be, and when it would be taught for this audience. And the PE credit issue was of more interest to students than this audience. This last might have been skipped entirely

PRESENTATION STYLE/VISUALS—There was variation in presenters’ effectiveness, but there were more highlights than lowlights. At your best, the team showed some remarkable mastery, with instances of real engagement with your audience. There was also a wonderful internal summary (“who, what when where”) that really helped in a fairly long presentation. In fact, this structure would have been good to introduce at the beginning. Some presenters took excellent positions, and moved to and from the screen effectively. At other times, presenters were not as effective, but the overall engagement was very good. We persuade with our eyes, and this team maximized their effective eye contact.

There were excellent intros of team members and what they would be talking about, so it was a minor flaw that names were not reiterated when pass-offs occurred. Team mates were attentive to each presenter.

It took a LOT of slides to get the location settled. And there were a couple of noticeable mistakes in sequence.

Again, more highlights than lowlights, which is good. And these highlights boosted your grade.

Q&A—The team did a good job with Q&A, particularly in helping each other out by jumping in—this makes you look like a team. And the questions showed the audience engagement you achieved—nothing coming in out of left field. There was an excellent reiteration of “pilot program” in the Q&A—we like to repeat things that help us!

The team should be together for Q&A; you had one member off to the opposite side.

Team Report Presentation grade: 9.2/10 Written Report grade: 10.9/12