

1.1 What am I doing here

- How did this come to my attention – I once visited the 4th grade in my old elementary school and brought with me a colleague from Russia. We spoke about life in Russia and how things were different. The students were inquisitive. More importantly, to my mind, I ran in to the parents of one of those students a couple months later. They mentioned how extensively that their daughter had spoken about the visit with them over several days. It struck me not only how much of an impact that the visit had on the students, but also the parents (the fact that they would go out of their way to stop me on the street and bring this up).
- Why should I spend time on this –
 - uniquely qualified – we all are; most of us just don't know it
 - it has the potential to have huge impact on both students (mentees) and adults (mentors)
 - it is important to lead – to show others how they can make a difference (set an example)
 - key benefit – lead by helping others lead
- Which of my values are threatened or to be served –
 - failing to leave the world a little bit better
 - augmenting growth by helping others spot opportunities
- What do I have at stake here –
 - not much
 - *everything to gain (nothing to lose) → let's enter this room in which our youth live*
 - eternal life - the ability to pass on knowledge - I traveled the same path and want to see others succeed as I have
- What competencies do I have to bring to this idea – *I am looking for...*
 - diverse experiences
 - experience - achievement (having “gotten out”) + knowing the roads that I have traveled
 - connections to interesting people
 - passion

1.2 - Why is anyone else interested

- What do others have at stake –
 - legacy
 - popular opinion of them
 - personal conscience
- What do they see as the problems / possible benefits –
 - problems =
 - trouble in the world (like to be happy)
 - possible benefits =
 - feel good about themselves (by helping others)
 - recognition
 - appreciation (by those helped)
 - respect
 - admiration
 - ensuring that their world is not disrupted by the trouble in others
 - growth – learn more about how life actually is

- eternal life
- Who is concerned –
 - *those who recognize the potential for great things in every single person*
- Are people genuinely concerned or do they have ulterior motives –
 - some genuine concern – those who can relate
 - ulterior motives – those who cannot relate (CV motivated)

1.3 - What is being assumed?

- What do people believe will happen with the status quo?
 - the world will continue to revolve
 - future generations will continually advance over those that came before
- Do they regard these consequences as desirable?
 - Yes – want to see everyone doing better
- What do they believe about one another?
 - believe others are self motivated
 - believe others are smart / out going / motivated
 - people have differing levels of concern over this area (depends on their background)

1.4 What does it mean?

- What are the key terms / What do they mean in terms of observable things (e.g., behavior)
 - *unknown opportunity* – unrecognized events or actions available to a person that would provide that person with a deeper understanding about themselves, their position in society, and their future
 - *control of one's future* – having the knowledge to continuously make informed decisions that will allow a person to move between 2 changing points over a period of time
 - *growth* – the possibility of understanding more tomorrow than you do today
- Do some of the key terms have multiple meanings?
 - all do – depends on perspective
 - *not everyone sees opportunity as a good thing – many want to be told what to do*
- Are there different terms to express the same concept?
 - *self determination* (more broadly)

Why

2.1 - What values are purported to be served or threatened

- What is alleged to be good about it? intrinsic good (inside) v. instrumental good (things lead to it)
 - makes those helped feel fulfilled (intrinsic)
 - sets an example for our fellow man (instrumental)
- Do we agree that the things identified as good are good?
 - Yes – *helping others help themselves is good*

2.2 – Does the proposal or practice lead to or contain what it is purported to ? (evaluate the strength of the cases made)

- What is the evidence that the idea (when implemented) has the effects on values claimed?

- I have seen how the eyes of children as young as 4th grade have been made wide by simple exposure to new things (e.g., Russian colleague speaking with 4th graders). I have spoken with fellow classmates from my high school and they have indicated their wish that they had had more info in making the decisions that they made in getting to the point that they have
- What other reasons can be offered in support of what is claimed?
 - How is it that the children of people who went to good schools always seem to make it in to good schools? Or the sons of former ambassadors go to Yale and Harvard, own a baseball team, become governor, and then become President (while his brother – supposedly the smart one – becomes governor as well)? Must be there genes, right? Has nothing to do with being a child in a house where ambition, success, good fortune and how to achieve them are talked about every day, right? Or is it that, ignoring the “connections” that would open doors for anyone, simply being made aware of the possibilities that life holds, understanding what is possible, exponentially increases the odds of doing great things.
 - Why is it that a disproportionate amount of incarcerated individuals are minorities and an even more disproportionately (like 95%) are from the lower class? Is it just poverty? Or is it even more fundamental – opportunity and the knowledge that it exists?
- What is our evaluation of the strength of the evidence and other reasons cited?
 - *need empirical evidence*
 - anecdotal evidence is strong, though
 - personal experience should bear the point

2.3 – Is the idea appropriate to this Context?

- What are our areas of interest, responsibility, and competence?
 - *interest* – gaining new experiences + recognition as being elite + healthy pay + wanting to make mark on the world
 - *responsibility* – for ourselves, families
 - *competence* – rich experiences + culture of success (got into Wharton) + appreciation of the need for diversity (in friends, personal life, and society at large)
- How does the idea relate to those areas?
 - leverages experiences
 - fulfills need for recognition and need to have positive influence
 - places in us a leadership position
- Is the idea sufficiently appropriate to these areas to continue inquiry into it?
 - Yes

3. Workability

3.1 – What is required to make the idea work?

- money - \$5,000 (to develop)
- time – 1 hour a week (to start up); 1/2 day (to visit your high school – can be on your trip home); 1 hour a week (to reach out to those who are following in your footsteps)
- equipment, supplies, materials – web interface and database
- space – none (only to meet)
- people –
 - web programmer

- people with enthusiasm, an understanding of the value of having opportunities and the ability to achieve them, and an ability to communicate that understanding
- curiosity – of students (and the desire to seek new opportunities)

3.2 - How will these requirements be met?

- How / from where will the resources be acquired?
 - donations – money = me; time = you and me
- How will other conditions be met?
 - There are two pieces – making resources available to students and making it easy for graduates to be those resources. The web interface makes it easy for graduates by allowing them to access the requests of students on their time. The database institutionalizes the knowledge previously transferred by graduates to allow students from asking the same questions. It also provides a rich, growing, living resource from which to glean practical knowledge

3.3 – How are we to know what is happening?

- How are we to know the idea has been implemented?
 - can check on-line – will see graduates registering there
 - inquiries from students will be posted there
 - system can monitor average response time of mentors so that students know who are the most responsive to their inquiries
- How are we to know if the idea has had its intended effects?
 - The goal is to expose youth to new ideas, experiences, and knowledge. Not that they actually act on it. It will have its intended effect.
 - I would like to have an annual dinner to bring together those who have mentored and those who have been mentees
- How are we to know if the idea has unintended effects?
 - Good question. I hope it does have unforeseen consequences because I don't know how those could be anything but good (e.g., a lifelong bond between mentor and mentee, a mentor thinking about a career change and going into teaching (realizing the value and potential for impacting another person's life)
 - We can ask for feedback from school administrators

4. Compatibility

4.1 - What are the implications for other values?

- Will resources have to be diverted from other sources?
 - No. This project runs outside of the school system but allows for input / participation / oversight where desired
- How will people's activities, functions, status, interpersonal relationships be changed? What effects?
 - People will connect with people they probably would never have known existed. People will be enriched by interacting with new people from varied backgrounds
- How are community (bystanders) likely to perceive the idea? What effect of their perceptions?
 - will be perceived positively

- hopefully they will join in. They will see how easy it is. They will understand that they have something valuable to contribute
- Who is likely to be threatened by the idea?
 - school administrators (counselors) – if feel jobs are threatened
 - teachers – if feel jobs / position of influence are threatened
 - alumni associations – if feel that being displaced as point of contact to alumni by this idea which promotes the idea of self fulfillment and helping others (i.e., more than just the idea of nostalgia)
- How do we address those who are threatened?
 - counselors – emphasize that this idea makes their job easier
 - teachers – explain that they are not being replaced; that students should be more interested in class as they better understand how what they learn in the class room relates to what they will face in the real world

5. Alternatives

5.1 – What other ideas are available to serve the same values?

- Are there ideas that are more effective?
 - No. This idea leverages good ideas, like being a mentor, helping others, self fulfillment, and makes them more effective, long lasting, and easier to undertake.
- Are there ideas that are more efficient?
 - No.
- Are there ideas which support the same values with fewer or less intense value conflicts?
 - No. Because this idea is totally elective. Once made aware of it, those alumni who want to participate go to the web site themselves and sign up through an efficient process that takes 5 minutes (5 minutes to fill out your complete biography – can take more time if you want). Administrators and teachers are powerless to stop it. because it is outside the school system

5.2 – Would we be better off if the resources were used to serve other values in the system?

- Where else in the system are these significant values to be served?
 - Age related – **Adults** (situation is more hopeless because often times no longer view themselves as part of the learning sub-system of life), **younger children** (more impressionable, more time to achieve greater things)
 - geographically – Outside of our home countries. Most of us do not comprehend how good we have it.
- Are there ideas available as to how these values might be served?
 - Problem is that these people are less accessible, less amenable to outside influence.
 - Seems like a different type of support mechanism would work better (Job training, better teachers in schools, basic education – including inculcating notion of women’s rights)
- Would the resources required for our idea be appropriate / adequate to implement these ideas serving alternative values?
 - No. Point is that mentors are too far away in time and space to be interested in contributing their insight in any other manner

6. Hierarchy – How important is it?

6.1 How valuable is this idea relative to its alternatives which serve the same values

- What is the cutoff to void this idea?
 - When no one responds to it – if it fails to gain traction

6.2 How valuable are the values served by this idea relative to other system values which may be served by the same resources?

- No other values that can really be served.

<h2>7. Commitment</h2>

7.1 – What now

- Meet once a week to monitor the progress of the development of the interface and database and address issues associated with and plan for implementation.
- Contact our respective high schools to garner interest. Bringing them on board will prove useful in contacting graduates (finding + credentialization)
- Contact alumni to find those high achievers with an interest who can serve as the initial contributors to start growing a critical mass of participating students.
- Contact students to bring them on board

We know they exist. We see them behind the counter, coming out of the factory when the shifts change, sweeping the floors when the lights go out. Yet, they are not so different from you or I, but for the choices they have made and the unknown opportunities that they have missed.

Now don't misunderstand me. I am not against people choosing whatever profession, career path, or lifestyle that they want. I merely want to ensure that this choice is an informed one. People should be able to grow through conscious decision rather than the state of their fortunes.

Broadly, I want to ensure that people gain the information they need to make informed choices about their future early enough in their lives to make a difference yet late enough that they have the ability to make their own decisions. More specifically, I am asking you to join me in empowering high school students to explore their possibilities by facilitating connection with graduates of their own high schools in mentoring relationships. Together, we can ensure that students have access to the expertise of those people who have invariably taken the exact same steps they are about to make.

Message

As we move through our lives, there is no shortage of opportunities to take on mentoring roles. What is missing, however, is a mechanism to connect people in mentoring relationships that allows them to pass on expert information that they know will be relevant to the person receiving it. By facilitating this connection, high school graduates will know that the experiences they have gained and information they pass on will allow those who follow in their footsteps to benefit from lessons learned and avoid mistakes made. They will know that they have made a difference.

Most of us have probably moved away from where we grew up and we have little time as it is. I envision a web interface that allows graduates, in the span of a couple of minutes, to enter information about themselves, their lives, experiences, accomplishments – how little or how much - with that information automatically compiled into a database searchable by students from each graduate's own high school. With the resources at their fingertips (and perhaps some delicate prodding from a school counselor), we can to empower students to help themselves.

I am merely looking for individuals wanting to make a difference by helping others make a difference as well.

And not only that, I want to know that we have created a movement that will outlast us, ensuring that future generations will continue to reach back and lend a hand to those who come after them.

If you are willing to make a difference, please visit Alums4students.com and provide whatever information about yourself you would like to make a difference in a growing high school student's life. Also, given my passion for this subject, I would like to follow-up individually with each of you who is interested in helping, so please provide your name and e-mail address on the sheet that I am passing around.

Are there any questions?

Thank you for allowing me to take a few minutes of your time. I stand here seeking those among you who are looking to lead, those wanting to leave your mark, those searching for that spark that will set your passion afire. I am looking for those among you who care – not in the sense of simply being concerned but more in the sense of understanding how good life can be, how good life is. Those who understand that the goodness of life that we enjoy here at Wharton can be enjoyed by all ...