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Layperson Summary

For my group honors thesis project, I am planning to design and deliver a month-long professional development program. The project involves elements of event planning and implementation beginning with market research to determine students' interests and needs, topic research and selection, identification of our audience, and management of the event as a whole.

The first step in designing the program was to brainstorm topics that would be of interest to Belk College of Business students. Special consideration was given to a program revolving around helping students improve their soft skills and business knowledge with an emphasis given to topics that are not covered in traditional business courses. We specifically researched other top business schools to identify best practices. After researching programs and identifying our key ideas, our group settled on conducting a professional development month. The professional development month will be presented with the help of the Belk College of Business and the Student Center for Professional Development. The Student Center for Professional Development provides an excellent opportunity for raising awareness of the event, and just as importantly we hope that our program will allow for an equally excellent vehicle for increasing the reach of the SCPD.

Since this program is designed for the students, our next phase of research involved reaching out to the students of the Belk College through a survey. In order to craft the survey, a focus group was formed to receive a broader range of ideas straight from the students to prevent the risk of a biased survey. After leading a 30-minute focus group, we were able to construct a survey we believe will allow students a chance to choose workshop topics based on their interests. After the results of our survey, the implementation and research phase continues at a more advanced level, as we network with speakers and prepare for our own presentations.

The month will consist of two to three workshops per week in February focusing on a particular class level (e.g. freshmen, sophomore, etc.) each week. This ensures that each message reaches the desired target audience. One of our main ideas is to actively involve the student organizations in our month-long program, for example, Enactus has reached out to the SCPD and our group to help plan an etiquette dinner for students during the month. This allows, again, for
more awareness for our program as well as for the student organizations within the college. Ultimately, we plan to measure our success not just by the attendance at the workshops, but by the quality presented through our program.