



University of Michigan Provost's Teaching Innovation Prize

2011 WINNER



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*Professor Ashford is accepting this award on
behalf of the Ross Leadership Initiative.*

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The Leadership Crisis Challenge (LCC): Forging Courage, Judgment, and Integrity

Innovation Description

The LCC simulation forces students to make decisions under acute time pressure and to trade off competing demands, thereby addressing the difficulty of teaching these key elements of leadership. Intangibles such as judgment, courage, and integrity are hard to meaningfully broach with traditional teaching methods. However, leaving these skills to be learned in the field has costly financial, social, and career consequences.

The intensive exercise runs 24 hours and presents a realistic business crisis that poses vexing questions: What does a company “owe” the community in which it does business? Should the natural environment be sacrificed for shareholder wealth? Can companies admit wrongs in today’s aggressive legal climate? In the absence of any “right answer,” students teams must think hard and critically regarding the best response, exercise integrity in making judgments about how to proceed, and exercise courage in standing up for those judgments under fire.

Acting as corporate executives, student teams present their plans of action to a confrontational Board of Directors (played by Ross faculty), who evaluate the quality of their decisions. The best student teams move on to a final round press conference where they face rapid, contentious questions from actual journalists (Knight-Wallace Fellows). Throughout the simulation, students are faced with changing circumstances conveyed by time-release documents, videos, and other interactive elements.

Student Comments

“...there are no preceding examples to guide you, no textbook reading to help your decision, and every answer at some point will feel like the wrong answer.”

“In many ways the amount of information we were given was intimidating – in other ways, we were starving for information. ...the case writers did a great job providing just enough ambiguity to make the case challenging.”

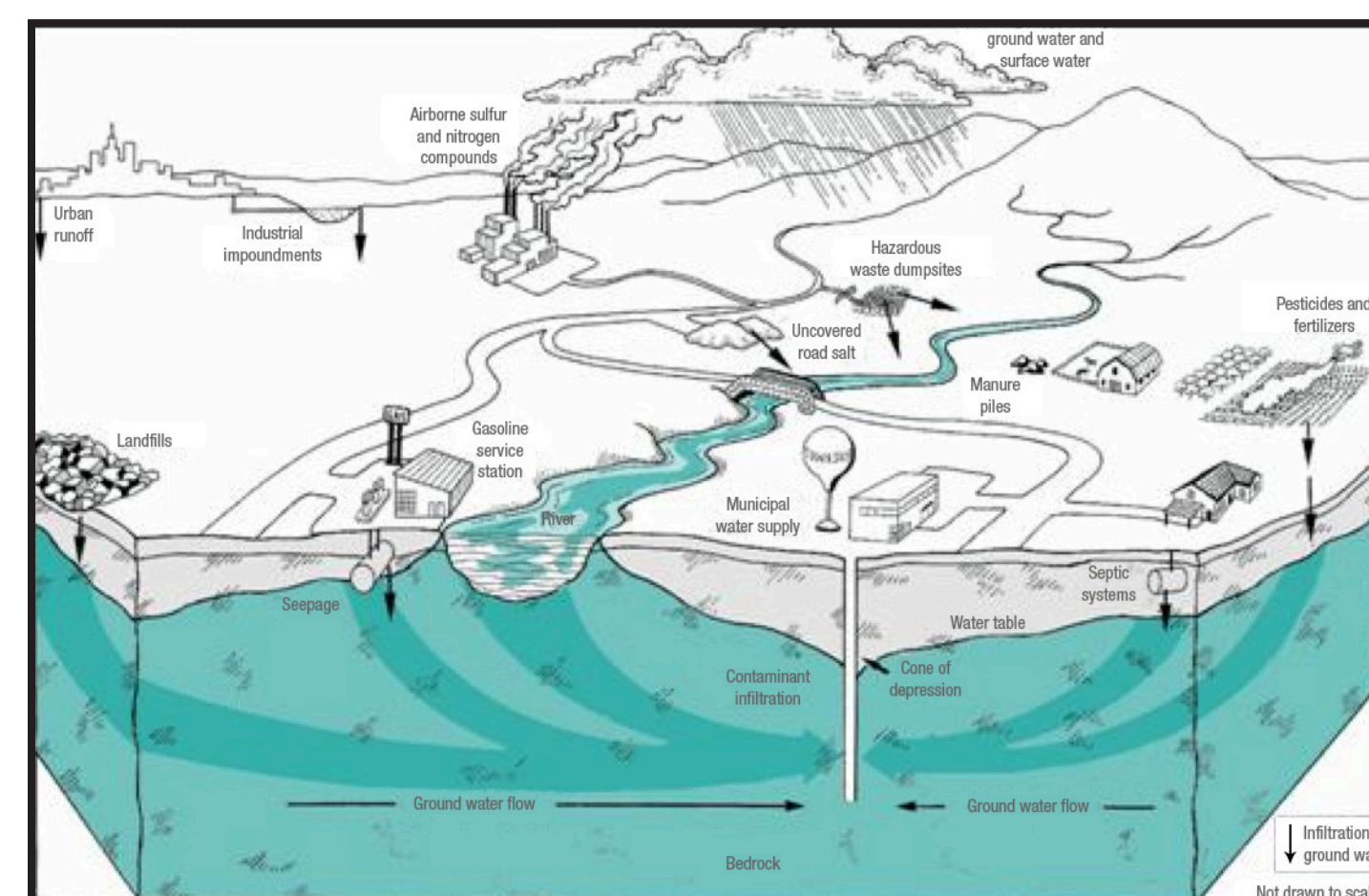
“...the [LCC] not only allowed me to apply lessons learned from my accounting, strategy, and management courses, but also taught me about making challenging, high-level decisions as a team, given limited time and incomplete information.”

“To stand in front of a hostile audience and defend yourself – that’s an opportunity that you don’t get that often in b-school.”

“It’s common to go into a business setting and have to work with VPs who may span different continents, who’ve never met or worked together before, to address a crisis in that moment. So I found the whole challenge to be very realistic. I think having this experience will definitely help me in the future.”

The LCC “really forced students to draw upon skills that they may never have realized they possessed.”

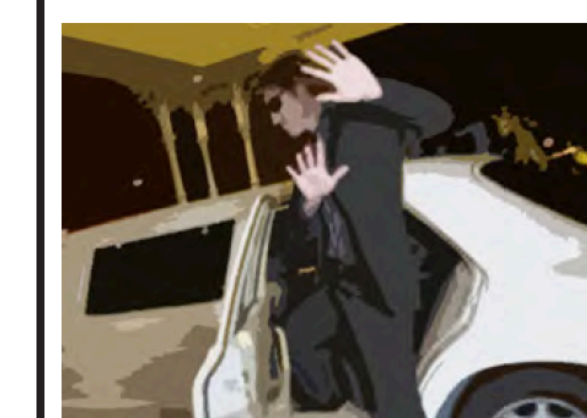
Examples of Teaching Innovation



AquaStar executives (played by business students) are informed that their water bottling operation has been contaminating groundwater in Grayling, Michigan.

AquaStar: In Bed with the Governor?

GRAYLING (By Stephanie Biden and Caitlin O'Connor)



When it rains, it pours. Amidst the floods of AquaStar r asks if Michigan Governor Bryce Kingsley laid the groud from a small start-up to one of the dominant players in – and for what price?

Clearly, AquaStar was given many perks to set up shop. Imply that the governor may have been involved in the Quality (DEQ)'s decision to approve AquaStar for the hi permit limit. As Grayling's current public water contain the DEQ's permit ranges are based on 'science at its inf what limits the environment can handle, and what leve environmental and human pain (one baby has now died and dozens of citizens remain hospital would be the “environmentally friendly” governor's motive for taking the risk?

After speaking with former AquaStar biologist Rohit Sharma, it also appears that Kingsley may bottled water contracts, such as Great Lakes Food Service Corporation, towards AquaStar. The

Teams have 45 minutes to prepare a press release after a blogger accuses AquaStar of corrupt dealings with a fictional Michigan governor.



A press corps composed of visiting Knight-Wallace Fellows grills a team about its press release.