



August 17, 2021

Dr. Marilyn Macik-Frey, Dean  
College of Business Administration  
Nicholls State University  
106 White Hall  
Thibodaux, LA 70310

Dear Dr. Macik-Frey and the Selection Committee,

I offer my full support of the attached 2021 SBAA Societal Impact Award application packet entitled *The Africa Medical Relief Project: Experiential Learning for Supply Chain Management Students*.

As part of this project, Dr. William Ritchie led the development of a partnership with Mihret Medical Supply to create an experiential learning experience for his students which involved procuring and managing shipment of medical supplies to Congo during the 2019 Ebola outbreak. By 2020, the project evolved to include the shipping of medical supply containers to Ethiopia during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

This project ultimately provided students with experience managing a real-life supply chain. Equally important, the societal impact of this service learning is immeasurable. As Bill notes in the application packet, the project can be replicated at other Universities as long as there is a nonprofit partner, a regional or university hospital, physical space for storage and staging, and a course or club with students interested in supply chain management.

Please let me know if I may be of assistance with furthering Dr. Ritchie's application packet.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael E. Busing".

Michael E. Busing, Dean  
Betty Coe ('64) and Paul J. Cinquegrana  
Endowed Chair in Business Ethics & Leadership



**The Africa Medical Relief Project:  
Experiential Learning for Supply Chain Management Students**

**Submitted to**

**Southern Business Administration Association**

**In Consideration for**

**2021 SBAA Societal Impact Award**

**by**

William J. Ritchie, Ph.D.  
CSX Professor of Management  
College of Business  
421 Bluestone Drive – MSC 0207  
Harrisonburg, VA 22807  
Mobile: 239.218.9759  
Email: [ritchiwj@jmu.edu](mailto:ritchiwj@jmu.edu)

**with support of**

Michael E. Busing, Dean  
College of Business  
421 Bluestone Drive - MSC 0207  
Harrisonburg, VA 22807  
Phone: [540-568-3254](tel:540-568-3254)  
Email: [busingme@jmu.edu](mailto:busingme@jmu.edu)

### **Description of the Innovative Strategy or Program.**

Dr. Ritchie, along with the Executive Director of Mihret Medical Supply (a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit), and the support of the JMU College of Business Dean, Dr. Michael Busing, created The Africa Medical Relief Project in the summer of 2019. This unique supply chain alliance between the JMU College of Business and Mihret provides an experiential learning opportunity for students to engage in meaningful supply chain activities while providing valuable international humanitarian relief. The project was initially created in an effort to help with the Congo Ebola outbreak in 2019, but has now expanded to help meet critical COVID-19 needs in Ethiopia, as well.

Working with Mihret, JMU supply chain students engage in a variety of supply chain activities such as transporting needed equipment (beds, tables, chairs, and wound care), inventorying, and packing. In preparation for shipments, students have worked together to pack and load supplies into a 40' high-cube container. The project's first container, bound for Congo, was loaded and shipped in 2020. Early in 2021, two additional containers were loaded and shipped to Ethiopia to help with the COVID outbreak. The project now includes regular planning for shipments of at least one container per semester. The initiative also includes dedicated JMU campus classroom/storage space for students to undertake "milk runs" to local healthcare facilities to collect donated medical supplies as well as inventorying, sorting, and packing soft medical supplies such as wound care dressings. Students engage in all of these activities to help fulfill many of Mihret's supply chain needs.

### **Innovativeness or uniqueness of strategy or program.**

The Africa Medical Relief project provides an ongoing, real-time "laboratory" for both the professor and the students to develop meaningful pedagogical content and experiential

exercises. **First**, the project introduction is presented to supply chain students in the form of a class case narrative. The fact that the case is based upon current Africa project activities provides students with a real-life example of a humanitarian supply chain in action. The case is augmented with other humanitarian relief articles. **Second**, Dr. Ritchie has authored an *Inbox*© simulation – using *MSI Simulations* (producers of *Capsim*©) – to teach the students the basics of the container exporting process. The simulation places each student in the role of a supply chain manager who is responsible for getting a container of medical supplies “on the water” by a specified deadline. The student must navigate various exporting documents and learn common international shipping terminology. This tool has been deployed in class for five academic semesters and is in the final stages of review so that other supply chain and strategy programs may access the simulation through MSI Simulations’ cloud platform.

**Third**, the project has established a College of Business Warehouse Laboratory – whereby students learn to sort, inventory, pack, and stage soft medical supplies in preparation for transfer to the larger warehouse. **Fourth**, students use campus and personal vehicles to gather local medical donations and transport them to the campus warehouse for processing. **Fifth**, students engage in brainstorming new contacts in the healthcare field to secure additional donations of equipment and supplies for the project. **Finally**, on shipping day, a team of students travels to the larger warehouse (three miles from the JMU College of Business) to load the container.

### **Societal Impact of the Strategy or Program:**

The project has resulted in a variety of societal impacts. **First**, the project engages local and regional healthcare providers and organizations in the JMU Global Supply Chain Minor and the JMU Association for Supply Chain Management Student Chapter. Currently, a local hospital

provides soft medical supplies whereby student teams make bi-weekly ‘milk runs’ to pick up multiple boxes of medical supplies. This is then staged in our campus classroom/warehouse location. Larger equipment donations have come from a variety of regional hospitals and relief organizations. *Second*, this project provides a pipeline for healthcare organizations to repurpose gently used medical equipment and supplies. Often equipment will end up in a landfill or be incinerated. *Third*, these initiatives provide direct support to healthcare facilities in Congo and Ethiopia. Through our nonprofit organization alliance with Mihret, students received feedback directly from ‘boots on the ground’ in Africa, providing an assurance that the goods were received by the intended recipients. *Fourth*, this project has paved the way for JMU to establish a partnership with universities internationally. For example, the Global Supply Chain Program is in the process of establishing a relationship with Bahir Dar University (BDU), whereby the JMU Global Supply Chain program will ship medical equipment to the BDU university hospital. *Fifth*, the Africa project has helped promote JMU’s Global Supply Chain program. For example, the Ethiopian Ambassador to the United States visited the warehouse operations and Dr. Ritchie has presented project details to professional supply chain organizations such as the Association for Supply Chain Management (ASCM). *Finally*, the project has helped engage JMU donors and local stakeholders in the project. For example, JMU partners helped fund warehouse space and student support. The project’s local warehouse provider has donated more than \$35,000 worth of warehouse space, helping the sustainability of the project.

**Documentation of the size of the impact and/or outcomes of strategy or program:**

With regard to tangible impact in the community, during the period 2020-2021 the program has worked with Mihret to pack and ship three 40’ containers of medical equipment and supplies to Congo (1) and Ethiopia (2). Each container contained goods valued over \$200,000

(USD). The target for the 2021-2022 academic year is to prepare and ship at least two containers to Ethiopia (one to Bahir Dar University and another directly to hospitals in the region). With regard to impact on the students, the project has provided many educational opportunities. Students with an interest in supply chain gain hands-on experience with the multidimensional nature of humanitarian relief supply chains. Small teams of students meet to prep and organize supplies in the campus warehouse as well as coordinate supply pickups from local healthcare providers. Students also gain a deeper understanding of the complexities associated with large warehouse operations. To date, students from the College of Business, Health Services Administration, and Kinesiology have participated in the Africa project.

**Description of applicability or transferability to other institutions:**

The applicability of the project to other institutions can be best determined by availability of the following four key components. *First*, the institution should identify a nonprofit organization with ongoing international relief efforts and a local warehousing organization with an interest in the educational mission of the institution. The third-party nonprofit organization is particularly helpful in terms of securing contracts and other legal documents, permitting the educational institution to focus on student experiences. *Second*, either a university or regional hospital will serve as a suitable supplier of soft healthcare goods (note that the project can be undertaken on a smaller scale than filling 40' containers). *Third*, the university should provide an extra classroom to serve as convenient location for students to receive, inventory, and stage supplies. *Finally*, the creation of a university supply chain course or club (such as the ASCM Student Chapters) provides a means to connect students with the international relief efforts. Taken in aggregate, these four components, in combination with a motivated faculty member, could readily initiate a similar project.