FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY

Dr. Hari K Rajagopalan
Professor of Management
Dean, School of Business
Francis Marion University

October 6th, 2023

Dr. Marilyn Macik-Frey
President, The Southern Business Administration Association

Dear Dean Macik-Frey

Please find attached the application for the 2023 SBAA Societal Impact Award from Prof. Padmaja Rao (Computer Science) and Dr. Kay Lawrimore Belander (Marketing). The HealthplusMe App created as part of an interdisciplinary project by students in Computer Science, Marketing, Healthcare Administration and Graphic Design is a great example of what Schools and Colleges of Business can do when they reach out and work together with other disciplines to help impact their community and I am very proud to endorse it for the Societal Impact Award.

Regards

Hari K Rajagopalan

HealthPlusMe App for Rural Healthcare

Description of the Innovative Strategy or Program

Recognizing the need for a simple communication mechanism between the medically underserved populations and their health care providers in the Pee Dee Area of South Carolina, Prof. Padmaja Rao (from Computer Science), Dr. Kay Lawrimore Belander (from Marketing), Dr. Sarah Kershner (Healthcare administration) applied for and received a grant from South Carolina Research Authority to design and create a project for students in Computer Science, Graphics Design, Marketing, and Healthcare Administration to create an app that universally available and easy to use by all populations in the Pee Dee region and other areas of the state of South Carolina.

The project had three main objectives: (1) Integrate expert observations to drive the development of technology-enabled population health solutions appropriate to rural, poor, medically underserved

1

populations. (2) Develop an app that will provide accurate, accessible, and actionable health information that is tailored to culturally diverse, medically underserved, and hard-to-reach populations. (3) Enable end-users to engage in more frequent monitoring behaviors leading to improved control of chronic conditions resulting in better health outcomes.

The mobile app consists of two main parts: (1) Health Resources and (2) Health Journal. The Health Journal allows the user to track and log information into color-coded categories for actively prescribed and used medications, allergies, blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, vaccinations, and weight. Health information can be graphed and tracked and can be presented in a report format to share with the user's healthcare provider. The Health Resources feature locates free and/or low-cost services provided by clinics and pharmacies near the user by using GPS. Contact information, driving and/or walking directions of the resource are also available.

The project team comprised of an inter-disciplinary group of students under the supervision of the three professors. The group comprised of computer science, graphic design and health care administration and marketing capstone students. Computer Science students developed the mobile app with graphic design students designing an easy-to-use interface. Healthcare administration students gathered data on low to no cost medical screening services provided by clinics in the Pee Dee area. Marketing capstone students worked on multimedia marketing of the app. The project

2

also formed an Advisory Board that is comprised of representatives from local hospitals, clinics, nurse practitioners, nurses, students, faculty and citizens. The development team met with the Board throughout the design and implementation of the project, getting valuable feedback.

Once the app was deployed, our students participated in marketing the app by distributing marketing materials to local clinics, medical offices, libraries and attending local health care fairs. Students also attended local free clinics health days where they helped patients download the app and showed them how to input their health metrics.

The mission of the Francis Marion School of Business is to "serve our region by offering high-quality educational programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels that prepare individuals to compete on a regional, national, and global level. We develop faculty whose teaching, service, and research benefits students, community members, and colleagues. We engage in student-focused education experiences to develop a comprehensive foundation, so that they may craft for themselves fulfilling successful careers and lives".

This project directly links to the School of Business mission as this project was embedded into the Computer Science and Marketing capstone classes enhancing the quality of our program. An interdisciplinary project ensuring that students would across disciplines as a team gives them an experience that allows them to understand teamwork, communication and

sets up a base for a professional experience that would benefit them as they build their resume. Finally, it was an exceptional experience for faculty across disciplines to work with each other and students from other disciplines.

Societal Impact of the Strategy or Program

Given the rural region, there is a huge population who do not have the information for medical access and healthcare providers in this region. The app is free and can be downloaded at Google Play Stores for android phones. We have been able to get our local healthcare provider for rural South Carolina Hope Health to display flyers and posters on their premises. We had more than 300 downloads in the first year. The professors are currently looking for funding to port the application to the Apple Store.

Applicability and Transferability to other institutions

The concept of building interdisciplinary projects for students between departments in the university is transferable to any institution. This is particularly true when you bring in the Computer Science, MIS or Engineering departments. Students from Marketing, Finance, Management departments from the Colleges and Schools of Business can help them with marketing, building business plans for products that they can create. This would be an excellent opportunity for students learn to work in interdisciplinary environments and build meaningful solutions for problems that their local community faces.