

Social enterprise today in the U.S. has gotten much more recognition but unfortunately it's been driven by the cascading series of negative events. Primarily federal budgets being slashed, great recession has devastated the federal state and local budgets that support non-profits. And it's further compounded by dramatically reduced investment returns the foundations use to fund non-profits. All of this has forced non-profits, their boards of directors, their management teams, to look at generating other sources of income to fulfill their mission.

My name is Jason Weiss and I'm on the faculty of the American School of Business at the University of Baltimore.

How do you get other non-profits, large and small, to start thinking beyond just performing or delivering more than their mission? It is difficult for them to do that because the primary source of funds that they receive comes from foundations and donors. And almost all of those dollars of restrictions on them that are program related. It gives the non-profit little if any running room to experiment with new things. Non-profits, many of whom have been generating additional sources of income over the years have served as role models. Think of Girl Scout cookies, think of the YMCA with it's gyms and day-care centers. These are sources of additional income that augment the mission of these non-profits.

So, to think through the exercises of how they might generate additional sources of income to grow the nonprofit, to replace these diminished resources, is what we teach and what I teach here. We've had some wonderful success stories. But right from the onset we make the non-profits compete to get into this course. They can't just apply like as student. Although, I made the students compete to get into the course also because they work with the non-profits that are admitted to the course anywhere from five-eight per semester, to develop a feasibility analysis and a business plan to launch a for-profit venture, a subsidiary, an affiliate, or some additional source of unrestricted income that might not necessarily require a separate corporate form, or at least not at the on-set.

This course in social enterprise that I teach here at the Business School for many years exemplifies, I believe, the strategic plan of the University of Baltimore which is to be an urban engaged or engaged urban university. This really gets UB into the midst of working with our neighbors around the city. We've worked with over fifty non-profits now in the last several years. I've got a tremendous amount of personal pleasure out of taking my years of experience and turning it around and aiming it at this non-profit sector where you have well educated, passionate, dedicated, professionals who truly soak this information up like a sponge they've never been exposed to.