<u>**Your Case Analysis Project**</u>

The Case Analysis Project is an important one, both in terms of the learning experience in this class and in terms of the effect on your grade. The purpose of this paper is to collect the project descriptions, requirements, and grading criteria for the Case Analysis Project and to include recommendations to help you successfully complete the project as efficiently and satisfyingly as possible.

<u>**Here is the project description**</u>

Excerpted from the syllabus:

Project Overview

For this project, you will analyze a business case, Yahoo! Inc.: Marissa Mayer's Challenge*, and make recommendations based on the outcome of your analysis. The goal is to demonstrate strategic critical thinking skills when analyzing a business scenario, taking all factors into account, and recommend a strategy to move that company forward. Your analysis and recommendations should flow together, providing your readers with a clear picture of the issues at hand and leading them to the logical conclusion of your strategic recommendations. Your case analysis should be designed for an audience of working adults who are seeking to improve their understanding of your chosen topic.*

Case Topic

"Case 30: Yahoo! Inc.: Marissa Mayer's Challenge," (page 30-1 to 30-12). *In preparation for your case analysis, As you develop your analysis and recommendations, use the tools provided in your text to guide you.*

Project Requirements

To achieve a successful project experience and outcome, you are expected to meet the following requirements.

Content and flow: In your final submission, be sure that the:

Structure is evident, understandable, and appropriate.

Main and supporting points are easily identifiable, plausible, and clear.

Paper employs a minimum of four reputable sources to support main points.

Logic is identifiable, reasonable, and sound.

Paper includes at least two charts, graphs, or visual aids to support your points.

Transitions from point to point are excellent and paragraphs support solid topic sentences.

Number of pages: Your final paper must be 6–8 pages, excluding the title page and reference list.

File format: Be sure to submit your paper in Microsoft Word format.

Style and formatting: Use proper APA sixth edition style to cite and reference your sources. Also follow APA formatting guidelines for the layout of your paper. Refer to the Capella Online Writing Center's APA sixth edition style and formatting module on iGuide for more information.

The syllabus identifies nine criteria in the grading rubric for the draft and final versions of your case analysis:

1. Analyze the strategic fit between the business vision and the key elements of the business strategy, considering domestic and global environments, and provide supporting evidence and examples.
2. Evaluate the alignment between business strategy, customer needs, to determine how and the degree to which organizational value has been established.
3. Create organizational value in the recommendations provided and provide a detailed description of how value is created through decisions made.
4. Demonstrate an excellent ability to plan strategically in domestic and global environments in the recommendations provided.
5. Integrate high-performing business management techniques in the analysis and recommendations; the integrated techniques consistently promote delivery of value-added, bottom-line results.
6. Consistently solves problems within professional standards and provides supporting evidence and examples.
7. Uses and integrates multiple, appropriate financial models and principles to support decisions and recommendations.
8. Demonstrate excellent use of proper APA style and formatting, effective written communication skills, and supported evidence to communicate effectively; there are no style or formatting errors.
9. Demonstrate excellent written communication skills.

Excerpted from the text Strategic Management: The authors of your text have seven excellent suggestions for case analysis in Part Four: Guide to Strategic Management Case Analysis that are a combination of substance and style which I strongly recommend to you:

1. *Analyze*. Avoid merely repeating the facts presented in the case. Analyze the issues involved in the case and build logically toward your recommendations.

2. *Use headlines or labels*. Using headlines or labels throughout your written analysis will help your reader follow your analysis and recommendations. For example, when you are analyzing the weaknesses of the firm in the case, include the heading Weaknesses. Note the headings in the cases that follow.

3. *Discuss alternatives*. Follow the proper strategic management sequence by (a) identifying alternatives, (b) evaluating each alternative, and (c) recommending the alternative you think is best.

4. *Use topic sentences*. You can help your reader more easily evaluate your analysis by putting the topic sentence first in each paragraph and following with statements directly supporting the topic sentence.

5. *Be specific in your recommendations*. Develop specific recommendations logically and be sure your recommendations are well defended by your analysis. Avoid using generalizations, clichés, and ambiguous statements. Remember that any number of answers are possible and so your professor is most concerned about how your reasoning led to your recommendations and how well you develop and support your ideas.

6. *Do not overlook implementation*. Many good analyses receive poor evaluations because they do not include a discussion of implementation. Your analysis will be much stronger when you discuss how your recommendations can be implemented. Include some of the specific actions needed to achieve the objectives you are proposing.

7. *Specifically state your assumptions*. Cases, like all real business situations, involve incomplete information. Therefore, it is important that you clearly state any assumptions you make in your analysis. Do not assume your professor will be able to fill in the missing points.

My recommendations:

There are as many different successful ways of developing this case analysis as there are learners. That said, here are a few suggestions for you and some expectations for this project that you will want to meet:

Establish a role for yourself. For example, assume that you are a consultant hired either by Yahoo! or an internal consultant to the company and have been given the task of analyzing the company and making recommendations that will guide strategy decisions. Your deliverables are recommendations based on analysis of the business.

Do not assume the role of reporter. Your role is <u>not</u> to report the facts about the company—that has been done in the case. You do not add value by restating these facts. Your role is analysis—not reporting.

The complaint I hear most often about business or financial analysts: too much data; too little analysis. Especially today when so much information is so easily available, providing more of it is not helpful. Analyze, interpret, predict, recommend! That's where you add value.

Use a SWOT analysis approach. (See your Strategic Management text, especially Chapter Six. This approach to your case allows for logical organization and presentation of your analysis. Be very targeted and purposeful in the use of this approach: don't include random, unrelated factors. Select only those factor that will be the focus of your recommendations. There may be any number of strengths or weaknesses, opportunities or threats that you will ignore. You'll focus on those critical few that will be the subject of your recommendations and implementation plans. Focus your SWOT analysis on the specific issues that you feel are key to your analysis of the case. Identify only factors in the SWOT analysis that are important to your recommendations and implementation strategies.

 Make and support recommendations. The meat of your presentation are the recommendations that follow from your analysis of the facts. Make your recommendations specific, relevant, achievable, and

actionable. (A mistake that I've seen repeated is a recommendation: increase market share 40%. I ask myself: how would the company do that: growth, acquisition, how? That much growth would be enormously expensive in the short run—you know how much liquidity is eaten by growth—and that kind of acquisition plans would likely have serious problems with regulators. So I am eager to see how that plan is defended. But, there was no support offered. Only the recommendation. Which does not add value.

Include implementation plans for your recommendations. Specify the who, what, where, why, when to support your recommendations. How will they be accomplished? By whom? How will they be funded? Over what period of time? To accomplish what?

Analyze your recommendations. Include your cost/benefit analysis. What is their expected return? How much value do you expect them to add?

Length of the paper: The project instructions include that your paper must be 6-8 pages long exclusive of title page, references, and appendices. My expectation is that most effective papers will be at least eight pages long-- if your paper is longer than ten pages edit it down to ten pages. Again, this length is exclusive of charts, pictures, graphs, etc. which belong in an appendix, not in the body of the paper. Tactics like using wide margins, large fonts, and excessive amounts of white space do not hide the fact that a paper is inappropriately short, but instead call attention to that fact.

Charts and Graphs: Meet the requirement that you include at least two charts, graphs, or visual aids to support your points. You would be well advised to include charts and graphical analysis for the major points of your case. These charts or graphs are not merely reproductions of those presented in the case, but are the result of your analysis. Your use of data must be analytical—don't just present the facts, but interpret them. You are not a reporter; you are an analyst! What does the data show? What does the data predict? What recommendations do the data prompt you to make?

Cite credible resources. Meet the requirement that your paper employs a minimum of four reputable sources to support your main points. Your sources must be reputable-- which in this context means that your source must be primary. Wikipedia, for example, is not a reputable source because it is in most cases a tertiary resource.

Start with an outline. Decide on, and then outline your approach before you begin. What factors will you analyze, what data will you use to analyze them, what alternative recommendations will you explore, how will you decide among them, what recommendations for implementation will you make, how will you justify these recommendations, how will they help to solve the problems you have identified or how will they help to take advantage of the opportunities you have identified.

Invest in the draft. Resist the temptation to view your project submission in unit six as a rough draft. Think of it instead as a robust draft. Remind yourself that the more time, effort, and energy you invest in the version you submit in unit six the less will be required of you in your unit nine assignment.

Establish a plan. Plan now to budget your time, effort and energy for this project so that you will be able to produce an end result which will give you the satisfaction of completing your Capstone Project at a distinguished level.