

M.B.A. programs prepare socially aware entrepreneurs

by *LuAnne Speeter*

A growing number of graduate students are seeking to specialize in social entrepreneurship – the development of for-profit companies that deliver socially responsible products or services, or are tied to social causes. As a response, business schools are tailoring their curricula to accommodate their interests.

The following are a few graduate programs that address this new paradigm:

[The Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship](#) at the University of Oxford's Saïd Business School explores such models as venture philanthropy and an ethical stock exchange – an alternative that is less focused on financial and more on environmental and social returns than the traditional exchange model.

[The Allwin Initiative for Corporate Citizenship](#) is an on-campus group at [Tuck School of Business](#) located at Dartmouth College. The vision of the Allwin Initiative is to imbue Tuck students with “a heightened social conscience, a strong sense of business ethics, an understanding of social enterprise, and a familiarity with the management tools that facilitate corporate responsibility and community involvement.”

[The Center for Responsible Business](#) at the University of California at Berkely/Haas School of Business was founded in 2003 thanks to the generosity of actor/philanthropist Paul Newman, among others. The Center offers an integrated portfolio of research, teaching, experiential learning and outreach.

According to the [Center for Sustainable Global Enterprise](#) at Cornell University's The Johnson School, solutions to environmental and social problems “are business opportunities, not a cost of doing business.” The program includes such courses as Sustainability as a Driver for Innovation in the Entrepreneurial Organization and Corporate Social Responsibility: Organizational Issues.

A number of conditions within the U.S. and globally could be driving today's budding entrepreneurs to have a deeper sense of social and environmental responsibility, such as:

- A natural outgrowth of our more socially aware society.
- A tightening of the job market, leading to more creative start-up ventures.
- A reaction to the financial crisis and what is interpreted as Wall Street greed.
- An opportunity for laid-off employees to find greater meaning in their next career stage.

In any case, we can look forward to an era of significant social and environmental solutions by for-profit businesses. If they do it right, they will do well by doing good.

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