

Sustainable Marketplaces Laboratory

The Sustainable Marketplaces Laboratory brings together students, faculty, and practitioners from a diverse set of backgrounds to seek actionable knowledge to enable sustainable marketplaces through research, teaching and social initiatives. We focus on sustainability with an emphasis on learning from subsistence marketplaces which represent the most unsustainable of contexts. Learning from these contexts which have faced extreme resource constraints and deteriorating environments can help the design of sustainable solutions to face the challenges of the 21st century. We offer a number of educational experiences to a variety of audiences.

Sustainable Business Enterprises

At the dawn of the 21st century, business and society is confronted with a confluence of factors ranging from environmental degradation, widespread poverty, and the need for renewable sources of energy. Through a first-year MBA course and a junior or senior level undergraduate course, we seek to address these issues and engender an appreciation among our students for the challenges that lie ahead for businesses. Although the primary focus is on sustainable business in all contexts, the course begins with and is informed by insights from subsistence marketplaces where individuals find ingenious ways to reuse and conserve in order to survive. Through lectures, case discussions, guest speakers, and a course-long project, each week, we examine and critically evaluate contemporary trends in sustainable business practices and discuss such topics as sustainable consumer behavior and product design. Using the realm of sustainable business practices, we address related issues of incorporating social values into business objectives, social responsibility, and the need for businesses to meet triple bottom lines relating to people, planet, and profit.



SUSTAINABLE MARKETPLACES LABORATORY

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COLLEGE of
BUSINESS
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SUSTAINABLE MARKETPLACES LABORATORY

Seeking actionable knowledge to
enable sustainable marketplaces
Department of Business Administration



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STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND PRACTITIONERS SEEKING ACTIONABLE KNOWLEDGE TO ENABLE SUSTAINABLE MARKETPLACES THROUGH RESEARCH, TEACHING AND SOCIAL INITIATIVES

Sustainable Product and Market Development for Subsistence Marketplaces

Students in the Sustainable Product and Market Development for Subsistence Marketplaces program are challenged to understand the most unsustainable of conditions, i.e., subsistence marketplaces, and design solutions. They work for a year to produce a product prototype and a business plan tailored to the needs of a sponsoring company. Business, engineering, and industrial design students collaborate in this carefully guided program to produce insightful and actionable materials based on the latest scholarship and sound business intelligence.

We have worked successfully with small startups as well as large companies, such as Unilever, Motorola, Microsoft, and Kraft, and social enterprises. Our passionate students begin the course by experiencing virtual immersion in subsistence contexts through such means as a poverty simulation and analysis of interviews and videos of subsistence individuals. In the next immersion phase, they grapple with principles elicited from a rich set of case studies and guest speakers including social workers, technologists, and entrepreneurs. In parallel, each project begins with extensive idea generation, followed by filtering to a family of ideas that students evaluate on a one-of-a-kind international immersion experience during which they interview subsistence consumers and entrepreneurs and observe urban and rural subsistence contexts. Once fully prepared, in the spring semester, students apply their business and technical skills to design a product prototype and a related business plan. Projects to date have dealt with information technology, education, energy, food, and health. From a company's perspective, projects that fit well with this course are those that involve product design.

Professional Responsibility Through Sustainable Global Business

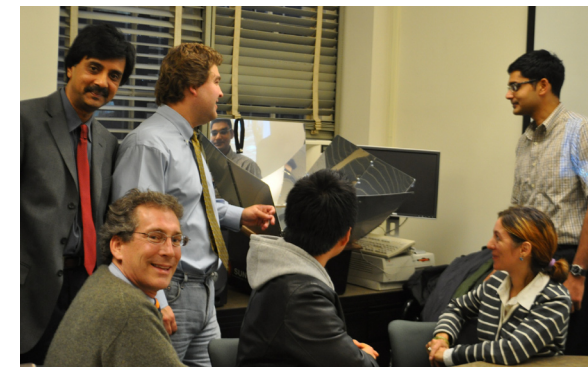
This module is part of a larger course on professional responsibility that is required for all the incoming first semester undergraduate students in business (approximately 600 students). It combines the twin issues of sustainability and poverty alleviation to highlight professional responsibility organized around developing a sustainable business for a subsistence context. It is framed within the larger course in terms of professional responsibility involving "me," "us," and more than "us," with business having an important role to play in addressing global problems while being profitable. Students participate in a poverty simulation, and analyze interviews and videos to understand the subsistence contexts. Using a number of assignments and class discussions to understand subsistence and sustainability, groups generate product ideas, develop a short business plan, make presentations and participate in a poster session.

Sustainability Case Competitions

Teams of undergraduate students participate in international trips related to case competitions on sustainability. These competitions allow students to explore the relationships between government, business, social enterprises and the university as they develop solutions to address climate change and sustainability issues. The students work collaboratively with students from other universities around the world creating a cross disciplinary, cross cultural learning experience. Students then travel for an intensive immersion experience where their business plans are evaluated by a panel of external judges.

Certificate for Excellence in Sustainable Management and Technology

This certificate is awarded in recognition for outstanding achievement in sustainable management and technology through completion of field work and projects. Eligibility for this certificate is based on completion of field work and a set of projects including but not restricted to the term project in the course, Sustainable Marketing Enterprises, the commercial or social enterprise-sponsored project in the course, Sustainable Product and Market Development for Subsistence Marketplaces, international immersion experiences offered through the course, Sustainable Product and Market Development for Subsistence Marketplaces, or projects and fieldwork through independent study.



Interactions with Practitioners

Through visits to campus by leading practitioners from companies, social enterprises and government and assignments designed around challenges their organizations face, students learn about cutting edge sustainable practices.