

# DESIGNING THE MARKETING COMPONENT OF A PROBLEM-BASED INTEGRATED MA PROGRAM IN SOCIAL & SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents the design of the marketing component of a new, unique MA program in Social and Sustainable Management (MASSM). The program has been developed in response to the difficult employment outlook for newly minted, non-business BA's, employers desires, cost-containment pressures, and SPU's strong mission-driven identity and emerging thought leadership regarding ethical and values-oriented business.

The program enables graduates to participate in creating sustainable value and responsible businesses that contribute to the well-being of customers, employees, the community, and the ecosystem as principled business professionals, or as social entrepreneurs by developing an integrated, cross-functional understanding of business; an understanding of responsible, ethical, and sustainable business; ability to address real-world business situations; and ability to behave as business professionals. It remixes the school's pre-MBA business foundations courses, leadership courses, ethics courses, and two electives into a five-module, 11-month curriculum organized around the business decision cycle – analysis, planning, implementation and revision - with the additional meta-themes of business foundations and a responsible and sustainable approach to business. Coherence, scaffolding, integration, a professional-school model, learning communities, meaningfulness of knowledge, repetition, and active learning were guiding design principles.

The competency-based instructional approach employs problem-based learning including problems, cases and four closely linked major application projects; hybrid delivery including self-study, team learning, on-line, classroom and coaching sessions, collaboration with business community partners; a cooperative learning consultancy; a study abroad experience; and, professional and career development activities.

### **The Marketing Component**

Designing the program's marketing component has required disaggregating the traditional introductory

graduate marketing management course's topics and the traditional marketing plan project into elements that are located across the flow of the program's modules and projects which include a domestically oriented industry outlook (i.e., a situation analysis), a global outlook and market area analysis, a social venture business plan, and a business consultancy. Connections with sustainability and social entrepreneurship are emphasized.

Thus, understanding the marketing environment, buyer markets and demand, marketing research, value chains, competition, ethics, and global issues are addressed in the Analysis module. The instructional marketing problems here focus on market selection, development of buyer profiles, demand estimation, value-chain/distribution channels and comparative strength analysis (including financial and social performance analysis).

Acquiring buyers (i.e., development of relationships with a target set of buyers and offering them a compelling, sustainable value proposition enacted through the 4 P's and ethics are in the Business Design module. The marketing problems here include identification of target market segments, competitive value propositions (i.e., positioning), sustainable product design, pricing, promotion strategy and budgeting, and distribution strategy.

Maintaining and deepening buyer and value-chain partner relationships and revisions based on performance attainment are in the Operating and the Renewal modules. Marketing problems here include customer satisfaction measurement and management, channel relations management, and responding to performance variances.

The integrative case studies used in the program also involve the range of marketing issues. A self-marketing plan is also integrated into the professional and career development activities.