

THE GREENEST MBA PROGRAMS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2009

BETSY MASSAR, FOUNDER & CEO, MASTER ADMISSIONS

A number of business schools are leading the charge in teaching, research and student activities related to sustainability. These efforts fall into three broad categories: environmental sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and social enterprise. Fifteen outstanding “green” programs are profiled below.

Even business schools are going green. Type “Green MBA” into Google and you get nearly 200,000 hits. Indeed, sustainability, green tech, clean tech, triple-bottom line, bottom-of-the-pyramid and a host of other fashionable terms have been making their way into business school curriculums around the world.

And it’s what students want. According to a November 2008 Net Impact/Aspen Institute study, 78% of MBA students surveyed wanted to see more content and applicable case studies related to sustainability and corporate responsibility integrated into the curriculum. Furthermore, in a 2008 Stanford Business School study of 759 graduating MBAs at 11 top business schools, corporate social responsibility ranked so high on their list of values that the surveyed students said they would be willing to accept a lower salary to work at a socially aware employer.

The environmental club Net Impact is one of the most active and popular clubs across business schools. Beyond Grey Pinstripes’ report is a sought-after information tool for MBA aspirants. Furthermore, the Aspen Institute, which published the *Guide to Socially Responsible MBA Programs 2008-2009*, showcases 111 schools from around the world with programs bringing social impact management into their MBA curriculums.

New initiatives abound, and some new schools, for example, Presidio School of Management and the Bainbridge Institute are dedicated entirely to sustainability, offering, what they call, a “Green MBA”. Duquesne University launched a one-year MBA in sustainability, one of the few dedicated programs accredited by the U.S.’s premier accreditation body, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

Most MBA programs are adding course content focused on some aspect of economic, environmental and/or social sustainability. Hundreds of business programs have infused the concept of sustainability throughout the MBA curriculum in both core and elective courses.

This article reviews 15 accredited business schools that have distinguished themselves in an aspect of sustainability. Note that the list of schools in this article is not exhaustive. **Berkeley (UC) Haas, Case Western Reserve Weatherhead, Colorado (University) Leeds, Columbia, Cornell Johnson School, Davis (UC) GSM, Duke Fuqua, ESADE, IE, Harvard Business School, Michigan Ross, North Carolina (University) Kenan-Flagler, Oxford Said, Stanford and Yale** are all pioneers, but they are not the only ones.

Drawing up a list is also complicated by the fact that businesses, academics, non-government organizations (NGOs) and prospective students may each have differing interpretations of what “sustainable” means. Some schools offer more green/clean/environmental opportunities while others have more social and economic courses. And others are revamping and updating their curriculums as you read this.

The groupings below showcase the areas where the school has demonstrated a unique strength. In some cases, like Yale, for example, a school was strong across the board, but has an exceptional program in social enterprise, so it was put in that category. Please note that within each category, the ranking is alphabetical.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

University of California, Davis; Case Western Reserve Weatherhead; University of Colorado Leeds; University of Michigan Ross; University of North Carolina Kenan -Flagler

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT DAVIS, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

The administration at the UC Davis Graduate School of Management (GSM) not only makes a commitment to incorporating sustainability in core classes, where, according to Net Impact's 2009 report "lectures, case studies, and class discussions often revolve around themes of environmental sustainability and social responsibility." Former Dean and current faculty member Nicole Woolsey Biggart was selected as the Aspen Institute's 2008 Faculty Pioneer for Institutional Impact and was influential in the school's adoption of the UN Global Compact's Principles of Responsible Management Education. Students can take specialized course in social entrepreneurship and management of non-profit organizations. Through UC Davis Center for Entrepreneurship, MBA students are able to work with their fellow science and engineering students on projects and initiatives related to green technology, agriculture and health. Through the Center for Investor Welfare and Corporate Responsibility and its close association with California's public employee pension funds (CalPERS, for example), students have the opportunity to learn first-hand about shareholder activism and corporate governance. GSM's new LEED-certified building, Maurice J. Gallagher Jr. Hall, is a source of pride, and is considered one of the "greenest" buildings in the University of California system.

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY, WEATHERHEAD SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

The Case Weatherhead School of Management has been an early pioneer in bringing sustainability into its core curriculum. The school's two-year full-time MBA program explicitly integrates sustainability and social entrepreneurship into fundamental courses such as product development, risk management, accounting and reporting, operations and supply chain management, strategy and organizational design. Students choose between one of two tracks: sustainability or management by design. Professors are encouraged to integrate sustainability into class work and cases. Case Weatherhead is home to the Fowler Center for Sustainable Value (formerly known as the Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit), which "practices, researches and teaches whole-system design methods for advancing the 'how-to' of sustainability." First-year students are required to attend the MBA Institute in Sustainable Value and Social Entrepreneurship, a weeklong introduction to concepts such as cradle-to-cradle products, stakeholder value analysis and blue ocean strategy as applied to sustainability. Next, students begin a two-semester program in "sustainable design." Students team with faculty to work on projects for businesses which are seeking to create sustainable value. Weatherhead is ranked among the top MBA programs in nonprofit management and offers courses ranging from "Trusteeship: Governance of Non-Profit Organizations" to "Earned Income for Non-Profit Organizations."

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, STEPHEN M. ROSS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

According to Net Impact's 2009 report, "Ross incorporates triple-bottom line issues into some of its core classes" and according to one student, "These issues aren't just an extracurricular activity

here at Ross, but a core piece of your education.” MBA students also have the option to take such courses as “Corporate Environmental Strategy, Finance for Sustainable Enterprise and Sustainable Manufacturing.” The Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise, a 50/50 partnership between Ross and Michigan’s School of Natural Resources, also influences student awareness and course options. The Erb Institute focuses on: alternative energy and clean technology, climate strategy and carbon policy, mega-city mobility and accessibility, base-of-the-pyramid and social enterprise, and green buildings and development. Students also have the option of a joint MBA/MS program, which combines coursework, fieldwork and research related to business, the environment and sustainability. The Ross community is very proud of its brand new building which, according to the school: “In form and function, it has been designed to support our collaborative culture, embody our commitment to environmental sustainability, and reflect our recognition of the importance of imagination in the affairs of the world.” Ross offers loan repayment assistance for those who go into non-profit careers after graduation.

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER. LEEDS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

When parent University of Colorado is named by *Sierra Magazine* as the top “green” university in the U.S., the Leeds School isn’t far behind. The Deming Center for Entrepreneurship is the hub of sustainable activities, particularly its partnerships with the U.S. National Renewable Energy Laboratory and, Naturally Boulder (a natural-products business advocacy group). The Deming Center is home to the Social Venture Initiative, which, according to the school, “Through courses, projects, and internships, students apply their business skills to solve real-world challenges and capture opportunities in new market niches”, such as the Organic Business Initiative. Though the Curriculum Emphasis on Social Responsibility (CESR), the administration is working toward incorporating sustainable practices into core subjects such as supply chain management, logistics, marketing and finance. Students have the option of concentrating in sustainable venturing. Elective courses include “Assessing Sustainable Energy Technologies” and “Finding Business Opportunities in a Resource-Challenged World.”

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL, KENAN-FLAGLER BUSINESS SCHOOL

According to Net Impact, Kenan-Flagler has one of the longest MBA program histories in sustainability. And perhaps because of the school’s Center for Sustainability Enterprise (CSE), nearly one-third of students at Kenan-Flagler are involved in sustainable development, and about 20% of the student body completed the sustainable enterprise concentration. The numerous and varied courses include “Environmental Strategy”, “Climate Change – Turning up the Heat on Business” or “Product Stewardship and Sustainability”, the latter taught by the head of Global Product Stewardship at DuPont. To concentrate in sustainability, core courses include “Sustainable Enterprise” and “Ethical Aspects of Management.” The Center for Sustainable Enterprise Consulting Group, comprising promising MBA students, has been sought out by local and national businesses, including Bank of America and Progress Energy. Net Impact is the largest student organization at UNC Kenan-Flagler and has a large presence in the MBA experience. The CSE publishes the *Sustainable Enterprise Quarterly*, directed at students, alumni, business and academic stakeholders. UNC Kenan-Flagler is ranked among the top 10 in the *Financial Times*’s business school rankings on corporate social responsibility.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

UC Berkeley Haas School of Business, Instituto do Empresa (IE), ESADE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, HAAS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

With the announcement, "Corporate responsibility permeates Haas" it's no surprise that the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times* ranks Berkeley's Haas Business School at the forefront of teaching, research and experiential learning opportunities for MBA students in corporate social responsibility (CSR). With gifts from Silicon Valley visionary Mike Homer, Paul Newman and a former chairman of Bank of America, in 2003 the school launched the Center for Social Responsibility (CSR) as a bridge between academia and the corporate world. The center integrates CSR into the general management core and also offers courses such as "Metrics of Sustainability." Social enterprise courses are also offered. MBA and students in the Masters of Financial Engineering (MFE) program have the opportunity to work at the Haas Socially Responsible Investment Fund, which currently has \$1.2 million in assets under management. The CSR oversees the "Strategic CSR & Projects" field course, where students can perform live consulting projects, or pair with senior executives at local firms such as Gap, Hewlett Packard and Levi Strauss. The Nonprofit and Public Management track is also available, offering interested students the added experience of non-profit board service. Financial aid is available for students interested in CSR and through fellowships such as the Social Enterprise Education Design (SEED) Fellowship.

INSTITUTO DO EMPRESA (IE)

Instituto do Empresa (IE), based in Madrid and one of Europe's premier business schools was not only ranked as the top school in that region in the Beyond Grey Pinstripes 2008 report, but also offers over 60 courses that relate to corporate responsibility and sustainability. According to the school itself, these courses "address triple-bottom line [people, planet, profit] issues on a horizontal basis (finance, accounting, marketing, operations management, etc.) but also vertically, bringing added depth thorough elective courses." Specialized courses include "Business, Government and Society" and "Eco-Intelligent Management." Much of the dedicated CSR research comes under the umbrella of the Social Impact Management department, supported by the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, a full professor of social enterprise and the Director for the Center for Eco-Intelligent Management, among others. Students may also concentrate on a specific social entrepreneurship track. The upcoming fourth annual IE Social Responsibility Forum, scheduled for November 2009, is the school's largest student-led event and attracts global experts and opinion leaders in sustainability and social innovation. IE also has a dedicated chair in ethics and the Corporate Governance Center, both of which serve as hubs for research and on-the-ground CSR-related activities.

ESADE

ESADE, based in Barcelona, Spain, considers itself at the forefront of corporate social responsibility: "As a pioneer in corporate social responsibility, we strongly believe that beyond generating profits, sustainable businesses also need to contribute value towards society." The school incorporates CSR-related material throughout the curriculum; and about 90% of ESADE's MBA core courses include some social or environmental content. Dedicated courses include "Managing CSR: from Theory to Practice," "Global Context of Management," and "Social Marketing". Through ESADE's Institute for Social Innovation, students can work on research projects related to applying CSR in multinationals' corporate strategies. Ranked by the *Financial Times* as one of the top schools in corporate social responsibility, ESADE boasts 23 core courses

featuring CSR. The school is also home to the Institution for the Individual, Corporations and Society, which studies socially responsible investment, CSR policies and the environment, and companies and human rights. ESADE also offers a number of courses and activities focusing on entrepreneurship, including the Creapolis, a business park centered on cross innovation that allows start-up companies to take advantage of the ESADE community's experience and knowledge base.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Columbia Business School; Cornell University, The Johnson School; Duke University Fuqua School of Business; Harvard Business School; Oxford University Said Business School; Stanford Graduate School of Business; Yale School of Management

COLUMBIA BUSINESS SCHOOL

As a result of a 2008 curriculum revamp to focus on the “Individual, Business and Society”, sustainability is fully incorporated throughout the entire MBA program at Columbia Business School. Signature courses related to sustainability include “Globalization and Markets: Reforming the International Economic Architecture”, taught by Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz and “The Private Sector and International Development.” The Social Enterprise Program includes study in public and non-profit management, international development, social entrepreneurship, and corporate social responsibility and sustainability. Students and faculty are actively engaged in social enterprise at CBS, either through a social enterprise area of focus, through a range of electives, or through extra-curricular activities such as a robust Social Enterprise Club. In addition to an annual conference and a Global Social Venture Competition, the club offers career guidance, alumni mentorship, study trips, speaker sessions, and even has a cool reading list on Amazon. Columbia is particularly strong in international development and offers opportunities for MBA students to advise global clients on actual problems of microfinance, health care and entrepreneurship. Other relevant programs include those sponsored by the Sanford C. Bernstein Center for Leadership and Ethics, and the Eugene Lang Center for Entrepreneurship.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY, THE JOHNSON SCHOOL

In November 2009 Cornell's Johnson School will be able to showcase its commitment to sustainability by hosting the annual Net Impact conference – a watershed event with over 200 speakers and workshops. The Johnson School is committed to social enterprise, which, in the school's view, considers “social and environmental challenges as unmet market needs that can be met with business solutions.” The Center for Sustainable Global Enterprise (SGE) focuses on sustainable innovation and base-of-the-pyramid enterprise development. Students can participate in an SGE Immersion – an optional fieldwork-related selection within the first-year curriculum. Elective courses include “Global Corporate Social Responsibility” and “Sustainability as a Driver for Innovation in the Entrepreneurial Organization.” S.C. Johnson Professor Stuart Hart, an Aspen Institute Faculty Pioneer, co-authored the groundbreaking article “The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid” and, according to Net Impact, “students have access to him on a regular basis.” The Johnson School allows its students to take up to 25% of their coursework throughout Cornell's nine colleges, giving them access to courses in sustainable agriculture, ecology, renewable energy, green building, public affairs, and international development. The Park Leadership Fellowship program offers full-tuition scholarships to emerging leaders who have a commitment to social responsibility.

DUKE UNIVERSITY, FUQUA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

In recent years, the Fuqua School of Business at Duke has made tremendous efforts in bringing social enterprise into the curriculum and daily activities of the MBA student body. These initiatives accelerated with the 2002 establishment of the Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (CASE) at Duke. Students may elect to concentrate in social entrepreneurship, or simply take classes in electives such as “Corporate Social Impact Management” and “Entrepreneurial Strategy”. Students may also concentrate in Leadership and Ethics. For those who wish to do field work abroad, students can participate in the Global Academic Travel Experience (GATE), a six-week macro course in advance of a two-week intensive travel visit to areas such as Southeast Asia, Latin America, China or South Africa. According to the 2009 Net Impact report, the Fuqua admissions office has “made strides in placing special value on applicants with social and environmental interests.” There is some financial aid for students who wish to pursue social sector summer internships or careers. Duke University has also launched a Corporate Sustainability Initiative, supported jointly by the Fuqua School, the Nicholas School of the Environment and the Nicholas Institute of Environmental Policy Solutions.

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

Harvard Business School’s Social Enterprise Initiative (SEI), which began in 1993, was one of the first of its kind and has some lofty goals, including “building the world’s best faculty dedicated to social enterprise research and teaching.” Because of the HBS focus on general management, and because of its rigorous core curriculum, SEI’s original founders made the decision to mainstream social enterprise material into all aspects of research and teaching. Required courses such as “Business Government and the International Economy” a stalwart for over 25 years, and “Leadership and Corporate Accountability” specifically address sustainability issues. HBS, in conjunction with the Kennedy School of Public Policy, puts on a student-run social enterprise conference, which was named by *Forbes* as one of the most influential conferences in 2009, “along with the World Economic Forum and the Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting.” The famed business case competition, where the winner receives \$25,000, offers a social enterprise track. Harvard Business School offers a Leadership Fellows Program, with grants for deserving MBA graduates who choose to work in public and non-profit enterprises. A number of elective courses also offer an environmental focus, including “Building Green Businesses,” “Energy,” “Agribusiness” and “Institutions, Macroeconomics and the Global Economy.”

OXFORD UNIVERSITY, SAID SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Oxford’s Said School of Business, founded in 1996, is the youngest business school (and the oldest university, founded in the 11th century) to join the social enterprise movement. It did so with a flourish, through the Skoll Center for Social Entrepreneurship, a global hub for academics and real-world projects. The Skoll Center currently offers a number of fully-funded scholarships for MBA students working in social entrepreneurship. These Skoll Scholars take three eight-week social enterprise modules and carry out two major social business projects designed to positively influence a specific social problem. The Said Business School offers more than 20 courses that integrate social and environmental issues, including “Environment, Organizations and Sustainability” and “Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation”. The Said MBA experience also incorporates a consideration of macro issues via the Institute for Science, Innovation and Society, which focuses on research, policy development and teaching programs that provide new approaches to understanding technological and social change. The school also launched an initiative in corporate social responsibility, to “bring intelligent debate and practical recommendations to an important, but underdeveloped, field of corporate life.”

STANFORD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Ranked as the top school in the 2008 Beyond Grey Pinstripes report, Stanford Graduate School of Business (GSB) may well be considered one of the best all-around MBA programs for sustainability. From its fully revamped educational model, which launched a new “Management Perspectives” program, to the more specialized Center for Social Innovation (CSI), the GSB infuses its business teaching with social enterprise, environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility. The school offers a Public Management Program Certificate, earned by about 20% of graduating MBAs. The school offers elective courses in public and non-profit management, social entrepreneurship, international development, environmental sustainability and philanthropy. The renowned CSI offers students to take advantage of courses, interdisciplinary projects, and field work to build leadership skills in pursuing social value creation. CSI has created more than 60 business case studies for use at Stanford or any other school. Cases cover such topics as ecotourism, corporate social responsibility, health care, and education. There are a wide range of electives as well, including courses such as, “Commercializing New Technologies: Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine” or “Understanding ‘Cheating’.” Since 1981, the Stanford Management Internship Fund has funded fellowships for students to work in non-profits and social-purpose businesses. The new GSB Knight Center, a scheduled to open late 2010, will be a state-of-the art LEED-certified center of sustainability.

YALE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

The Yale School of Management has been at the forefront of merging public interest with private enterprise since its founding in 1976. The current MBA degree was originally titled the Master of Public and Private Management, and changed officially in 2000 to the MBA. Yale’s robust Program for Social Enterprise (PSE) is the umbrella organization for research, conferences, and course design. Courses include “Managing Social Enterprises in Developing Countries,” “Microfinance and Economic Development”, and “Philanthropic Foundations.” The multidisciplinary offerings within the entire university allow students to take further courses, such as one through the Divinity School, called “Faith and Globalization.” Several core required courses, such as “State and Society” focus on the role of business and market and non-market constituencies. Students who concentrate or go on to work in non-profit management may qualify for one of the most generous loan-forgiveness programs available. Additionally, the Center for Business and the Environment, a joint program between the SOM and the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, offers a joint MBA with a Masters in Environmental Management. Additionally, the Millstein Center for Corporate Governance and Performance offers courses, interdisciplinary activities, and sponsors research on governance and stakeholder interface.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Betsy Massar is Founder and CEO of [Master Admissions](http://www.masteradmissions.com). A graduate of Vassar College and Harvard Business School, she spent the majority of her extensive career as an investment professional and financial journalist on Wall Street, in Asia and Silicon Valley. Betsy has been helping candidates in their applications to business school since she was in her second year at Harvard. She is an ESL tutor and a lifetime member of the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents Club.