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TEACHING & LEARNING

Corporate Sustainability as the Cornerstone of the Capstone Course in Strategy

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In the Teaching & Learning Section we take a look at one of the big topics in management education. Sustainability is a critical issue and discussed by everyone from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)¹ to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA),² where the 2013 Final Four event included an active sustainability committee to “green the tournament.” For management professors, the sustainability concept gives two key issues to engage: how to understand the idea in terms of organizational functioning, and how to integrate our understanding into our courses. We can start with a reasonable working definition of the term. Sustainability is the capacity to endure. In ecology the word describes how biological systems remain diverse and productive over time.³

That definition is a good place to start but hardly enough to give us a sense of where this fits into corporate enterprises beyond the obvious environmental aspects. Our featured article in this issue is “Integrating Corporate Sustainability and Organizational Strategy Within the Undergraduate Business Curriculum” by Jamie R. Wieland & Dale E. Fitzgibbons, both of Illinois State University. The authors have refined the definition of sustainability to include the idea of corporate sustainability (CS)—a state that requires organizations to shift focus from short-term, financial goals to further consider the long-term social, environmental, and economic implications of their operations. In addition, they clarify the differences between the notions of corporate sustainable development (CSD), corporate social responsibility (CSR), and corporate

social performance (CSP). All these terms have been in the current literature and added to the confusion in developing integrated course topics.

The great contribution Wieland and Fitzgibbons make in this article comes from their development of a framework for an integrated CS-strategy course focused on three objectives: to develop a broad, interdependent view of business in society; for students to understand the link between competitive advantage and CS; and finally, for students to view CS as a vital risk management tool. This approach firmly places the value of CS in the Strategy course as an important part of corporate management, rather than just another item to be checked off before going on to the “more important” work of creating net present value.

The article is supported by evidence-based information on student views and attitudes regarding CS, as well as particularly useful appendices that include a list of readings and videos to help develop the new course design.

I am confident that *OMJ* readers will find all of this to be interesting and helpful in meeting the challenge of incorporating corporate sustainability ideas into our courses regardless of our specific business disciplines.

NOTES

1. American Association for the Advancement of Science. (2013). *Forum: Science and innovation for sustainable development*. Retrieved from <http://sustsci.aaas.org>
2. National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2013). *Sustainable final four*. Retrieved from <http://ncaa.firmdesign.com/information/sustainable-final>
3. Environment and Ecology website. (2013). Retrieved from <http://environment-ecology.com/what-is-sustainability/247-sustainability.html>

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