

University of California–Berkeley: Leaders of Tomorrow Learning Sustainability Today

Overview

One of the top universities in the country with almost 36,000 students, the University of California–Berkeley makes key contributions to the economic

and social well-being of the San Francisco Bay area, the nation, and the world. The university’s Haas School of Business Center for Responsible Business (CRB) was founded in 2003 to bring students, companies, and faculty together to explore issues of corporate responsibility and sustainability and inspire leaders who redefine good business by integrating responsible and sustainable practices into business strategies and operations.

Social Responsibility Challenge

In the wake of recent financial, environmental, and social crises comes a loss of confidence in businesses to lead and operate responsibly. In the past, business schools focused on the financial portion of the equation alone, often leaving students unprepared to face growing challenges such as addressing climate change and local social development. But the CRB believes it has both an opportunity and obligation to teach, practice, and research finance differently.

“We want to graduate leaders that will redefine how business gets done, incorporating sustainable and socially responsible practices into their work, companies, and communities,” says Haas School of Business Dean Rich Lyon.

Solutions

The CRB uses an integrated approach that provides:

- Knowledge that enables students to lead corporate responsibility efforts for their companies.
- Practical experience that helps students to develop strong careers in an emerging field.
- Awareness that can make students effective change agents for positive social impact.

Since 2007, the Sustainable Products & Solutions Program has funded dozens of projects that are developing usable, scalable, and sustainable solutions to global challenges. Students can research sustainable solutions, including renewables, clean water, energy savings, and more; or consumer products, including research on consumer product packaging and sustainable waste processing.

Additionally, through its popular corporate responsibility and sustainability consulting course, Strategic CSR & Projects, offered at both the MBA and undergraduate levels, students have an opportunity to influence corporate responsibility strategy and implementation within a major company. For instance, undergraduate students helped Disney Consumer Products understand options for reducing the environmental impact of paper in its products, packaging, and office use. The students conducted primary research, including interviews with environmentally responsible paper vendors, certification programs, relevant NGOs, and competitors. A team of Disney execs came from southern California to hear the final presentation.

Local, national, and global companies benefit by submitting consulting and research projects for students to undertake. They also can send their own business professionals to the Center for workshops to strategize, develop, and deliver a corporate responsibility implementation plan.



Organization: University of California–Berkeley

Location: Berkeley, California

Website: www.berkeley.edu

Founded: 1868

Employees: 24,700 (UC Berkeley as a whole),
Center for Responsible Business: 4

Measurement/Results

- Since 2003, CRB has worked with 80 companies on almost 200 projects.
- As part of the Sustainable Finance program, MBA and MFE students manage the first ever \$1M+ socially responsible investment fund—an opportunity to adapt traditional financial models to generate both business and social value.

Other SR Involvement

Through its Sustainable Products & Solutions Program, the Center hosted “Clean Water Solutions for the Developing World,” a solutions-oriented roundtable that brought together corporations, NGOs, academics, and foundations interested in an action-oriented, solutions-based approach to marrying water purification technology with sustainable business models.

Photo: Kristin Richmond and Kristen Tobey are co-founders of Revolution Foods and Haas graduates.