

## **THE PRESSURES TO TEACH SUSTAINABILITY TO MARKETING STUDENTS: MOVING TOWARDS US FROM BOTH DIRECTIONS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Sustainability is growing to be an important topic at both the university level and at the college of business level throughout the country. For example, in July of 2008, the AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) focused their first summer conference on this subject, inviting academic speakers and those from industry including Arizona State University, General Electric, McKinsey & Company, and PriceWaterhouse Coopers. Attending the conference were college of business deans and interested faculty. It was enlightening to see the importance given to this topic and level of credibility that came from the types of speakers and presentations. Presentations were geared towards sustainability curriculum, college of business programs and corporate sustainability reporting.

Immediately following the AACSB conference in Salt Lake City, another conference commenced in San Luis Obispo, the UC/CSU/CCC Sustainability Conference. This annual conference (the seventh) brought together students, staff, faculty and administrators from the Universities of California, California State Universities and California Community Colleges. Over the period of the conference there were seminars and discussions addressing the interests of the many constituencies involved. Seminars also included discussions with sustainability administrators from the administration of the UCs and the CSUs.

Even as this abstract is being revised, time has passed for submission of papers to the 2009 American Marketing Association Summer Educator's Conference aptly themed, "The Role of Marketing in Defining the Organization's 'Sustainability' Goals." These conferences appear to be only several of a

number of "top down" pressures encouraging us to develop sustainable practices and curriculum on university and college campuses. National organizations and state sustainability initiatives are trickling down to the overarching university and college level. In California, for example, university and college chancellors and presidents are being asked to voluntarily or through mandate develop sustainability committees or initiatives on campus. These initiatives and committees are not only focusing upon facilities management, but the development of curriculum addressing this topic.

From the "bottom up," colleges of business are being required to rethink their offerings by organizations seeking out informed employees, faculty and student interest groups, and competition from other institutions. In addition, universities and colleges are looking at Sustainability Across the Curriculum (AASHE, 2008) programs and identifying courses which could satisfy environmental literacy requirements. There are also marketing academics looking for a change in what we are teaching future marketers.

After attending the AACSB and UC/CSU/CCC Sustainability Conferences, the author identified other areas that are creating an environment for changes in marketing curriculum to include sustainability topics. A model of these pressures for change was created and a description of these pressures is presented. The paper is divided into sections describing the (1) background, (2) influencers of pressure on curricular changes, (3) conclusions, and (4) implications and recommendations.

**References Available on Request**