Leadership and Sustainable Management: An Ignatian Field Course

RATIONALE

For an Ignatian leadership and sustainable management course, getting a job or profiting from a business cannot be the sole aim, despite the currently struggling economy and high unemployment rates. Our program is rooted in the recognition that there are many professionals, graduate students who are also seeking to be part of a transformative change, who want to make a difference in the world, and “to find work with meaning and find meaning in their work.”

This course seeks to prepare professionals, graduate students for the broader role of business leaders as agents of change in the wider community – emphasizing on the value of success (that is significant), and performance (with a social purpose).

In this sense, our program is in keeping with key developments across industries where:

• business professionals, and others involved in policymaking are involved with projects that demand sustainable approaches; and
• clients prioritize holistic approaches to problem-solving and prefer graduates who are able to respond to such values.

A significant aspect of Ignatian leadership training, is reflected in our desire to help graduates think critically about how to decouple ‘business as usual’ from the common assets of ‘carbon,’ ‘water,’ and ‘land,’ which are today casually lumped together and manipulated without restraint. This is
crucial if we are to move beyond the usual platitudes of green-washing and the struggling mandate of Corporate Social Responsibility, to recognize the physical limitations of our natural resources.

Our program hopes to make this connection by focusing on the community of Bendum with its rich mélange of socio-cultural, economic and ecological contexts, and studying the problems that its people and biodiversity face with the entry of large corporations seeking land and natural resources. The goal is to train graduate students of business to read and analyse scientific data, and by interacting with field environments, think about how the relationship between business and community can be made sustainable rather than predatory. In this sense, we propose to train business leaders whose moral compass is carefully calibrated by scientific knowledge and empathically oriented toward field realities.

Most sustainability courses are designed as class-room conversations supplemented with lectures by visiting experts who essentially focus on the same subjects and skills that business schools already impart to their students (from the intangibilities of leadership to the specificities of accountancy). To this extent, the value added in terms of sustainability is that the students are trained to return to reorganize their home institutions sustainably. Our goal is much broader in that we hope to inspire a transformation in the kind of leadership that Jesuit business schools produce: accordingly, this camp takes sustainability out in the real world seriously, and incorporates deep dives into scientific knowledge conducted both in the classroom as well in the field, to prepare graduates to engage with natural, ecological as well as artificial/institutional systems that are not limited to office-spaces and professional responsibilities that they may already be familiar with. To this end, over the course of the sustainability camp, we expect our graduates to:

- learn sustainability management practices in the context of a specific natural ecosystem; and also
- think critically about what components of their learning may be transferrable or adaptable to a variety of other institutional scales and ecological contexts globally.

**PRINCIPLES**

- Foster long-term change to improve human development while maintaining the health of the natural environment.
- Explore the definitions, perceptions, benefits, and challenges of sustainability management and examine best practices for creating or redeveloping sustainable organizations and environments.

- Outline ethics and standards in human development
- Understand how leaders provide vision and empowerment for organizations and individuals

**ELEMENTS**

- Discussion and reflection on key leadership and sustainable management concepts
- Sessions to improve the understanding of best practices in sustainable organizations with a focus on the multitude of environmental, social, and economic factors that affect long-term quality of life.
- Practice capturing the business value of sustainability through live case studies.
- Train, empower, and create a network that can help accelerate change towards sustainability and social-entrepreneurship.

**VALUES**

- Green economy in a responsible way, by decoupling business and carbon, water, land.
- Enhance Corporate Social Responsibility.
- Teaching students to contribute outside the walls of their institutional environment to the broader society.

**METHODS**

- Classroom lecture
- Field engagement

**TOPICS**

- Leadership and Sustainability Ethics
- Urbanization and green economy
- State of the world’s resources
- Human development paradigm and development
- Community development, social enterprising and management
- Sustainability science and values
- Natural resource governance approaches, management regimes, challenges
- Agriculture, food security (+GMOs), forest management and water
- Climate change and disaster risk

**OUTPUT**

Students divided into smaller groups that work together to produce:

- Reflection paper, per group
- Feasible study/ small-scale social enterprise design
- Groups present their field study/ proposals, followed by Q&A