

The Business of Education

Why change-minded MBA candidates turn to the Institute before they pick a business school.

BY JUDITH F. SAMUELSON

This fall, close to 1,000 US graduate schools of business will welcome over 150,000 new MBA candidates onto college campuses, and even more students will start the highly competitive admissions process to business schools around the globe. These days, many young business school candidates want to make a good living and stay true to their ethics, environmental concerns, and social causes. So they turn to the Institute to find the right school.

Every two years since 1999, the Institute's Business and Society Program has produced a global ranking and searchable database of MBA programs called *Beyond Grey Pinstripes*. For a generation of business students and faculty, *Pinstripes*—along with a suite of Institute resources and academic networks to encourage cutting-edge scholarship—is their primary connection to the Institute. “When I first read *Beyond Grey Pinstripes* in the late '90s, I was blown away,” says Jason McBriarty, a manager at Levi Strauss. “Reading it was one of the factors

that motivated me to attend b-school.”

The process of gathering and analyzing the reams of data required to produce *Pinstripes* is a complex one. The goals, however, are straight-forward: Arm the next generation of business leaders with information, and drive the changes necessary to incorporate environmental stewardship and social-impact management into mainstream b-school curricula.

Converting data from 150 participating schools in Asia, Europe, and the Americas into a credible ranking and coherent story about the state of play in global business education requires significant people-power—and attention to detail. The program relies on a three-person team in the Business and Society Program's New York office along with a cadre of talented Ph.D. students from schools around the world who compete to be named Scoring Fellows. “As a Ph.D. student, it's been an amazing experience to review the course outlines that are at the very leading edge of teaching about sustainability, international business, and poverty alleviation,” says



Winners of the Business and Society Program's annual Case Competition, which encourages MBA students to write a case for an ethical and socially responsible business.

Kevin McKagne, a 2009 Scoring Fellow from Toronto. “I’m now fully up to speed on best practice in course design, including the latest resources, debates, and pedagogical approaches.”

There is no shortage of content. This year’s class of 14 Scoring Fellows analyzed 5,826 course submissions and almost as many research abstracts—all scrubbed clean of school identity to eliminate selection bias. With b-schools competing for a numerical ranking in the *Pinstripes* “Global One Hundred”—from INSEAD in France, Pontificia Universidad Católica in Peru, and the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology to top US schools like Berkeley, Cornell, Stanford, Wharton, and Yale—administrators are eager to download course descriptions and syllabi onto the Institute’s custom website to document their claims of values-driven business education. Sometimes just submitting material to *Pinstripes* can catalyze change at a school. “The data collection gave us a baseline, illuminating our strengths as well as areas that needed improvement,” says Ann Buchholtz, research director at Rutgers’ Institute for Ethical Leadership, John Mittelstaedt, a marketing professor at Clemson University, agrees: “[*Pinstripes*] is shaping the strategic direction [by] leading and aspiring business schools in ways individual faculty, scholarly communities, and journals cannot.”

Plans for the public release of the ranking begin before the results are in—including extensive media outreach, design of a state-of-art website, an awards breakfast and deans’ dialogue in New York City, and a program of corporate sponsorship that builds bridges to influential firms that also recruit MBAs. Corporate sponsors over the years—like Microsoft, Ernst & Young, and Citigroup—send the message that the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that *Pinstripes* values are welcome in the Big Show: getting a job.

Finally, select syllabi, teaching resources, and case studies are selected and loaded onto www.BeyondGreyPinstripes.org and its sister site, www.CasePlace.org, where tens of thousands of business educators access them each



Sally Blount (third from left), dean of the Kellogg School of Management, discusses the future of business education at recent Business and Society Program event at Bloomberg in New York.

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year. Faculty also get involved by nominating their peers for the coveted Aspen Faculty Pioneer Awards—which *Financial Times* has dubbed “the Oscars of the business school world”—that celebrate scholars who put business purpose and values at the center of their scholarship.

So why do we do it? In short, business schools matter. In the United States, one out of four post-grads and one out of five undergrads are majoring in business or a near-equivalent. Business education is a major enterprise; it is setting the tone in boardrooms and executive suites across the planet. We need to spotlight the best thinking and teaching about the complex realities and multiple objectives of business. And we need to help students vote with their feet—to enlist them in creating demand for the kind of coursework that engages business in the most critical issues of our day.

And it’s working: In the weeks and months following the release of the 2011–2012 ranking this coming November, more than 100,000 visitors are expected to come to www.BeyondGreyPinstripes.org to compare school profiles, just as the business school admissions process kicks into high gear. In addition to prospective students, visitors will include interested alumni, faculty, and administrators, who use the site to benchmark their peers in the hyper-competitive environment of global business education. The Institute has been a great home for this work since the Business and Society Program opened its doors in 1998. And *Beyond Grey Pinstripes* has allowed the Institute to introduce itself to a new generation of users—and in turn introduce that generation to a unique set of ideas: timeless values. ♦