Sustainability Policy and practice: An Executive Re-training program

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Objectives

Need for Leadership
“Sustainability” is the agenda. It is becoming an integral part of the long-term planning of both developed and newly developing economies.

According to a recent report by Accenture for the United Nations Global Compact study of chief executive officers, 93% of the global CEOs believe sustainability issues will be critical to the future success of their business, and 96% believe sustainability issues should be fully integrated into the strategy and operation of a company.

New approaches for incorporating “sustainable” strategies are emerging from both government policy and business practices. Learning about, and applying, the best of these will give a competitive and early advantage to those who adopt and incorporate them. It will be these leaders in business and government and community that will lead us all into a sustainable future.

Educating for Action
Faculty from the National Technical University of Athens, Greece, in collaboration with a group of distinguished international experts, are offering a focused executive course of study that will bring together business managers, policy makers and leaders from the government, non-government and business communities, and prepare them to work together to align business, government and community policy and practice toward creating a more sustainable future.

A New Concept of Executive Education
This unique executive level graduate program will provide nine-weeks of intensive study over a three year period. For three weeks each summer, over three consecutive summers, participants will engage in a course of study that will culminate in an Executive Masters of Science Degree in Sustainability Policy and Practice. This new MSc degree will be conferred after successful completion of the full course of study by the National Technical University of Athens in cooperation with other Universities.

Each summer’s course of study will take place at a selected Greek venue, typically a Greek island, where the learning will be integrated with issues related to the study site. This design will afford the students and the host site the opportunity to experience real-world challenges and explore and apply solutions to these challenges. Each summer segment will consist of three courses and incorporate a project specifically designed for the benefit of the venue.

Methodology

Description of Program
The program will consist of a total of nine (9) courses. Three courses (4 credit hours per course) will be offered in each of three consecutive summers. One course will be delivered and completed each week. Each course will be covered over six days (Monday – Saturday) for a total of 36 hours consisting of six (6) hours of lecture and discussion for each of the six days. Additional time will be allowed for project work. The class time may be divided into a morning session and late afternoon or evening session, allowing some study/research time between sessions.

The three courses in each of the summer sessions will be aligned to issues of sustainability that are important to the venue. Two weekend discussion groups and a resolution session at the close of each of the summer programs will connect the course learning to the sustainability issues that are specific to the venue. Group projects may be allowed to be completed virtually after the summer session ends.

Students are able to take one, two or all three of the one-week courses offered each year, i.e., take courses according to their specific interests or all courses towards a degree, which will require a minimum of three summer teaching periods plus the project during the first two summer sessions.

Learning in Living Laboratories: Islands
An experimental design often requires the study of independent or dependent variables unaffected by factors not included in the experimental design. In the case of an experiment on some environmental issue in the real world, it is often difficult to isolate the problem from surrounding parameters. One way to accomplish this feat is to test the experiment on an island.

Islands are contained, or nearly contained, systems, that may have minimum outside influences. There are several examples in which islands have provided opportunities for learning about the consequences of behavior on the ultimate sustainability of a system. It is in the context of island systems that students can consider what issues are important to their management, including resource management and allocation, carrying capacity and governance.

Study of past island systems and application of what is learned from these studies to the current island systems will offer a real-world, and possibly real-time exploration and experimentation of how we might manage the ecological, sociological and economical balance through policy and practice toward a viable and sustainable future.

Curriculum

Year A

Theme A: Sustainability Definition, Policy and Strategy
- Industrial Ecology
- Business Strategy
- Corporate Reporting and Metrics

Year B

Theme B: Energy and Climate Change
- Energy Management
- Energy, Environment and Economics
- Carbon Management & Climate Change

Year C

Theme C: Critical Resource Management and Restoration
- Water, Air and Soil Policy and Management
- Creating Integrated Sustainable Communities
- Environmental Sustainability and Economics

Applied Learning: Executive Projects
Related to the themes described above, the venue (host) island can provide an opportunity to explore and possibly implement a sustainable strategy. The program organizers and administrators will pursue these opportunities prior to each summer program with the island government and businesses. Projects, where participating executives can practice on the course contents, may be as follows:

STRATEGIC THINKING: Develop a strategy that will identify existing or newly developed local business models that might operate competitively while being sustainable. Local businesses may be able to adopt the strategy, allowing the students to measure results in future years.

ACTION ORIENTED: Develop and apply changes to local utility policy and practices that can make it operate more efficiently, cleaner, carbon neutral, etc…

INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS: Develop a policy and practice model for more efficient use of local resources, e.g., replenishment of water, while serving the needs of the local culture.