

# THE BLESSED UNREST IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

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In his 2007 book *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being, and Why No One Saw It Coming*, environmental scholar, activist, and leader Paul Hawken describes the worldwide movement of millions of individuals and groups working to create a better world.

Early in the first chapter, he reports seeing

compelling coherent, organic, self-organized congregations involving tens of millions of people dedicated to change. When asked at colleges if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: If you look at the science that describes what is happening on earth today and aren't pessimistic, you don't have the correct data. If you meet the people in this unnamed movement and aren't optimistic, you haven't got a heart. (4)

Since 2007, the reasons for both pessimism and for optimism have grown.

The planet's ecosystem has continued to be assaulted and to deteriorate. The latest 10-year window of opportunity to take the necessary actions for preventing a global ecological catastrophe has passed, as have all the other 10-year opportunities for critically important actions. Those windows keep passing without inspiring the level of worldwide commitment and actions needed to avoid that catastrophe, and each decade the magnitude and cost of the needed actions grow. Although many countries have made some significant strides in dealing with the existential challenges posed by climate change and global unsustainability, those efforts are far from adequate (Wallace-Wells, 2020).

In many respects, the most troubling event in this post-2007 period is the continuing opposition to positive actions by some political and some business interests in the United States—blocking, to a large extent, the national and

international initiatives led earlier by the Clinton administration and later by the Obama administration. This ideological and greed-driven set of destructive actions culminated in the abandonment of any efforts by the United States to provide leadership for a sustainable world from 2016 to 2020. In that period, the American national government actively fought against the kinds of measures needed, both domestically and internationally, not just for national prosperity and well-being but also very likely for the survival of ourselves and our species. Alas, there is plenty of reason for pessimism worldwide.

Compared to the reasons for being pessimistic, the reasons for being optimistic seem modest but they do exist. Attempts to establish multilateral agreements for environmental healing continue to be sought and to move forward, albeit modestly and haltingly. Hard technologies for creating clean energy have progressed rapidly with dramatic reductions in costs and increases in deployment. Awareness that we have the capacity and resources to eliminate global poverty at an almost trivial global economic cost is growing. The catalogue of feasible and powerful initiatives that deal with the multiple aspects of global unsustainability continues to grow and inspire positive actions. And in the United States, a new national administration is seeking to regain a positive role for America in dealing with climate change—one of the two great existential challenges of our lifetimes. And, by the way, we have continued to avoid, barely and mostly by pure blind luck and good fortune, the second greatest existential threat to the existence of our own and other species: nuclear Armageddon (Sherwin, 2020).

This journal has a history of being optimistic about the opportunities business schools have for contributing to meeting the challenges of global unsustainability, and post-2007 events have contributed to that optimism. In this editorial, we will frame the very basic case for that optimism about the role business schools can play and now appear increasingly likely to play. Then, we will list two broad domains in which this optimism lives. Finally, we will invite you to read the excellent articles in this issue of the Journal.

## THE CASE FOR OPTIMISM ABOUT THE ROLE BUSINESS SCHOOLS CAN PLAY

If we are to find a way to live on this planet without destroying it, we need to do at least three things. They occur at the individual, organizational, and global levels:

1. become the kinds of people who can live on this planet without destroying it;
2. produce, distribute, and consume the goods and services we need in ways the planet can support; and
3. create global economic and political systems that enable all of the world's peoples to flourish.

Each of these three tasks has a discovery part and an action part. Discovery: "What needs to be done – what does it look like"? – Action: "Making it happen."

Both of those tasks – discovery and action – are what any educational endeavor should be about, especially the educational endeavor of business education.

It is true that business schools as a group have long been remiss in seeing and acting on such a vision for their role. Many of them have been content to accept a comfortable accommodation with the neoliberal, maximizing-shareholder-wealth framing of the purpose of the business enterprise and of all economic activity: "The purpose of business is to make money – period."

However, a much-needed blessed unrest has been growing rapidly in and around business education (Laszlo, Sroufe, & Waddock, 2017) and in the world community. It is increasingly clear that business practice aligned with the dominant neoliberal paradigm is a failure: it is destroying the planet, it is leaving a third of the world's peoples in dire poverty; it has increased income and wealth inequality to levels that are so great that one's mind cannot fully grasp both the extent and the implications of that inequality, and its advocates watch—or perhaps even celebrate—the flaunting of a 500 million dollar yacht by one of the greatest beneficiaries of that set of practices, as he leads a company, some of whose full-time employees seem to need government-provided food stamps to feed their families.

These systemic failures and the ugliness of the related excesses have become undeniable and are encouraging searches for a more valuable, creative, and exciting

adventure for business education. One of the possibly many approaches for seizing the opportunities open to business education is to embed material on sustainability, social justice, and poverty alleviation throughout the business curriculum. Another approach is to base the entire curriculum on the commitment to sustainability, social justice, and poverty alleviation from the very beginning—to start with the premise that the purpose of business education and business enterprise is to create a sustainable/flourishing/regenerating world.

As both of these approaches are gaining acceptance they are inspiring discovery and research activities of literally tens of thousands of faculty members, student, and student teams – many focused on the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. As this editorial was being drafted, the Fowler Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit announced this year’s Flourish Prizes. The prizes acknowledge for-profit companies for their contributions toward achieving the SDGs, as described in student Aim2Flourish research projects—17 companies, 17 SDGs, and 17 research projects (Aim2Flourish, 2021). Similar initiatives are occurring around the world.

## EMBEDDING AND TRANSFORMING: TWO BROAD DOMAINS FOR BUSINESS SCHOOL CONTRIBUTION

As the unrest in business education has grown, the means to translate unrest into positive action have also grown. Perhaps the most frequently taken approach to increasing business education’s contribution to a better world involves embedding projects and content into existing core and upper level business courses, such as the projects that earned the seventeen 2021 “Flourish Prizes.” A second approach involves “going down to bare metal” and transforming the entire business education curriculum from the very first course to the very last. Both approaches are important and desirable, and each approach contributes ideas and content to the other.

### Embedding sustainability into the existing business-as-usual curriculum

Embedding sustainability content into courses in existing business-as-usual curricula allows good things to be done right now, begins shaping the mindsets and building the skills for more fundamental change, and increases the desires for more fundamental change in what business education is for and what it accomplishes.

Efforts to embed sustainability/flourishing/regenerating content into any course are supported by a rich literature and set of ideas for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (e.g., United Nations, n.d.), the Aim2Flourish program (e.g., Aim2Flourish, 2021), the materials and conferences for the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (e.g., UNPRME, 2021), the programs of the Responsible Research in Business and Management (e.g., RRBM, 2021), and many other contributions such as the course materials developed and provided by Jeffrey Sachs and the SDG Academy (<https://sdgacademy.org/>) and those of the LEAP group (<https://isabelrimanoczy.net/leap/>) that plays an important role in changing course content, through its work on the Sustainability Mindset—described earlier by Isabel Rimanoczy in this journal (Rimanoczy, 2014) and in a second article, with Beate Klingenberg, in this issue.

Of course, as valuable as “doing sustainability” within the existing dominant business-as-usual paradigm might be, it is hard to imagine that even greatly growing numbers of business activities that involve making more money by doing less harm will get us where we need to go. The “business case for sustainability” within the existing neoliberal paradigm will not create a sustainable world.

“Going down to bare metal”—truly transforming business curricula and research

Very shortly after the publication of this issue of the *Journal of Management for Global Sustainability*, the *Journal of Jesuit Business Education* will publish a special issue devoted to the initiative described by Michael Garanzini a year ago in this journal (Garanzini, 2020). In a virtual meeting on July 15 and 16, 2020, eleven teams from Jesuit business schools began work on developing a set of core courses that move away from the neoliberal business-as-usual grounded programs that are taught throughout most of the world of business education. Accepting the structure of the traditional business curriculum as their starting point, these new business function courses, and the new textbooks they are intended to develop, will be aligned with a new purpose for business enterprise and a new paradigm for business education (Garanzini & Santos, n.d.).

The new courses these eleven teams are developing will very likely have many similarities to the courses in the sustainability MBAs offered by a few Universities.

These new courses, the new paradigm on which they are based, and increasing appreciation of the sustainability MBAs like the ones described by Sroufe, Hart, and Lovins in this issue are also likely to increase the desire in many universities and in their business schools to move away from the failed neoliberal paradigm and toward curricula aligned with the need for a sustainable/flourishing/regenerating world. These new courses, curricula, and sustainability-focused research will also reduce the perceived cost, difficulty, and risk of moving away from curricula grounded in that obsolete paradigm. The ground is shifting from under traditional purpose-of-the-business-firm-is-to-maximize-shareholder-wealth curricula. Those curricula no longer provide the safe harbor they used to offer. They are becoming the unsafe place to be.

Now what's next?

Three years ago this journal reported a 2016 initiative led by the International Association of Jesuit Business Schools and the Colleagues in Jesuit Business Education to inspire the transformation of business education along the lines of what we can now see starting to happen in increasing numbers of business schools (Stoner, 2018). That initiative took the form of an application to the MacArthur Foundation in its 100&Change 100-million-dollar competition. The 100&Change competition called for projects that would make real progress in solving a major societal problem. In that 2016 application, 40 business schools would receive \$2.4 million dollars each to transform their curricula and some of their research to be fully aligned with the need for a sustainable world, and to do so in *only* three years. In 2016 there was much doubt that such a herculean task could be accomplished in just three years ... if ever.

When the application was submitted, it was recognized that the chance of winning the competition was essentially zero—there turned out to be 1,904 applications submitted. However, the real purpose of the application was not to win the 100 million dollars but to inspire the MacArthur Foundation to make a global statement that climate change and global unsustainability are truly a threat to the existence of our species and that we all need to take bold action immediately. One of the hopes was that the MacArthur Foundation would inspire other foundations to take equally bold actions to deal with climate change and global unsustainability.... And perhaps even inspire climate change deniers in government and business to start rethinking their positions and actions.

A similar application was submitted in 2019 by another group and a third will be submitted in 2022 if the competition is repeated ([globalmovement.net](http://globalmovement.net)). This application seeks the same goal—to encourage and support the world’s entire business school community to focus many of their very large intellectual resources on discovering how we can thrive on this planet forever and to provide leadership in taking the actions to make it so. The process of transforming the business curriculum was and is seen as generating many exciting and valuable research possibilities as faculty and students ask new questions and seek new answers as they keep modifying each course in each business discipline. The real value of the curriculum transformations was and is seen as the immediate discoveries and actions for change that the curricula changes will bring about. The contributions graduates of the new programs will make in 5, or 10, or 20 years when they reach customary positions of organizational influence were recognized as important and desirable, but the real payoff would be in creating change immediately through business school leadership.

The 2022 application has one major difference from the first two. Between 2016 and 2021 it has become clear that it does not require bold, risky, and herculean-type efforts to transform business education and three years is not an impossibly short period of time to do so. And large investments to bring about the changes are also not needed. What is needed is recognition of the need for deep commitments to rapid change and actions based on those commitments.

Since the MacArthur Foundation is “offering” that 100 million dollars, the 2022 application is being designed to invest the bulk of the 100 million in 400 \$240,000 grants to business schools around the world to report their progress in making those curricular and research transformations as they engage in the journey. The application assumes, and experience is showing, those transformations do not take the 2.4 million dollars that seemed like perhaps not enough in 2016 – that they can be accomplished “for practically nothing.” The grants to the 400 schools will be for sharing their progress, successes, and bumps in the road in making their transformations. The application will also seek to include 40 business schools that have already made that transformation or are well along the way of doing so within that three-year target for transformative change.

## The articles in this issue of the Journal

In the lead article for this issue, “Transforming Business Education: 21st Century Sustainable MBA Programs,” Robert Sroufe, Stuart L. Hart, and Hunter Lovins pose big questions for readers of JMGS. Are traditionally delivered business school programs doing more harm than good for this planet and its occupants? Are business schools preparing their students to be ready for complex global challenges? As we claw our way out of a pandemic and our thinking turns to creating a more sustainable future, what kind of business school curricula are required for a future that integrates global sustainability into business leader’s thinking? To help answer these questions the authors highlight the changing landscape of business schools, call for change from stakeholders, and describe how their programs became early movers in developing and delivering innovative MBA Sustainability pedagogy. The discussion of these three programs walks readers through case studies in change management, design, experiential learning, and action as they describe their attempts to change the fundamental DNA of business school curricula for the 21st century.

Given the existential challenges facing humanity, business schools will have to do more than create saddle bag courses to hang off a traditional business curriculum as some schools have done so they can check off a box for including ethics or sustainability within a program. Wrapped in the story-telling about each case study is the pushback of a paradigm shift underway in business school pedagogy, i.e., to continue the entrenched traditional neoliberal content, or to ground the curriculum in the social and environmental content relevant to a new generation of students and the complex challenges of this dynamic century. These authors and this article challenge others to develop a curriculum that makes sustainability the core of their programs, research, and mission. Sroufe, Hart, and Lovins contend that faculty and business school leadership should move beyond a shareholder primacy-driven core to a curriculum grounded in the realities of the 21st Century.

The three programs the authors describe are, of course, important for the committed and trained sustainability champions they have and will continue to produce. However, in the context of the growing blessed unrest in business education they have far more important roles to play. These programs are doing at the specialized MBA level exactly what needs to be done in all of business education around the world at all levels, aligning the curriculum and some—to much—of the school’s research fully with the need for a sustainable/flourishing/regenerating

world. Each has shown that it is possible to create such a curriculum and to survive and thrive with it in a relatively unfriendly environment. Unfriendly in the sense that the business education environment was composed of business schools, faculty, students, employing companies, and even foundations, wedded to the business-as-usual ways that are so very different from what their new programs are all about. And so different from what the world needs.

But that environment is slowly changing in favor of those three programs and all other business schools committed to creating a sustainable world. Faculty, potential and current students, and even many alumni and employing organizations are coming to realize business education must be changed if we are to get to where we want to go.

Beyond the contributions their graduates will make and are making a second major contribution of those three sustainable MBA programs, and others like them, is the fact that they could climb the “Mount Sustainability Curriculum”—to modify and to steal playfully a phrase from the wonderful and widely-loved sustainability champion Ray Anderson of the sustainability-committed company Interface. The third major contribution is their curricula. Those schools provide course designs and program ideas from which other schools on the same journey can learn and upon which they can build. They have shown the way—providing not a “cookie-cutter solution” to global unsustainability but valuable examples that other schools can use to create innovative approaches to their unique situations and unique opportunities ... just as the courses the eleven teams in the New Paradigm for Business Education initiative are doing.

This article is a call to action: The author’s stories of disruption give evidence of success and hope for the coming transformation of business education and of capitalism itself. The lessons learned and insights in this article provide guidance for business school leaders aspiring to redefine management for global sustainability and business programs. The authors assert that we are in the middle of a struggle for the soul of business schools and, now is the time for change. It is an open invitation for others to collaborate, disrupt, rethink, and to integrate business education before it is too late.

In this issue’s second article, “The Sustainability Mindset Indicator: A Personal Development Tool,” Isabel Rimanoczy and Beate Klingenberg report continuing

progress on developing ways to create the mindset changes required to help us, as a species, find ways to become the kinds of people who can live on this planet without destroying it. Continuing their work on the sustainability mindset concept, Rimanoczy and Klingenberg offer a brief overview of the origins of this construct and introduce the exploratory research that seeks to determine if a mindset for sustainability can be intentionally developed. From the early research 12 sustainability mindset principles were developed. Current work focuses on developing a new measuring instrument: the Sustainability Mindset Indicator (SMI). The instrument will assess the impact of initiatives focusing on a mindset shift. As such, the SMI represents the possibility of a new and innovative tool that supports the much-needed mindset change toward sustainability.

The complexity of the mindset is carefully laid out in this paper, allowing readers to expand their understanding of the components at play, and their linkages to a broad spectrum of scholarly frameworks. A comparison to other measurement frameworks available in the extant literature shows what additional features and opportunities the SMI offers. This work seeks to lay down the foundation of a new assessment tool that will serve both as a personal development instrument and as guide for educators and coaches.

In the third article, "Identifying the Dominant Ecological Worldviews of Community Leaders and the Influences These Have in Managing Conservation Areas in Ghana," Nana Owusu-Ansah explores the ecological worldviews of top management executives in Ghanaian conservation-supporting organizations called CREMAs. The Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission of Ghana is pursuing a community collaborative natural resources management strategy to promote biodiversity sustainability in communal and family lands. To do so the Division is facilitating the establishment of Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs). The CREMA constitutions and bylaws that establish such areas emphasize fair representation of leaders from participating communities and not just individuals with sustainability inclinations. His paper examines how ecological worldviews of CREMA leaders could be used to gauge their sustainability considerations in managing the CREMAs.

The article explores how the leaders' subscription to anthropocentric or eco-centric ecological worldviews might impact their management prescriptions. Five ecological worldview domains were used to assess the leaders' ecological worldviews:

human dominance over nature, human exemptionalism, balance of nature, risk of eco-crisis, and limit to growth. It was assumed in the article that leaders with strong anthropocentric worldviews would endorse unsustainable harvesting of biodiversity resources whereas leaders with strong eco-centric worldviews would promote a prohibitive stance that might stifle the utilization of the resources and thereby might inhibit socio-economic development in their communities.

In bringing into focus the interface between the paradigms of nature conservation and socio-economic development, the article explores how the leaders' ecological worldviews influenced the socio-economic development activities allowed to be carried out in designated ecological hot spots in the CREMAs. The conclusion is that the leaders employed eco-centric ecological worldviews to maintain proper functioning of ecological processes whereas ambivalent ecological worldviews were used to promote socio-economic activities deemed to be less harmful in ecologically sensitive zones.

In "Assessment of TRAIN's Coal and Petroleum Excise Taxes: Environmental Benefits and Impacts on Sectoral Employment and Household Welfare," Philip Arnold P. Tuaño, Ramon Clarete, Marjorie Muyrong, and Czar Joseph Castillo highlight the policy trade-offs of increasing energy taxes in the Philippines. The increase in coal and petroleum excise taxes, under the Philippine government's first phase of current programs for tax reforms, is shown to have a slight adverse output effect for most industries, a decline in employment, and an increase in poverty incidence because the excise taxes have an adverse effect of higher commodities prices paid by the poor. On the other hand, carbon emissions are estimated to be lower.

The authors conclude that in undertaking reforms that would improve the environment, complementary measures are necessary to ensure that marginalized groups are not affected negatively by the tax reforms even in the short-term. At the same time, governmental policies to raise revenue should also consider how such policies might lead to improving the design of alternative energy policies. This paper highlights the fact that any economic policy re-design should take into account the effects on economic welfare and resource sustainability.

In this issue's final article, "Addressing Sustainability in Fashion Through Goal Frames and the Theory of Planned Behavior Perspectives," Jomel J. Reyes and Anna A. Mendiola address the problem of fast fashion, which is unsustainable primarily

because it generates more waste and contributes to depletion of natural resources. They note that interest in fast fashion has risen exponentially in the past few years, primarily because it provides fashionable clothes that are relatively affordable and convenient to buy. A look at a typical millennial or Gen Z closet would easily confirm this rise in fast fashion's popularity. The authors note that it would be safe to say that most people have many more clothes than what they really need. One simple solution to the fast fashion problem would be to reduce the frequency of buying clothes and to buy fewer clothes each time. This course of action is quite consistent with the growing trend toward minimalism, an enlightened simplicity as exemplified by what Marie Kondo preaches. Their study shows how communication can help people realize the positive environmental aspects of buying fewer clothes. It shows that one's attitudes and subjective norms can be significantly influenced when exposed to messages that frame one's goals alongside an environmental concern. Since these message frames take into consideration a person's goals, they are an effective way to encourage a change in perception toward favorable pro-environmental behavior.

The authors suggest that one of the many realizations this pandemic has engendered is a simple one: we do not really need all the clothes that we have in our closets and a less complicated life in some domains may be a more satisfying one. They note that, perhaps, this time may be quite an opportune one to link this practical realization with the awareness that buying fewer clothes could actually be a way to help the environment, and ourselves as well.

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