

Introducing PRME in a Research-led Business School: Challenges and Opportunities

Michael Powell
Pro Vice Chancellor (Business)

Background/History

- Griffith University has long-standing commitment to social justice and environmental studies
- Griffith Business School establishes “sustainability and corporate responsibility” as a key strategic commitment in 2006
- But little expertise in these fields other than in traditional business/professional ethics

Griffith Business School

- Newly formed from multiple, separate schools and faculties (2004)
- Spread across four campuses
- Very large with 10,000 students and 220 faculty
- Strong research commitment and highly valued faculty independence
- Broad group including Politics and Public Policy, Asian Studies and Tourism, Sports and Event Management

Challenges

- No established researchers in CSR or related fields
- Researchers reluctant to expand or change focus of existing research programs
- Marginal courses in CSR/Ethics area; no programs in area
- Faculty consider themselves “too busy” to integrate PRME into their courses
- No public identification or positioning of GBS in this area; seen as “new” and possibly threatening.

Strategic Approach

- Link GBS commitment to University values of social justice/environmental protection
- Make a visible public commitment: “putting a stake in the ground” as symbol of new direction
- Join international partnership of business school moving in similar direction (GRLI)
- Appoint international expert as “Adjunct Associate Professor” to provide leadership and international networks
- Create a new Strategic Research Program with financial support

Initial Actions

- Found champions from within Business School
- Launched “Strategic Research Program” with co-leaders from different disciplines (around 25-30 faculty indicated interest)
- Held Sustainability and CSR “retreats” to engage key staff
- Established sustainable enterprise website
- Held public seminar series with high profile industry speakers (thought leadership)
- Commenced curricular audits to identify existing PRME content
- Created linkages with NGOs and companies interested in area
- Provided funding to support development of teaching modules

Further Initiatives

- Appointed of senior strategic position to develop PRME commitment
- Using existing programs as leverage: e.g. Beyond Grey Pinstripes for MBA
- Developing focused graduate program in “Sustainable Enterprise”
- Recruiting specialist faculty with expertise in area
- Establishing a Centre to “house” sustainability and CSR initiatives and provide a public face to GBS initiative
- Foundation member of Asia Pacific Academy of Business in Society
- Hosting Asia Pacific conference in late 2009 in Brisbane

Success Stories

- High degree of faculty support achieved; several faculty now engaged in research in area
- Research program with FINSIA (Financial Services Institute of Australia)
- University funding for research program in Sustainable Tourism
- Ongoing policy research around sustainable land policies for indigenous people of Australia
- Departments taking initiative to champion internally
- Public seminar series continue to be successful (2nd year)
- Established regional and national profile as leader