

Doing good while doing well



The USB was recently ranked 70th in the Global Top 100 of the Beyond Grey Pinstripes rankings, which is a research survey and alternative ranking of business schools done by the Aspen Institute in New York every two years.

The Beyond Grey Pinstripes initiative focuses on innovative full-time MBA programmes leading the way in the integration of social and environmental stewardship into curricula.

The USB ranked 49th in the student exposure part of the rankings, which means students are well exposed to social and environmental issues during their MBA studies.

NEW YORK Representing the USB, lecturer Jako Volschenk (centre) receives the USB's 70th ranking in the Beyond Grey Pinstripes Global Top 100 list from Rich Leimsider and Nancy McCraw of the Aspen Institute.

Preserving the environment is a global imperative, and business schools compete to instil this social consciousness in their graduates. CLAYTON SWART reports.

Judy Samuelson, director of the Business and Society Program at New York's Aspen Institute, explained Aspen's role at the reception, in New York, where business schools from across the world that promote environmental and social awareness received recognition from the institute.

Samuelson said Aspen's role is to ensure that wherever MBA graduates ply their trade they are equipped to think deeply about the fundamental purpose of the enterprise, to clarify the measures of success, and to consider who is affected by the decision or investment over the long haul.

"We call these the rudiments of social impact management, which goes to the heart of the challenge of business schools.

"Social impact management is code for the changes we need in our business education system. These are to move away from the current focus on share price and short-term results as well as from a business model that is designed to externalise costs on wider society – towards one that honours the interdependence of business and wider society."

The USB was ranked in the top 100

business schools worldwide that advance global stewardship.

Jako Volschenk, USB lecturer in environmental finance, received the award in New York on behalf of the USB.

Volschenk says business has the most resources to make changes that governments cannot. "Africa has for long been seen as a continent rampant with corruption, despite recent examples to fight it – like Lesotho's clamp-down on bribes. Furthermore, developing countries will be hardest hit by climate change. Such issues should prompt business to act on the social, ethical and environmental aspects of their operations."

Volschenk sees a clear niche for business schools in this regard. "It is our role as management educators to train the leaders of today and tomorrow to take up the challenge within their companies. We hope to see management move away from personal enrichment to a wider agenda that includes creating social and environmental equity. There is also

increasing pressure from society for these new managers and companies to fulfil such a role."

He says such a shift can be observed from the increasing number of students who have enrolled for the environmental finance and sustainable enterprise MBA elective courses over the past few years.

"It is easier for managers to align their value systems with companies which are more active in the social and environmental spheres. South African companies are already very active, but we should see a bigger movement in this area in the next few years. Companies need change agents who understand the underlying principles of sustainability, thus creating a further need for more education and training in these fields – as well as integrating these issues into core modules of the MBA programme.

"Companies need people who grasp the principle of doing good while doing well," says Volschenk. □

What Aspen has to say about the USB

'Compared to other Business Schools in our survey, the University of Stellenbosch Business School offers a good number of courses featuring relevant content, and does a good job in those courses explicitly addressing how mainstream business improves the world.'