This paper analyzes the evolution and significance of an important new masters program on social enterprise based in American University’s School of International Service.

Graduate education in social entrepreneurship has evolved over the past three decades from origins in the established entrepreneurship and nonprofit management fields. Over this time period courses, research efforts, school- and university-wide initiatives have grown in many leading business and public policy schools. These have included pioneering efforts at Columbia, Duke, Harvard, Oxford, New York University, Northwestern, Stanford, and Yale among others. Many have been accelerated by generous philanthropic giving, increasing student interest in careers combining business methods and societal-improvement objectives, and the emergence of a large international support infrastructure to promote social entrepreneurship. The award of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize to a social entrepreneur, Mohammad Yunis, elevated the visibility of all these
endeavors. Increasing public concern with the abilities of the traditional triad of the private, public, and independent sectors to sustainably address many of the world’s most critical challenges has added a sense of urgency to the emergence of the social entrepreneurship alternative.

With this as a backdrop, a number of universities throughout the world are considering establishing programs to prepare social enterprise practitioners. At this point, only a handful offers specific graduate degrees in social entrepreneurship. Most graduate training in this field has involved elective concentrations appended to traditional MBA or MPA/MPP degree programs, along with extra-curricular activities.

The School of International Service (SIS) at American University is among the first schools worldwide to offer a two-year Master of Arts in Social Enterprise (SE). Its inaugural cohort of 12 students entered in August 2011. This program is also the first of its kind offered by a member of the Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs.

Being based in a school of international relations, a multi-disciplinary field with a more flexibly-defined-accreditation-context than the more established disciplines of business and public administration, the American University program has taken advantage of this freedom to rethink social entrepreneurship education from the ground up, giving strong emphasis to identity-formation as well as knowledge and skill acquisition. The school’s
globally focused, multi-cultural nature facilitates its receptivity to lessons from a field that has emerged and grown significantly outside the U.S. and the developed economies.

This paper presents a case study tracing the origins, development, and design of this program, and gives special attention to the aspects of the program oriented to produce graduates skilled in the doing, not the study of, social entrepreneurship. Opportunities for complementary relationships with MBA, law, and other graduate programs are also considered.

THE PLUNGE

Many universities hold an orientation program to provide a gentle entry into the world of graduate study for incoming students, with information sessions about the campus, the faculty, the curriculum, and student services as well as opportunities to socialize.

The SIS SE Program approaches this socialization task a little differently. On the first day of arrival on campus, after a half hour of pleasant mingling with other new students and faculty, the SE students are paired, and each pair given the name of a DC-based NGO. Each NGO has a specific challenge facing it. The students are told they have 8 to 12 weeks, starting now, to add value to the organization. It is up to them to figure out how.

Assisting the student pairs is a coach, a Wharton MBA graduate with extensive experience in consulting with and managing several social enterprises, who has also negotiated the details of these assignments with the NGO CEOs.
Called “The Plunge” this first step into the masters program illustrates several key themes of the curriculum – its focus on real problems in the real world, not the campus; its bias toward action; its use of practitioner faculty. The Plunge involves surprise and risk; it generates enthusiasm and excitement, and after several weeks, anxieties, as the students become immersed in the often-chaotic realities of nonprofits and social enterprises. The assignment socializes by stressing collaboration across the student pairs, in contrast to the orientation project offered simultaneously to American University’s entering MBAs: a classroom-based business case competition. It also begins the process of building relationships among students, ties hoped to survive graduation two years hence as key nodes in the graduates’ personal and professional networks. As a part of this process, a student cohort member skilled in social media volunteered to create a blog, with each pair reporting weekly on progress made and obstacles encountered in their Plunge assignments and other students frequently commenting on the posts.

THE STUDENTS

The first entering class in the Social Enterprise masters program reflects a broad diversity of backgrounds and experiences. They have:

- Cultural ties to places as widespread as Columbia, Japan, Mexico, Vietnam – and post-Katrina New Orleans. Most have worked, volunteered, or studied abroad.
• **Undergraduate study** at a range of schools including Connecticut College, the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, Northwestern, Tulane, University of California, University of Texas, and Yale.

• **Experience working** at Ashoka and Grameen, two law firms, Wall Street, an international foundation, a global professional services firm, a federal government agency, and several NGOs.

About half have private sector backgrounds or undergraduate business degrees. They have indicated that their interest in the program reflects a shift in career interest toward the social sector. The others, from the NGO and public sector see the program as a way to acquire management skills. Many students have a strong interest in studying management subjects, and an equally strong desire to study them outside traditional business schools and with a cohort of other students primarily interested in social, not business, entrepreneurship. Reasons given by entering students for choosing this program include:

“It seemed like a great fit. I could take business school classes but could really focus on what I love to do – which is to combine the business and social sectors in a new and exciting way. After looking at this program, a regular old MBA sounded boring.”

“I’m attracted to new ideas and novel things.”

“I have a strong desire to do. I’ve stood on the sidelines... now I want the skills to act on issues and events.”

“I feel strongly about using my business skills and background to make a real difference, and this is the best way I know how.”

“I honestly weighed for a long time whether or not going back to school was necessary and appropriate for what I wanted to do. It seems like every time you read about a new entrepreneur, they have succeeded not because of any education or degree, but on sheer genius, determination, wit and personality. I did come to realize, however, that going back to graduate school was not just about the degree. It is about learning and gaining experience in a field I care deeply about,
building skills and practical tools, networking and meeting others just as passionate as I about social enterprise.”

“I applied to many, many different schools (including MPP, MA and MPA programs). However, I knew that the Social Enterprise program was the only program I actually WANTED to complete and would enjoy studying. It is completely relevant to my interests and I believe, the most supportive of my goals. I love that the program is practice oriented with the intention of giving us real-world (and not just theoretic) knowledge and experience. “

(Source: excerpts from Self-Assessments completed by all students soon after entering the SE program.)

**STUDENT CAREER OBJECTIVES**

The program is oriented at preparing action-oriented doers – people who start their own organizations or have the knowledge and skills to make existing ones run better. Its courses teach, over two years, practical skills in organizing, managing, leadership, and resourcing, all of which can contribute to student employability along several paths:

**Start a new organization.** For students motivated along these lines, this program can serve as an incubator for a social enterprise they might create and run, perhaps prior to graduation. They will, in-effect, create their own job, having learned how to approach potential funders and start a self-sustaining “more-than-profit” organization.

**Contribute to an existing social enterprise.** Alternatively, students might choose to prepare – through the sequence of core courses, projects undertaken in them, networking opportunities, and the practicum and capstone requirements – to contribute problem solving and leadership expertise to existing social enterprises, their funders, consultants and support infrastructure. Probably the largest source of employment opportunities in this field will be the thousands of new social enterprises created worldwide each year concerned with issues such as disaster relief, education, environment, fair trade, internet and mobile phone access, health, human rights, micro-credit, and other poverty-reduction
**Transform existing organizations.** Many established NGO advocacy and service organizations are searching for ways to adapt the principles of social enterprise to transform their current operations. Many are also seeking ways to diversify their funding base beyond traditional sources of gifts and grants – techniques for doing this will be studied by all students in the program. In addition, many large corporations are creating or expanding their own corporate social responsibility programs, and growing their businesses through social entrepreneurial ventures. These include most Fortune 500 companies and many multinationals headquartered in Europe and Asia. All of these trends drive career opportunities for graduates of the SE program.

Can this program create social entrepreneurs? No graduate program can turn students into entrepreneurs, but a good one can amplify and augment the experiences and mindset they bring to it, and give them skills and knowledge that can increase their likelihood of success. Social entrepreneurs seldom follow existing paths; for some, this out-of-the mainstream masters program is intended to be a useful stimulant and support for their intrinsic entrepreneurial motivations.

**PROGRAM ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT**

American University’s School of International Service (SIS) has almost 1000 graduate students enrolled in 13 masters programs. In its January-February 2012 issue *Foreign Policy* ranked SIS - along with Columbia, Harvard, and Princeton - as offering one of the ten best international relations masters programs. SIS’s historical orientation toward
service has attracted activists, students often more interested in working in change-oriented NGOs than bureaucracies. A significant number are interested in creating their own organizations.

Over the past decade, in several parts of SIS, elective courses have been created to address the needs of these students. These have included study of social entrepreneurship, NGO management and business plan development, effective activism, and corporate social responsibility. The demand for these courses – and their evaluation by students and faculty – has been strong. Some have been taught by senior tenured faculty such as Nanette Levinson, a scholar in the fields of knowledge transfer and innovation who was formerly associate dean of the school and leader of its interdisciplinary International Communication Program. Faculty members with significant practitioner experience have also taught many of these antecedent courses. One of these, Robert Tomasko, with a background in management consulting and executive education, was asked in May 2009 by Louis Goodman, then the SIS dean, to design a masters-level degree program in social enterprise, and was later appointed its director.

That summer a proposal was prepared, based in part on examination of existing programs in the U.S. and Europe and a review of major trends in management practice and social innovation education. The dean and the SIS faculty approved the proposal in September 2009. After a process of consultation with the deans and faculty of American University’s other schools, and the university senior academic officers, the proposal was
sent to the university board of trustees. They approved the granting by SIS of a Masters of Arts in Social Enterprise at their November 2010 meeting.

**THE BUILDING AND THE PROGRAM**

SIS is based in a year-old 70,000 square-foot building in Washington DC designed by the world’s leading green architectural firm, William McDonough + Partners.

William McDonough himself is a prototypical social entrepreneur, whose career highlights SIS’s longstanding concern for social justice, especially environmental stewardship, and the responsible use of natural resources. The SE program, taught in his LEED Gold building, includes study of McDonough, his ideas, and innovative approaches to turning constraints into opportunities (McDonough & Braungart, 2002). His application of design logic to solve seemingly intractable management and social problems can be applied well beyond environmental architecture to address many of the issues that are this program’s core concerns.

For Social Enterprise (SE) students, the new SIS building is more than a new physical structure. It also serves as a teaching tool and a point of inspiration. Its design – offices and classrooms around a three-story light-filled atrium stocked with comfortable and easily-moveable furniture, anchored by the best coffee house on campus – is intended to promote easy, informal interaction among students, faculty, and outside visitors. These chance meetings can lead to ideas and perspectives being combined and innovations seeded (Johnson, 2010). Small glass-walled conference rooms and balcony perches on its second and third floors provide many options for impromptu team meetings to flesh these
out. And a graduate student study center in its lower level – linked to the campus library by an underground connection – provides space for quieter study and reflection.

THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum of this program has been developed using many of the same concepts to be taught in it, especially with regard to innovating through rapid prototyping, pilot trials, and ongoing experience-based improvement.

This logic has been applied to the development of the core courses in the program. All of these courses have been tested by being taught to graduate students enrolled in existing SIS degree programs. Several courses have been taught for three years or more. Student feedback and lessons gained by faculty have been used to further refine each course. The program has also experimented with alternative formats for teaching, including all-day classes held on weekends, extensive team-teaching, guided self-study, and distance learning. It actively looks for ways to, where appropriate, break out of the mold of every graduate course involving 14 two-and-a-half hour sessions offered an evening a week, and has found strong student acceptance of these alternatives. Many of the courses in the program are intensely interactive, stressing Socratic dialogue over lecture-based classes. The program was influenced by the approach IMD and Yale School of Management have taken to modularize their MBA programs. Many of the SE program’s courses are taught during evenings and weekends to allow students to take advantage of the rich array of jobs and internships available in the Washington DC social entrepreneurship community.

The Social Enterprise M.A. curriculum is built around the needs of practitioners. It blends traditional graduate courses with elements borrowed from executive education and
leadership development, an approach pioneered at Harvard Graduate School of Education’s new Doctor of Educational Leadership program. It also borrows from the curricula of the growing number of social entrepreneurship educational programs based outside university departments such as those created for fellowship programs by organizations including Ashoka, Echoing Green, StartingBloc, and the Unreasonable Institute. Building on these influences, the program tries to maintain a strong ongoing real-world orientation in all its educational activities, minimizing the wall between the campus and practice, with the intent that more learning will occur outside of the credit-bearing courses than within.

See Appendix C for more information about the specific practitioner-oriented skills and techniques taught in the program.

There are several key elements to the curriculum, as shown in Figure 1 above.
Social Enterprise Core Courses: a sequence of three courses introducing the field of social enterprise, the dynamics of leadership in it, and a review of its emerging best practices.

Complementary Courses: these support the Core Courses, dealing with both quantitative skills (one or two graduate courses in economics, as well as an introduction to basic accounting and financial analysis) and social enterprise-specific management oriented subjects concerned with issues such as organization start-up and ongoing management practices and corporate social responsibility.

A Specialization Concentration. These are student’s electives, to be chosen in consultation with a faculty advisor to support the specific professional identity each student hopes to acquire by graduation. The purpose of this concentration is to allow the development of substantive knowledge of a specific problem or technique to be addressed through social entrepreneurship. Depending on students’ management background, some use these electives to further develop specific organizational and analytical skills.

Action Learning. Learning-by-doing is a critical component of any program intended to produce doers. Students have several opportunities in be involved in intense experiential learning. Starting with the Plunge, these range from team-based consulting projects for start-up social enterprises to summer and semester-internships, and the final semester capstone project, a resume-worthy “masterpiece”. For some students these may involve taking the initial steps to create their own new venture, either alone or in partnership with student-colleagues (something the cohort design of the program is crafted to gently encourage). In effect, some participants will use the program to incubate a social enterprise and create their own job.
**Professional Development Coaching.** This is the glue that binds students with the rest of the program, classmates, and post-graduation plans. It begins on their first day and continues until they leave. The first year emphasis is on self-assessment and peer learning – students study the professional competencies that don’t always make it into graduate curriculums, but can be make or break factors for real-world success. These include presentation and selling skills, goal setting, burnout prevention, and network-building. Later the focus of the coaching component shifts to post-graduation-planning. Advisors, from inside and outside of American University, are assembled to help students master the practicalities of turning vision into reality. A structured approach to self-assessment and career planning is also used throughout. At the outset of the program students analyze themselves, inventorying the skills and knowledge brought to the program, examining passions and motivations. They then develop a Personal Learning Plan to get the most from their two years by personalizing the program around this Self-Assessment. Ongoing faculty mentoring helps ensure that they stay on track with their plans.

This approach has been well received by the students. One called it a “… very student oriented program. After only 3 weeks in it, I’ve felt like I learned so much more about myself already. The focus is really on ‘me’ and how I can make an impact and create change. Although the Professional Competence component of our program is only one-credit, the knowledge we acquire is much more than the credit suggests.”

Elements of the Action Learning and Professional Development Coaching components have been adapted from successful graduate programs at Columbia, Harvard, and IMD (IMD 2005 and Lorange, 2008). Figure 2 below shows how the first semester Professional Competences course is structured.
Despite the anxiety most students experienced midway through their first-semester Plunge, the inaugural cohort all completed their assignments to the strong satisfaction of their “clients,” many of whom felt they learned a great deal from this effort. The students learned in a very tangible way about the varied strengths they, and their peers, have brought into the program, and also identified skills they needed to acquire and further develop. In this way, the Plunge served as an experienced-based complement to the written Self Assessment each student completed, and an important input to their Personal Learning Plans.

At the last Professional Competences class of the semester, each student pair made a five-minute presentation summarizing what they accomplished in their Plunge as if they were
using this experience to establish their qualifications to take on future consulting assignments. Their audience included two guests: executive directors from organizations other than those assisted in the Plunge projects, who provided feedback about how their “pitches” would be received in the off-campus world.

Student interest in the Plunge was very strong, so much so that a voluntary mini-Plunge assignment was created to occur between their fall and spring semesters. Half of the SE students participated in this, a project to assist the co-founder and CEO of Honest Tea develop ideas to deal with a pressing concern. This provided exposure to the private sector side of social enterprise and served as a bridge to the students’ study of social innovation leadership in their spring semester.

During that semester, the SE students will all be involved in another action learning project aimed at giving them experience initiating change by developing and implementing improvements to the SE program itself.

HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Like many graduate programs intended to have a strong impact on their students, there is a “hidden curriculum” involved throughout the program. It is intended to help students acquire:

- Clarity about what they are passionate about – and why.
- Skill in winning the hearts and minds (and wallets) of supporters for their efforts.
- Fluency in ethical reasoning
• Ways to use feedback and reflection to self-correct and guide future actions.

• An ability to act in situations involving ambiguities or conflicts.

Appendix D elaborates on these by describing the core educational values the program was designed to reflect.

INFLUENCES ON THE PROGRAM DESIGN
Throughout the program’s design phase a great deal of attention was paid to evolving views about the field of social entrepreneurship, and evolving perspectives on the teaching of practice. Through this, the program faculty developed a shared understanding of how they felt social enterprise should be taught in the context of an international relations school. Because so much of the development of this field has occurred in business schools, the planning also took into account both the past decade’s debates about business schools and their role in corporate and economic calamities and the curriculum reform efforts underway in many leading business schools.

The Evolving Field of Social Entrepreneurship
Social entrepreneurship is a field where the rapid growth of its practice has outpaced the research-based scholarship that will eventually underlie it as a subject of study. Its definition, and rules of thumb to identify who is a social entrepreneur, is still a subject of great discussion (Light, 2006, Martin & Osberg, 2007 and Center for Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship, 2008). Calls come from observers and practitioners to identify a 2.0 version of social entrepreneurship, as its practice grows and slowly matures. Others
argue that the field is one not in need of new theory, but is just “a context in which established types of entrepreneurs operate” (Dacin, Dacin & Matear, 2010: 37).

This is also a field that stresses the positive, sometimes with an element of hyperbole. New entrants are urged to “change the world.” Ashoka implores everyone to be a pattern-breaking “changemaker.” Echoing Green advises boldness, hustle, and becoming resource magnets. “Conscious Capitalists” can “be the solution and solve all the world’s problems,” according to Michael Strong, a colleague of Whole Foods founder John Mackey (Strong, 2009). Funders increasingly favor replicable ideas with strong scale-up potential, and nonprofits are urged generate revenues rather than seek ongoing grants. Idea pitch contests and social business plan competitions also abound.

Social entrepreneurship has become a fellowship award-driven field with organizations such as Ashoka, Dell, Echoing Green, Schwab, and Skoll playing the role of certifier and credential-awarder. “Success” is sometimes defined as winning one of these highly competitive forms of recognition (and financial support). Entry to their fellowship networks is seen as a key enabler to a successful career, an opportunity to mingle with and learn from an elite group of heroes. This emphasis on the individual can create expectations that the spectrum of work involved in developing a new idea, refining and testing it, enlisting others in its support, creating a venture to launch it, and building a movement to sustain it is something that can be led by a single individual, rather than a sequence of leaders and teams and organizations.
At the November 4, 2011 session of the NYU-Stern Social Entrepreneurship Conference, Paul Light (NYU Wagner faculty member) used his presentation to make observations about the state of the field. He noted:

• Too many new entrants are too concerned with how to present themselves to win at “the fellowship game” rather than how to make the world a better place. Selection biases among the fellowship awarders are under-examined; an equivalent to the use of “blind auditions” in the music field is needed.

• Many of the SE conferences are becoming echo chambers; much of what is talked about are recycled old ideas. Too much time is still spent debating definitions.

• Much of the research in the field is opaque. Students in search of tactical skills tend to glaze over or drown in it.

• Many funders feel they know what works and are not interested in researching failures. Stories of success abound; reports of failures (which might offer better lessons) are minimal. Financial backers want those they support to be able to claim credit for their individual accomplishments, so at times they discourage collaborations and alliances.
• Too many SE participants are true believers: “I’ve got the right idea; it just needs to be scaled-up.”

• Not enough attention is being played to teaching social entrepreneurs how to operate in the dysfunctional political systems that exist around the world. Playing hardball and acquiring political skills need to be on the curriculum.

After assimilating and debating these multiple perspectives, the SE program planners decided to view social entrepreneurship as a discipline more related to social innovation and social change activism than as a sub-specialty of business entrepreneurship, and more related to creating system change than organization start-up and steady-state management.

Students are strongly encouraged to choose courses from all the schools with American University to help them acquire a cross-sector perspective (social enterprise practitioners from the millennial generation are increasingly referring to themselves as “unsectored”).

The program also takes a wary view of the solo hero social entrepreneur who is a jack-of-all-trades. Small wins are emphasized over big roll-outs, and subverting existing organizations given more attention than starting new ones. Focus is given more on ideas and movements to going to scale, rather than organizational entities pursuing a bigger
must be better strategy. This perspective is elaborated in the program definitional materials in Appendix A: Terminology and Appendix B: Myths.

Critiques of Management Education

SE program planners spent an equivalent amount of time reviewing the past decade’s critiques of management and leadership education. Some emphasize an overreliance by business schools on “bad theories” such as agency and shareholder value (Ghoshal, 2005) and a lack of evidence-based practices dominating actual management practice (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006 and Rosenzweig, 2007). Others raise concerns about an inappropriate orientation of business schools to mimic the sciences (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005) and to turn inward, away from actual management practice:

“The goal of producing deep knowledge about organizations for improving managerial practice was displaced as a greater proportion of business school faculty saw other academics, rather than practicing managers, as their constituency.” (Khurana, 2007: 312)

Khurana traces the historical roots of this disconnect, noting that unlike the accrediting bodies for professions such as architecture, law, and medicine, the organization serving business schools (AACSB) was “not an arm of a functioning profession but, rather, an assembly of academic institutions” (2007:230).
Datar, Gavin & Cullen (2010) extend his argument by noting business schools tend to overemphasize knowledge acquisition at the expense of developing skills and a value-based professional identity.

Mintzberg has written extensively about how the activities of leadership and management are not a “body of technique abstracted from the doing and being” (2005: 9) and not the sum total of the traditional set of functional disciples taught in most business schools. “Teaching analysis devoid of synthesis thus reduces management to a skeleton of itself,” he claims (2005: 37). Mintzberg views a practice as something requiring “a good deal of craft with a certain amount of art and some science,” (2005:10) and is concerned that many curriculums have given disproportionate emphasis to the analytic-based science component of this triad.

He sees this emphasis as inappropriate when preparing people for a practice in a field such as management that is more context-specific than the license-based professions such as engineering, law, and medicine where a stronger analytic emphasis can be more justified. Managers who succeed in one place often fail in others, he observes (2005: 11-13); physicians and engineers are more portable. Mintzberg is critical of approaches to management teaching based on an assumption that most actual management work involves analysis-based decision-making. His research suggests that creative artistry and insight and experience-based craft play a much greater role than analytic technique (2005: 93-94), and that identifying the most important problems to be solved and
acquiring the skills involved in taking action to alleviate them are seldom taught in traditional business school curricula (2005: 38-39).

Several major business schools are incorporating these observations in their curriculum improvement efforts. Harvard Business School, under a new dean, Nitin Nohria, has recently started FIELD (field immersion experiences for leadership development) to emphasize developing “doing” skills as well as the traditional emphasis on business case analysis. The head of IMD’s MBA program, Martha Maznevski, worries that the MBA may be obsolete without major changes. She feels:

“Sitting in a classroom is useful only when it prepares learners for action, and action should be connected with reflection and further formal knowledge building. From day one, MBA programs should therefore incorporate real-life experiences … integrating these into the curriculum rather than having them as stand alone courses …. A real MBA should in essence mean ‘guided on the job leadership training.’ ” (2011: 3)

_Awareness of these critiques of management education has influenced the SE program planners in a variety of ways. The issues they raised stimulated them to:_

- _Root the program in the world of practice, not scholarship; both in terms of learning materials used in courses and selection of faculty to teach them._
• Give great attention to student’s identity formation throughout their graduate study, starting with a comprehensive student self-assessment process upon entry.

• Treat SE as a context-specific discipline; highlight both the unique needs of social enterprises while not ignoring the value of borrowing and skillfully adapting private sector practices.

• Give greater emphasis to collaboration than to competition; substitute partnership-building projects for business plan or case competitions.

Learning Partners

Special attention has also been paid to examining and learning from successful business school outliers - borrowing ideas and techniques especially from IMD in Lausanne and Rotman in Toronto.

A set of close working relationships have been maintained with individuals from the consulting firm Bridgespan, Brown University’s Social Innovation Initiative, and IMD. They have served as the program’s informal “learning partners” by participating in a multi-year mutual exchange of ideas, critiques, syllabi, and other learning materials.
Additional ongoing exchanges with faculty from Babson, Middlebury, New York University, the NGO Management School of Switzerland, and the Rotterdam School of Management have also been very beneficial to the program’s development.

SE students have also practiced this mutually beneficial “learning partner” approach in their Plunge assignments with the executive directors of six Washington DC-headquartered NGOs, and their between-semesters project with Seth Goldman, CEO of Honest Tea. In the spring semester, several SE courses will incorporate into their syllabi work with GoodWeave, a social enterprise working to end child labor in the handmade rug industry. Nina Smith, an SE Practitioner Affiliate, leads it. (See Appendix E).

THE FACULTY AND THE PROGRAM’S KNOWLEDGE BASE

The program depends on the careful integration of experienced social innovation practitioners and institutions with SIS’s existing faculty resources. It uses a practitioner-led blended faculty model, with many of the core instructors qualified to serve as coaches and role models for the masters students, along the lines of clinical education at many medical and law schools.

Academic Faculty

Faculty - tenure-track, term, and adjunct are drawn from the established programs of SIS (See Appendix F), with the introductory course in the program taught by a tenured professor, Dr. Nanette Levinson, whose work has been recognized as among the best in
this field by Ashoka. Additional faculty support is provided by American University’s Kogod School of Business for both required and elective courses, and coordination maintained with faculty involved in the university’s graduate programs in nonprofit management (School of Public Affairs), arts management (School of Arts and Sciences), and media entrepreneurship (School of Communications). To ensure that values and ethics are central concerns of the program the University Chaplain, Joseph Eldridge, (who is an internationally recognized human rights advocate and NGO-founder) is a co-teacher in the series of Professional Competence courses.

The SE program course on NGO Management is taught in parallel with an upper-level American University law school course in nonprofit law, with students in the law course serving as “counselors” to SE student teams who are developing plans for start-up social enterprises. This provides the law school students with clients and the SE students an opportunity to learn how to make use of legal advisors.

**Practitioner Affiliates and Tacit Knowledge**

The program cultivates its strong real world orientation through its creative use of full-time practitioners who are closely involved with both teaching and student coaching/mentoring. Called Practitioner Affiliates (See Appendix E for their backgrounds), these individuals play a key role in the clinical components of the degree program, and are often the student’s best source of tacit knowledge. Practitioners tend to know more than they can say. Rather than attempting to codify this sometimes hidden or implicit wisdom, it is often most useful to directly connect the people who need it with
those who have it. Attempting to make this explicit is often a loosing battle, as Polanyi notes: “The aim of a skillful performance is achieved by the observance of a set of rules which are not known as such to the person following them.” (Polanyi, 1962: 49) The rules are embedded in the expert’s mindset and actions, and are often best transmitted through careful observation, mimicry, trial-and-error practice, and identification with the expert.

Also, as specific student needs emerge, the Practitioner Affiliates play a more instrumental role by assisting in developing partnership arrangements with appropriate social enterprise support organizations in the US and overseas, and relations with the emerging industry of social venture capitalists and social innovation incubators.

These external connections, and the hybrid model of closely aligned academic and practitioner faculty, distinguish the SE Masters from other more traditionally taught degree programs, and help lower the wall between the campus and the outside world.

**The Role of Synthesis**

This teaching model was developed in recognition of the focus of university-based scholars on production of new knowledge. Many operate in systems that reward analysis and discipline-based inquiry, with research agendas and dissemination possibilities often driven by the orientation of their academic silos. At times there is not always a good match between the disciplinary orientation of the university and the nature of real world problems.
The SE program extends the reach of discipline-oriented scholars by giving equal emphasis to the utilization of teachers whose professional focus involves synthesis, application, and cross-discipline translation of both academic and practitioner originated knowledge. In the management field, this later type of focus has been driven by the knowledge management processes of the major international management consulting firms that link their practice-based insights with the scholarship developed in business school settings. The knowledge-building priorities of these firms are often set by the demand for ideas and solutions that is created by practitioners and clients they serve. For this reason, the SE program makes extensive use of materials prepared by firms such as Accenture, Bridgespan, Community Wealth Ventures, FSG, The Management Center, and McKinsey. Tacit knowledge, and the social context in which it operates, is vital to practitioners, and is often captured in the work of these professional problem-solvers.

**Propositional and Prescriptive Knowledge**

The SE curriculum is built around both propositional knowledge from research (the “what”) and prescriptive knowledge (the “how”) from the best of practice (Lorange, 2008). As noted by Edgar Schein (1972: 43), professional knowledge does not always follow the model of an underlying discipline or basic science generating an applied science or engineering component. Often, according to Schein, it is the basic science that is stimulated by the applied area. This reversed sequence appears to be playing out in the field of social entrepreneurship, and is the reason (illustrated by the Plunge assignment) that many components of the SE program start with students developing practice-
knowledge that, in turn, motivates their study of propositional.

Both types of knowledge complement each other. The interplay, the continuous interaction between them that occurs in the world of practice, is central to the effective education of practitioners. The SIS Social Enterprise curriculum is built around this premise.
APPENDICES

[Includes material adapted from the SE program website: www.american.edu/sis/socialenterprise/]

Appendix A: Terminology

Social ventures selectively borrow and adapt the logic of the private sector to address issues that have traditionally been beyond its scope. They often work across established sectors, blurring distinctions among public, private, and nonprofit activities.

Social entrepreneurs are people who apply the techniques of business and innovation to solve social problems.

Social innovation is what they do, and social enterprises are what they create.

Social enterprises may be new, stand-alone, economically sustainable organizations, or they may involve change and innovation within existing structures.

People skilled at leading change from within are social intrapreneurs.

Appendix B: Myths

Every popular, rapidly growing field acquires some myths about itself that need to be examined. Here are a few about social entrepreneurship that the SE program is designed to counter:

It’s all about the heroic, solo entrepreneur.

They do get a lot of the press, and the occasional Nobel Prize. But the reality is most impactful, lasting social enterprises are team efforts. They have to be, the range of skills needed is generally broad. Someone good at managing cash flow may not be the best people manager, or social change advocate. So, if you want to start something new, consider starting by finding a partner with complementary skills. And then build a team around you two. An old African proverb sums it up nicely: “If you want to go fast, go
alone. If you want to go far, you have to go with someone.”

*It’s all about charisma.*

The ability to inspire is important. It attracts attention and followers. But skill is essential too. It’s amazing how many social entrepreneurs are quiet, solid performers. They are emotionally-intelligent, not just emotional.

*It’s all about creating new organizations.*

A big danger of the social enterprise movement is that it might breed thousands of small, redundant, under-funded entities, all trying to tackle problems much bigger than they are. Scale is important, and often it exists in existing organizations. The mission for many innovators is to learn how to drive change in these, not just proliferate alternatives.

*It’s all about the mission. It’s all about changing the world.*

Social innovators know the world needs changing. They also know the important of small wins, tight-focus, and momentum building. They avoid letting lofty missions get in the way of day-to-day incremental progress. Performance counts; no points are given just because the issue being worked on is critical.

*It’s all about applying business know-how to social problems.*

That’s certainly a piece of it. But social entrepreneurship employs a unique set of business tools to achieve humanitarian results. Social entrepreneurs consider both economic and social performance in evaluating business decisions. Of these, priority attention goes to the social objectives. The role of economic performance is to make the benefits to society sustainable.

• *It’s all about applying market logic to social problems.*

The market is a marvelous signaling mechanism. But it’s something to use, not idolize. Market failures abound. Social entrepreneurs are aware of them, and creative in finding good workarounds.

*It’s all about learning the hard skills.*

Being enterprising requires a set of hard skills, the quantifiable side of management.
Social innovators have to get over any fear of numbers and arithmetic they may have acquired. These are vital to running an ongoing operation. But they are not sufficient to create a new one, especially ventures aimed at destabilizing the status quo. Social entrepreneurs must have an even greater command of the harder skills: self-awareness, emotional intelligence, connecting with others, use of influence and power, imagination and creativity, and the like. These harder skills are the ones that help some to see opportunities others may miss. They facilitate formulation of creative strategies to capitalize on the opportunities, and win the hearts-and-minds of the supporters needed to bring them into reality. The harder skills are essential to quickly building momentum and rapidly rebounding from setbacks. Sometimes they’re called “soft.” They’re not.

**It’s something you can learn in a classroom.**

You can learn many useful theories and concepts in courses. You can also learn how to analyze and think critically. But understanding how to apply ideas in practice takes, well, practice. Practice in the real world, a key reason all of our Social Enterprise Initiative activities are closely connected with people, organizations, and events off-campus.

**Appendix C: Skills and Techniques Taught**

The program is designed to introduce students to a broad portfolio of techniques, all relevant to social enterprise, including:

- Benchmarking and best practices
- Business models, branding and positioning
- Changing people’s minds
- Creating a great place for people to work
- Design thinking
- Economic and financial literacy
- Effective advocacy
- Experimenting and rapid prototyping
- Framing messages that get through
- Getting gifts and grants; becoming self-sustaining
- Igniting social movements
- Intended impact
• Logical incrementalism
• Managing money, people, projects, and boards
• Mission and purpose
• Momentum-building via small wins
• Organizing around strategy
• Performance measurement; midcourse correction
• Positive deviance
• Power and influence
• Scenario planning
• Sustainable growth strategies
• Systems thinking
• Target-setting
• Theory of change

The program uses the idea of strategy – how broad intentions translate to visible results – to link these techniques into a framework you can use to identify what techniques are best to use when.

Appendix D: Core Educational Values

Every educational program is rooted in a set of assumptions about what is most valued. Here are the SE program’s: expressed as the abilities students are to acquire beyond the skills and techniques of social entrepreneurship and the passion they bring to SIS about service and societal betterment. The program believes these are essential to equip students to grow and adapt along with this fast-moving field.

**Understand and apply theory.** It is important to understand the context in which social enterprises operate, and place them in the framework of international relations (IR), innovation, and social change theory and history. Students study the different schools of thought in IR, in particular political economy theories that address the relationship between business and society, and ethical concepts that tackle the question of public and private sector social responsibilities. They also acquire an appreciation of the larger issues and challenges that historically and currently shape social change efforts. Finally, students are expected to grasp how the theories and concepts they learn are a lens to uncovering and understanding the root causes of the problems social enterprises seek to address.
Practice critical thinking. The program's courses are intended to increase the critical thinking abilities of its participants. The field of social enterprise is trendy, and at times more characterized by catchy idealistic slogans than deep thought. We expect to attract students with a passion to promote social change and fight injustices. The initiative aims to help them be smart about what they are doing, by helping them understand the systemic nature of the problems they want to address, and use this knowledge to set priorities, find leverage points, appreciate time lags, and create lasting solutions that minimize backlash.

Look for evidence. In our courses, students learn to distinguish evidence-based, proven practices from well-hyped management fads. Extensive study of real world cases throughout the program’s courses also provides an analytical frame of reference for students to take with them and apply to the situations they encounter after graduation. There are seldom clear cut right or wrong answers to case studies, but individual study and group debate about how to resolve complex situations will support the program’s objective of expanding the critical thinking abilities of its participants.

Awareness and reflection. This ability is especially relevant to decision making in the absence of clear facts or precedent – a situation in which many social entrepreneurs frequently find themselves. In those cases decisions are often driven by ambitions, ideology, and personal values. Our program does not intend to prescribe any particular set of these, but it will teach the importance of awareness, reflection, and critical assessment with regard to these drivers of entrepreneurial actions.

Ethical reasoning. Entrepreneurs are often known for their abilities to innovate by working around obstacles and creatively breaking through established constraints. To help our students identify appropriate boundaries when pushing the envelope on social norms and mores, the program gives ongoing attention to moral reasoning, the ethical dimensions of social enterprise, and the practical ethics of professional conduct.

Appendix E: Practitioner Affiliates

A key assumption behind the SE program is that social enterprise can be best learned by identifying with people who are actually doing it. In that spirit the program has assembled a group of practicing social entrepreneurs who help guide it and serve as a resource for its students. Their advice about real world practicalities is essential to keep the degree program anchored in actual practice rather than ideas about actual practice. They serve as guest speakers in classes, sources of feedback on student ventures, coaches and mentors to students, and internship-providers.
Here are the first nine of these practitioner-role models:

**Robert Egger** is the founder and president of the DC Central Kitchen. The DC Central Kitchen is the nation's first "community kitchen," where unemployed men and women learn marketable culinary skills while donated food from restaurants and farms is converted into balanced meals. Since opening in 1989, it has distributed over 20 million meals, and has been honored by several U.S. presidents. The Kitchen operates its own revenue generating business, Fresh Start Catering as well as the Campus Kitchen Project, which operates at 30 college and high school based kitchens. Robert has chaired a Mayor’s Commission and founded Street Sense, Washington DC’s first newspaper to benefit the homeless. He also authored *Begging for Change: The Dollars and Sense of Making Nonprofits Responsive, Efficient, and Rewarding for All.*

**Derek Ellerman** co-founded the Polaris Project in the living room of his cramped apartment when he was a senior at Brown. Since then, it has become one of the world’s leading international anti-trafficking organizations, conducting advocacy and providing support for trafficking survivors. At 26, Derek was elected an Ashoka Fellow, one of the youngest members of this leading promoter of social entrepreneurship.

**Stephanie Fischer** helps students in the social enterprise program get the most from their outside-of-class learning experiences. She has an extensive background in the social sector having been chief operating officer of Microfinance Opportunities and chief program officer of GlobalGiving. She advises a number of social enterprises in program planning and communications, and has been an associate director at Ashoka. She is a graduate of Middlebury College and has an MBA from University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School where she majored in strategic management.

**Jerry Hauser** is CEO of The Management Center, a consulting and training organization dedicated to bringing practical management practices to organizations fighting for social justice. He previously headed the Advocacy Institute and was the Chief Operating Officer of Teach for America during a very critical period in that organization’s growth. Jerry is co-author of *Managing to Change the World,* a pragmatic guide to basic management skills used in the Social Enterprise Degree Program.

**Krista Hendry** is Executive Director of The Fund for Peace. She also directs its Human Rights & Business Roundtable, a forum where corporations, governments, and NGOs focus on issues arising when businesses operate in conflict-sensitive areas. She works with companies to support their development of human rights policies in partnership with NGOs, and helps them identify the risks they face in their overseas operations. She has an MBA from the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University, worked in Germany at the Frankfurt Economic Development GmbH as its Asian Director, and also chairs the board of Liberty’s Promise, a non-profit that develops programs to increase civic participation of immigrant youth.

**Monisha Kapila** is the founder of ProInspire, an organization that recruits and trains outstanding professionals from business, consulting, and investment banking to work in the social sector. ProInspire is a social enterprise focused on building the next generation of management-savvy nonprofit leaders. Her career straddles both sectors: she has an
MBA from Harvard and has worked in banking and consulting as well as with ACCION, CARE, and the Clinton Foundation.

Anna Lefer Kuhn, a committed activist and recognized leader in philanthropy, is the Executive Director of the Arca Foundation. Arca supports innovative approaches to advance equity, accountability, social justice, and participatory democracy in the US and abroad, and has helped fund many organizations immediately after their start-up stage of development. Her career has focused on strengthening the involvement of young people in social change movements. Before leading Arca, she served as a program officer at the Open Society Institute, and has been involved as a board member or advisor with the Center for Community Change, League of Young Voters, the Urban Justice Center, and the White House Project.

John Passacantando’s career took him from Wall Street to leading the global fight to stop climate change. He founded the Ozone Action Project; the first NGO focused exclusively on global warming, and was the longest-serving executive director of Greenpeace USA. A life-long activist and practitioner of non-violent civil disobedience, he has been interviewed by every major news and broadcast outlet. John is now involved in helping develop sustainable energy projects and provides opposition research to the environmental movement through his Eco-Accountability Project.

Nina Smith is Executive Director of GoodWeave, (formerly RugMark) another innovative organization, which is dedicated to ending illegal child labor by providing a certification label for rugs and carpets, giving consumers assurance that no illegal child labor was used in their making. GoodWeave, in turn, uses the fees it obtains for its certifications for programs to rescue, rehabilitate, and educate children formerly in the rug-making workforce. A former president of the Fair Trade Federation, Nina won the 2005 Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship, a tribute to her creative use of market strategies to drive social change.

Appendix F: American University Faculty


**Stephanie Fischer**, MBA, University of Pennsylvania Wharton. SIS adjunct faculty and Social Enterprise Program Practitioner Affiliate. Co-teaches SIS 638 Professional Competences I and II and SIS 635 NGO Management.


**Leigh Riddick**, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin. Kogod School of Business Associate Professor. Teaches FIN 630 Financial Analysis.


**Nancy Sachs**, M.A., University of Chicago. Kogod School of Business adjunct faculty and Associate Director Kogod Center for Business Communications. Teaches SIS 638 NGO Leadership Persuasion Strategies and co-teaches SIS 638 Professional Competences I.

**Robert Tomasko**, Ed.M., Harvard. SIS adjunct faculty and Director of the Social Enterprise Program. Teaches SIS 635 NGO Management, SIS 635 Leading Social Innovation and co-teaches SIS 635 NGO-Private Sector Engagement, SIS 639 Effective NGO Activism, and SIS 638 Professional Competences I and II.

Additional School of International Service faculty members are available to advise students and oversee their research, internship, and practicum projects, including those from its International Development Program. Several have extensive experience creating and leading entrepreneurial ventures within the university, which serve as role models for the program’s students.
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**Robert Tomasko** is the founding Director of the Social Enterprise Program at American University’s School of International Service where is also a Professorial Lecturer. He is a member of the board of directors of StartingBloc, a competitive fellowship program for potential social entrepreneurs that offers institutes in social innovation in cooperation with leading business and public policy schools. Before joining American University he was a management consultant, partner in one large international consulting firm and practice leader in another, author of four business books, teacher in executive education programs, and speaker at management conferences throughout the world.

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