**2022 MOBTC SESSION PROPOSAL**

TITLE: ***Call to Action:*** *Winning the struggle for the soul of business education*

**ABSTRACT**

Please join this action-focused roundtable to help win the “struggle for the soul of business education.” Speakers and audience will share their past/current/future actions to stop teaching and researching business-as-usual and to mobilize their own and other business schools to deal with at least four of our species’ five great 21st Century challenges. Participants are invited to join existing initiatives to transform business education and join an application for a possible 2023-$100-million-MacArthur Foundation-100&change competition (MacArthur Foundation, undated). The session emphasizes transforming all core courses in every business discipline, co-creating courses with students, and “rapid-prototyping action-research.”

KEYWORDS:

Transforming research, transforming teaching, MacArthur Foundation.

**FORMAT**: Roundtable Discussion (*Note: we could also use the Exercise/Activity Format for 90 minutes if the review committee feels that format is more suitable.)*

**TIME:** 60 Minutes

**RESOURCE NEEDS:**

Space for breakout discussions. Flip chart tablets and markers to capture and display small group responses.

**TRACK:**

This session is anticipated to be interactive and aligned with the Conference Theme Track although we are not requesting that we be included in that track. The session helps define processes and resources needed to transform business curriculum in ways that break down institutional silos and intentionally incorporate equity and inclusion into business teaching and practice. This session is original to MOBTS, but it builds on many sessions and articles that seek to transform business education.

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this session is to inspire and enable participants to contribute to a global movement to replace current business school teaching and research with new concepts, framings, curricula, and materials that will contribute to creating a sustainable/flourishing/regenerating world. The session recognizes that the business-as-usual, shareholder-primacy paradigm that currently dominates almost all undergraduate and graduate level teaching and research throughout the world supports, enables, and legitimatizes the mindsets and business practices that have already destroyed much of the planet’s capacity to support our own and other species.

In the session, we will explore ideas and actions for mobilizing the resources of our own and other business schools to meet at least four of the five great challenges of the 21st Century and will hear reports from members who are already taking such actions.

We will discuss existing and possible new initiatives to bring fresh and exciting teaching processes and content into our classrooms and to discover creative research opportunities to be pursued. Participants will be invited to join several existing initiatives to transform business education including an application to a 2023 $100-million-MacArthur Foundation-100&change competition to do exactly that.

**THEORETICAL FOUNDATION/TEACHING IMPLICATIONS**

As Laszlo, Sroufe, and Waddock (2017) and others (Reilly, 2021, etc.) have described, there is “a struggle for the soul of business schools.” What we currently teach, and research is, in most cases, “part of the problem and not part of the solution” in a world that is under severe environmental, economic, social, cultural, and political stress. To a very large extent, our teaching in all core and advanced courses and our research topics are embedded in and subservient to the unchallenged and unexplored goal of “maximizing shareholder wealth.” That goal frequently boils down to maximizing today’s share price (and the obscene remuneration of top corporate executives and the wealth of hedge fund managers and other financial operators). The impact of doing so on multiple dimensions of our global social fabric is largely ignored in most business education.

Five Great Challenges of the 21st Century

One framing of our current situation in the global community is that we all face “the five great challenges of the 21st Century.” Those five challenges are defined\* as:

1. dealing immediately with global warming in particular and climate change and the

many other aspects of global unsustainability in general (e.g., Andre, 2021),

1. avoiding nuclear Armageddon (e.g., Sherwin, 2020),
2. becoming the kinds of beings who can live on this planet without destroying it (e.g., Rimanoczy, 2020),
3. producing, distributing, and consuming the goods and services we need to flourish without destroying, and hopefully healing, the planet (e.g., Sroufe, 2018), and
4. creating a set of global economic, political, cultural, etc. systems that enable all of us to flourish as a species with no one left out (e.g., McKibben, 2020).

\* defined in: globalmovement.net, 2021; JMSR, 2021; JMGS, 2021.

At least four of those five challenges are ones where business school research and activism can make major contributions.

Beyond Embedding:

The session proposers recognize that many business school programs teach the “business case for sustainability”, usually in upper level courses. Schools also “embed” content and projects based on the UNSDGs, Aim2Flouish, UNPRME, Triple Bottom Line and other valuable concepts into courses within the basic business-as-usual framing. We recognize and support such improvements but this session is directed toward a much deeper level of change – initiatives and approaches that seek to transform all core business courses at their very heart and transform the entire business curriculum “from the ground up.” We need courses and curricula that are fully aligned with the need for a sustainable/flourishing/regenerating world and help us to move toward such a world.

Teaching and Research Opportunities

For members of this year’s MOBTC and members of MOBTS in general, the teaching and research opportunities are especially exciting in at least three related ways. First, we need to develop new, innovative teaching materials, textbooks, cases, exercises, stories, videos, games, and so on. The goal of creating the new teaching and curricula that we need in our current situation is not to train students to make a difference in 20 or 30 years when they reach positions of great influence. We do not have the luxury of such thinking. The goal is to train and inspire them, and ourselves, to become activists right now -- taking steps to make a difference immediately as they and we learn how to do so -- MOBTS’s values at their clearest and best.

Second, and perhaps most important, the process of developing the new teaching materials we need will be an excellent, and perhaps the best, vehicle for discovering the kinds of research questions we need to pursue to move toward a sustainable world. Our teaching adventures can become the inspiration for our research adventures.

Third, and perhaps most exciting, we have the call, and perhaps the necessity, to co-create our new courses, new research themes, and new curricula with our students. None of us knows EXACTLY how to “solve” any one of the five great challenges global society faces. We need help in finding answers and we need action now. Many of our students are more aware of the global warming and related crises we are facing and are more eager for actions to be taken than many of our colleagues and political ”leaders” are. Our students (and colleagues from other parts of the campus) can be the partners we need on this new adventure.

Support for taking quick action to transform business education will come through partnering and collaboration with established organizations such as MOBTS, UNPRME, AOM, AACSB, Presencing Institute (undated), and others. Collaborative discussions in this conference session will identify key partners that can support transformation and action.

**SESSION DESCRIPTION**

Overview

We will follow the traditional informal processes of roundtables, but with the goal of breaking into small groups early in the session. The broad theme/question of the session is “*What can each of us start doing today to align the required core courses and then the entire curriculum of our business school with the need for a sustainable/flourishing/regenerating world?”* Supporting themes/questions are “*How will our efforts to transform those core courses: (1) uncover exciting new and better research opportunities, (2) avoid our being frustrated by the change-preventing traps imposed by the silo nature of our fields of study, (3) start to break down those silos, and (4) provide better learning and growth opportunities for our students (and ourselves) than what we are currently doing?*”

The final question to each of us will be: “*Will you join one of the available or emerging initiatives to transform business education immediately?”*

Curriculum and Course Innovators (“Experts”)

The session will acknowledge that MOBTC is always home to many curriculum and course innovators – perhaps all of us. The session will build on the expertise of the innovators in the “audience” and the expertise of invited individuals who have a lengthy and substantive involvement in teaching and researching ways to contribute to a sustainable world and are engaged in transforming business school curricula.

Session Introduction (5 minutes)

We will start and continue the session in breakout groups. All participants (invited experts and audience) will be seated at tables appropriate for six individuals. Invited experts will be spread around the various tables rather than concentrated on a panel. We will start the 60-minute session by seeking and hopefully getting permission of all members to record the session and share it with all members afterwards and to post it in several venues (if MOBTC will allow us to do so). Each of us in the room will have thirty seconds to share who we are, where we are from, and what we want to share and/or get from the session.

Expert Shares (15 minutes)

Speaking from the breakout tables, invited experts will take two minutes each to share her/his possible contribution to the broad topic of transforming business education to be aligned to the need for a sustainable world. If a table does not contain an invited expert we will ask one of the audience members at the table to admit she/he is very experienced in attempting to change courses and curricula, volunteer to be the table expert, and take two minutes to share his/her possible contribution. A session scribe will capture ideas and speaker names on flip chart pages.

Breakout Group Engagement (25 minutes)

Each breakout group will start by appointing a discussion facilitator, a scribe to capture the key discussion points and participant comments, and a reporter (three separate roles). The invited or volunteer experts in each group will be asked to be the discussion facilitator for their group and will also seek to be simply a member of the group in the discussion – even the “experts” do not have the magical roadmap on this journey.

Each group will focus discussion on the core questions:

* *What can each of us start doing today to align the curriculum of our business school with the need for a sustainable/flourishing/regenerating world?*
* *How can we do so in a particular core-required-first-intro course in our own field or in some other business discipline?*

The group scribes will record key topics and comments.

Sharing Session Ideas and Conclusion (15 minutes)

The “reporters” for each group will share the scribe’s notes, explain the key discussion topics, and summarize key take-aways from their groups.

The roundtable moderator will ask if participants have final questions or comments.

Follow Up

During the session, we will collect the names and email addresses of participants. We will email everyone the names and email addresses of the participants, notes from the breakout groups, and take-aways provided in advance by the invited experts. A working draft for a possible MacArthur Foundation 100&change application will be among the take-aways. In similar sessions we have been able to do so within 12 hours.

**REFERENCES**

*Andre, R. (2020).* [Lead for the planet: Five practices for confronting climate change](https://www.amazon.com/Lead-Planet-Practices-Confronting-Climate-ebook/dp/B08HVYJF2M/ref=sr_1_3?qid=1642787060&refinements=p_27%3ARae+Andre&s=books&sr=1-3).

Toronto: Aevo UTP.

Globalmovement.net (2021)  “Transforming business education to meet global unsustainability’s survival and flourishing challenges NOW.” [https://www.globalmovement.net/essay](https://www.globalmovement.net/essay" \t "_blank). Accessed December 12, 2021.

*JMGS* (2021) editorial “B*usiness education for the 21st century.” Journal of Management for Global Sustainability,* 9(2).

*JMSR* (2021) authors obscured for MOBTC submission*.* Introduction to the Special Issue of the *Journal of management, spirituality, and religion, 18(6),* 1-6.

Laszlo, C., Sroufe, R., & Waddock, S. (2017). Torn between two paradigms: A struggle for the soul of business schools AI *Practitioner*, May, 19(2): 108 – 119

MacArthur Foundation (undated), 100&Change. <https://www.macfound.org/programs/100change/> Accessed March 3, 2022

McKibben, B. (2020). *Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?* New York: Holt

Presencing Institute, (undated). <https://www.presencing.org> Accessed January 20, 2022.

Reilly, K. (2021). Inside the battle for the hearts and minds of tomorrow's business leaders. <https://erb.umich.edu/2021/10/13/inside-the-battle-for-the-hearts-and-minds-of-tomorrows-business-leaders/> and Time.com October 8, 2021. <https://time.com/6105006/mba-programs-changing/> Accessed January 20, 2022.

Rimanoczy, I. (2020). *The Sustainability Mindset Principles: A Guide to Developing a Mindset for a Better World*. Oxfordshire: Routledge*.*

Sherwin, M. J., (2020). *Gambling with Armageddon: Nuclear roulette from Hiroshima* .*to the Cuban missile crisis.* New York: Penguin/Random House.

Sroufe, R. (2018). *Integrated management: How sustainability creates value for any business.* Bingley, UK: Emerald.