**Teaching Tolerance in Business Schools**

**Session Proposal for the 2020 MOBTC International Conference**

Tolerance of unlike others, whether for racial, gender, or religious reasons, is becoming

more critical as evidence of violent intolerance piles up (e.g., El Paso, TX; Gilroy, CA or Dayton, OH; Christchurch, NZ; etc.). Further, this is not just a topic for society at large, but businesses are having to face this issue directly (e.g. the El Paso shooting was at WalMart). As a result, as business schools, specifically those accredited by the Association for the Advancement of College Schools of Business (AACSB), consider how to “foster engagement, accelerate innovation, and amplify impact”, they will likely have to begin considering how to address the ideas of tolerance. It is light of this very likely need that this session was designed.

In a general sense, higher education needs to advocate for tolerance and the basic elements of a democratic society in order to confront fundamentalism (Bradley, 2005). And, tolerance is something that can be taught, whether through stories or logic (although the former is more effective) (Colesante, 1999). As ethics can be taught as a full class or as an embedded topic in a more general course – like Organizational Behavior (Moberg, 2006), so too might the topic of tolerance be handled.

To begin, this session will explore the general need for such work by looking at how one campus currently impacts the attitudes of tolerance among its students. A tolerance assessment instrument was utilized to establish a baseline for tolerance attitudes among the business students on the campus. Scores from the incoming freshman class of business students from last fall (2018) were compared to scores from the exiting senior business class from this past spring (2019) in order to see how the basic business and campus general education programs impacted students over time. These results will be discussed in the session and likely similarities and difference will be explored, in an attempt to extend these findings and understand the need.

After the results are discussed, the session will then turn to a training module that can be utilized to teach tolerance. Whether as part of a dedicated class or as a module in a larger class, the intent is to share an option for developing tolerance, religious tolerance in this case, among our students. The resources and teaching to be modeled focus on cultivating students’ knowledge of religious diversity and leadership skills to bolster tolerance and create a pluralistic environment where diversity is leveraged as a strength. An additional plus of this approach is that it involves an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on faculty from religious studies, in this instance, to prepare and present the class. A discussion of the usefulness of this option, as well as identifying other options, will serve to wrap up the session.

References

**AACSB – The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business,**

[**HTTP://WWW.AACSB.EDU/**](http://www.aacsb.edu/)

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