

## TITLE

**MOBTS – Transforming Core Business Courses and Research**

## ABSTRACT

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this PDW is to contribute to creating a sustainable world by inspiring participants to transform their teaching, research, and activism and to help them move more effectively and rapidly if they have already started those transformations with others.

Participants and presenters will collaborate on steps to continue transformation work within and across core disciplines.

## KEYWORDS

Business Transformation

Core Courses

Practice and Research

## PDW OVERVIEW

Join us in building bridges to a new education future in all business disciplines. Workshop presenters will share their work in changing courses, teaching, research, and activism designed to create a sustainable/flourishing/regenerating world. Interactive breakouts will inspire and enable those engaged in core course teaching and research to build a bridge within and outside their discipline to expand business education transformation for a new sustainable world. Join a network

of professors and students who are already transforming their management/OB, marketing, finance, economics, accounting, and other traditional business “discipline” core courses and discovering new research and publishing opportunities as they do so.

#### FOCUS

Emphasis will be placed upon transforming the core, required, first undergraduate or graduate courses in each “business discipline”, the courses that create the pedagogical foundation upon which upper-level courses are based. Those courses are often labeled as “introduction” to finance, marketing, management, OB, or accounting, etc.

#### INTENDED OUTCOME

Ideally session participants will leave the workshop with a commitment to transform their own management or OB course to be aligned with contributing to a sustainable/flourishing /regenerating world. They will gain ideas about how to transform their courses and build contacts and bridges with those who can help them do so. Ideally, they will also identify colleagues outside the management/OB sphere with whom they may collaborate to transform core disciplines into a transformed core system for sustainable business practice.

#### TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience are those who wish to collaborate with or teach core courses in any business discipline, and who are committed to creating a sustainable/ flourishing/ regenerating world.

Ideally, they see that continuing “business as usual” will not prepare students to succeed in a radically changing world.

#### MAIN TOPIC

How to create courses, especially first required core courses, and conduct research that will contribute to creating a more sustainable world, transform the way business is practiced, and will inspire campus-wide collaborations.

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES, ENGAGEMENT, AND TAKEAWAYS

##### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Audience members will recognize the powerful roles business schools can play in creating a sustainable world by transforming immediately what they teach, what they research, and how they actively pursue change.
- Participants will realize that business schools have an exceptional opportunity to make major contributions to dealing with the great challenges of the 21st Century, and they can start making those contributions immediately.
- Together we are seeking to immediately transform ourselves, our colleagues, and our students into immediate activists working to create a sustainable world and providing leadership in that direction. We want to emphasize that we believe that students can and should make major contributions to new courses we need to create — courses that are aligned with building a sustainable world — and their strong voices can help us make

those needed changes. We see students as key partners in helping professors and administrators make this transformation.

- Audience members will be empowered to know that they can start transforming their courses and research immediately and such action does not require a lot of money, permission, or time. Speakers will share what they did to achieve results quite quickly. The workshop will also provide resources where participants can obtain support as they transform their core courses, conduct research, and take positive, active stands for change.
- Collectively, presenters and participants will learn what works in helping people commit to making the kinds of changes in our courses, our research, and our activism that we are trying to make.

## ENGAGEMENT

The engagement occurs in breakout groups. After a very short introduction by each discipline-based presenter (finance, marketing, etc.), participants will offer brief introductions of name, institution, why they are in the session, and any action they are taking in transforming a core course, if relevant.

Following introductions, we will do a two-minute guided imagery/meditation. In the exercise, we envision celebrating, at next year's MOBTC, our success in transforming a core course in our field and/or assisting a colleague in doing the same.

Then we will break into functional, discipline-based breakout groups (finance, marketing, economics, etc.) where the PDW work will be done. Each discipline presenter will briefly describe what he or she is doing, will open the discussion with the session members to describe how to get started, how they could progress, and with whom they can engage outside of their own discipline to help that person transform his or her course.

#### TAKEAWAYS

During the session workshop presenters will share materials from their courses that will be sent by email immediately following the session. All participants will receive materials for each of the separate breakout groups. Takeaways will also include information on research topics and activities that have emerged as core courses were revised/transformed.

#### OVERVIEW — THE SESSION DESIGN

##### PROCESS

The proposed session is straightforward in design.

- Introductions (13 minutes)
- Guided imagery exercise (2 minutes)
- Breakout groups (25 minutes)
- Mid-session check-in (5 minutes)
- Return to original group or join a new one (20 minutes)

- Full group wrap-up (10 minutes)

Total time: 75 minutes

## AUDIENCE

The proposal assumes that most of the participants will be management/OB folks. The goal of the session is for participants to begin, or continue, to transform their core course immediately and work with a colleague to transform his or her course in a similar manner with a similar goal. Participants are encouraged to write and publish stories of how they are transforming their own course and working with colleagues to transform their courses.

## THE WORK OF THE SESSION

As noted earlier, the work of the session will be done largely in breakout groups focused on core, discipline-based courses – such as finance, marketing, accounting, OB management, economics, etc. Each discipline-based breakout group will contain at least one person who has transformed his/her course from the discipline the group is focusing on. For example, there will be a finance professor in the breakout group devoted to finance. She or he will lead and facilitate the discussion with the major focus on what session participants can begin to do or research ideas to pursue.

## THE CONTEXT FOR THE PROPOSED SESSION

*Toward “doing the work of the angels.”*

The session emphasizes the long overdue need to reject the definition of the purpose of the firm as being to maximize shareholder wealth and to reject the cynical and destructive neoliberal narrative that is currently the underlying foundation of business education in most of the world's business schools. The session honors the calls-to-attention of such articles as "Torn between two paradigms: A struggle for the soul of business schools" (Laszlo, Sroufe, & Waddock, 2017)

It recognizes the challenges to the usefulness of much of business school research as described in such articles as "Most business school research lacks real-world relevance" (Basken, 2023).

And it honors and heeds the calls of such leaders as Greta Thunberg to stand up, speak truth to power, and demand actions to create a world that works for everyone with no one left out.

We strive toward "doing the work of the angels" in transforming business education by confronting the reality that almost all of global business education currently supports, legitimatizes, and trains our students to contribute to the current business-as-usual mindsets and practices that are destroying the planet's capacity to support our own and other species. With abundant examples of business fraud, greed, profit maximization, social disparity, and disinformation, it is difficult to deny assertions from students and others that the practice of business and business education leads to "doing the work of the devil." This session is inspired by the belief that business schools must play a *constructive* role in creating a sustainable/ flourishing/ regenerating world when they transform their work into activities that break away

from the business-as-usual mindsets and practices that dominate our current teaching and research.

*An important clarification:* This session focuses on *transforming* core courses and discovering and pursuing new research topics in doing so. It does NOT focus on embedding or layering on sustainability topics to existing coursework. We are looking for deep change that goes beyond pursuing the business case for sustainability – making more money by doing less harm. It is about breaking away from those concepts and framings. We are seeking a much deeper transformation of the purpose and practice in business schools and their responsibility in creating a sustainable world.

Our PDW session will create opportunities for participants to strike out in new directions that will excite them and their students and create new research opportunities. The session recognizes and honors individuals, teams, and schools that are starting to or have already broken away from the widespread business-as-usual mindsets and practices.

As part of “doing the work of the angels,” session participants will be encouraged to join a team in the MIT Presencing Institute’s U-lab 2x program and to join a 2023/4 version of the 2016 and 2019 proposals that were submitted to the first two MacArthur Foundation 100&Change competitions. A new version of the application will be submitted to the MacArthur Foundation and to other foundations and individuals supporting global transformation.



At the end of the session, we will ask for comments from breakout groups and will collect a simple form from each person indicating their intent or additional needs to transform a core or required course. Contact information is optional and completely voluntary. Following the session, participants will receive course material as outlined above and any other referenced material.

#### OTHER TOPICS OF INTEREST

##### Scaling Our Concept

We are intentionally submitting proposals for sessions very similar to this one to other conferences such as EAM and the IAJBS (International Association of Jesuit Business Schools) World Forum. We hope to maximize the likelihood that we can reach people in different circumstances and that those who attend will become part of a network of individuals doing the same work.

FOR MOBTC, the fact that our session can be hybrid – both in-person and video conferenced – is an advantage for the presenters and participants in encouraging a larger, global audience. We designed the session with that opportunity in mind. We recognize there may be technical issues associated with hybrid sessions we will master before the session if our proposal is accepted.

Other Conferences:

We are sufficiently convinced of the advantages of a hybrid format for this particular session that we will ask the EAM, and the World Forum organizers if we can make our session hybrid in their conferences —if we are accepted.

## PRESENTERS

For Fordham University, the presenters will be Professor Frank Werner (Finance) and Professor Emeritas Jim Stoner (Management). For Duquesne, the presenter will be Duquesne Professor Robert Sroufe (OM). For Regis University, Professor Kenneth Sagendorf, Director, Innovation Center (Strategy). For WPI, the presenter will be Professor John (“Jed”) Lindholm (Leadership). Also presenting are Linda Irwin, CEO SeeComm Group and recently retired faculty member from Regis University’s Anderson College of Business and Computing (Marketing) and James Weichert, founder livingconservancy.org and project manager for the Global Movement Initiative. (Economics)

## REFERENCES

- Laszlo, C., Sroufe, R., & Waddock, S. (2017). Torn between two paradigms: A struggle for the soul of Business Schools. *AI Practitioner*, 19(2), 108–119. <https://doi.org/10.12781/978-1-907549-31-1-12>
- Rhodes, C., Stremersch, S., Upton, B., Ross, J., & Williams, T. (2023, January 17). *Most business school research 'lacks real-world relevance'*. Times Higher Education (THE). Retrieved January 23, 2023, from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/most-business-school-research-lacks-real-world-relevance>