

TIP: LESSONS LEARNED

The following insights offer a glimpse into what participants in the first round of the Teaching Innovation Program (TIP) learned about achieving institutional change at their schools. We hope these “**Ten Tips from TIP**” will be instructive and inspirational for others striving for effective social impact management instruction.

- **There’s A Role for Everyone.** While change agents from the top echelons of business school administration are significant to accomplishing institutional transformation, one needs faculty to move the intellectual agenda forward via research and teaching. As the gateway to the school, non-academic staff like admissions are also key players, setting the context for career choices and communicating the school’s values to outsiders. Even students have a critical role to play – in expressing demand for the issues, and frequently, in spearheading extra-curricular activities that bring the issues to life.
- **Thinking Beyond the Business School’s Walls Often Requires Physically Stepping Outside Them.** Action Learning, the subject of September’s *Closer Look* article, encourages MBA students to constructively engage in their communities. Moving from classroom discussion to real-time problem solving of social issues enables first-hand observation of the larger context in which business operates, and provides what is often a transformational educational experience.
- **Bring in Champions From the Business Community.** Some TIP schools found that inviting senior business leaders to discuss the business-side of social and environmental concerns in panels and other forums introduced new ways for students and faculty to talk and think about these issues. As our November *Closer Look* on cross-sector partnerships notes, engaging corporate leaders beyond the traditional funder relationship is critical to forming lasting alliances and moving the social and environmental agenda forward in management education and business at large.
- **Watch For the Excitement, Not the Barriers.** In their feedback of the program, TIP participants agreed that experiencing an appetite for reflection and change in their fellow TIP participants turbo-charged their own reform efforts. Building on shared enthusiasm is crucial to finding the energy, and strategy, for realizing meaningful developments at your university.
- **Change Happens One Conversation At a Time.** One TIP school found that engaging with faculty on a very individual level – for example, asking faculty their own perspectives on how social and environmental issues are relevant to their discipline – resulted in many “converts.” When people feel personally invested in an abstract mission, they are more likely to subscribe to it, and convince others to do the same. Connecting with individuals is thus a key part to making incremental change.
- **Form Learning and Research Communities.** Associations like TIP that extend beyond institutional boundaries can be a source of inspiration and validation for the lone faculty change agent, and provide the impetus to galvanize resources internally. It can also alert one to successful practices in other institutions for integrating a social and environmental ethos into core business curriculum.

A Closer Look at Business Education

- **Nurture Individual Innovators.** Providing faculty institutional support by way of visibility, research grants and opportunities to participant in projects like TIP goes a long way. Not only does it give the lone wolf courage, it also has the potential to pique the interest of other faculty members.
- **International Exchanges Aren't Just for Students.** A critical piece of the design of TIP was selecting schools from around the world – Canada, the European Union, India, Mexico, South Africa and the United States. Our convenings were also global, taking place in the U.S., Mexico and South Africa. Examining the role of the firm in b-school is critically shaped by the relationships between business, government and society in individual countries. Thus, there is a great deal to be learned from stepping outside one's national context and considering social and environmental questions from an alternate vantage point.
- **Be Opportunistic with Existing Curricular Infrastructure.** TIP schools combated the frequent lament “but there's no more time in the curriculum” by finding unlikely places to add social and environmental issues, without increasing overall class time. One school used their required communications course as a place where these issues could be examined; other faculty members looked for projects that dealt with stewardship issues.
- **Build On Your Strengths.** Each school, by virtue of its particular institutional history, student population and faculty and administrator base, naturally have different “on ramps” for infusing social and environmental content into curriculum. For example, schools known as strong research institutions might find that launching a consortium is the right incubator for new ideas. For schools with exceptionally strong ties to the local business community, action learning opportunities or a speaker series could be the fitting launching pad. And schools committed to a specific disciplinary focus might develop new social and environmental content within that field.