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New UNH Program Works to Elevate Corporate Sustainability

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Recommended Citation

Mantz, Erika, "New UNH Program Works to Elevate Corporate Sustainability" (2019). *UNH Today*. 5190.
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New UNH Program Works to Elevate Corporate Sustainability

Monday, April 1, 2019

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DURHAM, N.H.—Thanks to a new collaboration between the Center for Social Innovation & Enterprise (<https://www.unh.edu/social-innovation>) at the University of New Hampshire and New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility (<http://www.nhbsr.org/>)(NHBSR), the B Impact Clinic will help companies elevate their corporate sustainability and university students to engage in high-impact learning opportunities.

The B Impact Clinic (<https://www.unh.edu/social-innovation/b-corp-clinic>) gathers teams of students to serve as consultants for New Hampshire businesses seeking to increase their social and environmental impact. Students are matched with companies to help them complete the B Impact Assessment (BIA). Nearly a decade old, the BIA is an open-access, rigorous assessment tool developed by the non-profit B Lab. It is widely regarded as a high-quality, comprehensive tool to assess a company's impact on society and the environment.

Companies can also use the tool to pursue B Corp Certification, a designation open to businesses that meet the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability to balance profit and purpose. As of March 2019, there were 2,788 companies across 150 industries and 60 countries certified. New Hampshire is home to several leading certified B Corps including Stonyfield, W.S. Badger, Pete and Gerry's Organic Eggs, ReVision Energy, and Veris Wealth Partners.

According to Michelle Veasey, executive director of NHBSR, the assessment “is an excellent tool that helps bring clarity and focus to a company’s commitment to positive impact. It helps businesses quantify their social and environmental footprint and helps create a roadmap for how to deepen positive impact over time. Ultimately it helps companies integrate profits and purpose.”

The program was piloted with UNH students Jill Howard '19 and Vincent Pagano '20 to help Koya Leadership Partners, founded and owned by UNH alumna Katie Bouton, become B Corp certified. Koya Leadership Partners (<https://koyapartners.com/>) is a leading executive search firm dedicated to placing leadership at mission-driven organizations and institutions of higher education.

Under the guidance of Fiona Wilson, executive director of UNH’s Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise, the students and UNH alumna Meghan Seidman, Koya’s senior director of brand engagement, collaborated on the assessment.

“Our company has long wanted to pursue B Corp certification,” said Seidman. “However, we were unaware of the rigorous and comprehensive nature of the assessment. The UNH team’s deep knowledge of the intricacies of the assessment, their insights, excellent project management, and communication skills were invaluable in helping us navigate this process. As UNH alums, it was an exciting opportunity for Katie and me to work with current students, and we are eagerly



awaiting our certification.”

During the semester-long immersive learning opportunity, UNH students are trained in the BIA, and then act as researchers, project managers and consultants, collaborating with their client to research and document the companies’ policies and practices, and investigating and recommending possible changes to help improve the company’s sustainability impact. For students it’s an opportunity to step out of the traditional classroom to work with local companies and gain first-hand, practical experience of what makes a truly sustainable business and successful B Corporation.

“This hands-on learning project has been an incredible way for me to learn what it means to be a sustainable business in a holistic sense,” said Howard. “I’ve developed a network of contacts in local businesses, and I’ve also been able to practice and get feedback to help me hone professional skills such as project management and communication. I know this experience has set me up well as I embark on my career post UNH and has confirmed my interest in working for a business that has strong, positive social and environmental impact.”

GrandyOats (<https://www.grandyoats.com/>), GWI (<https://www.gwi.net/>) and Lonza (<https://www.lonza.com/>), are currently participating in the program. Learn more about these three B Impact Teams (<https://www.unh.edu/social-innovation/spring-2019-b-impact-teams>). Companies interested in participating in the clinic can visit the CSIE website (<https://www.unh.edu/social-innovation/b-corp-clinic>) or contact Wilson (<mailto:fiona.wilson@unh.edu>). Interested companies are also encouraged to attend the B Impact Clinic Showcase Wednesday, April 24, 5:15-7 p.m. to watch the presentations and hear reflections by the participating students and companies in the Spring 2019 B Impact Clinic. Space is limited and is by registration only (<https://www.unh.edu/social-innovation/b-impact-clinic-spring-2019-showcase>).

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