

## : SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP / SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

### INTRODUCTION:

Entrepreneurs are innovative, highly-motivated, and critical thinkers. When these attributes are combined with the drive to solve social problems, a Social Entrepreneur is born. Although academics and lay observers generally agree what a social entrepreneur is, there is still ambiguity surrounding the definition of a “social enterprise.” This *Closer Look* defines a social enterprise as any organization that ranks social impact on par with, or above, profit concerns.

Social entrepreneurs and social enterprises share a commitment to furthering a social mission and improving society. Some of the basic definitional issues that remain include the choice of for-profit / nonprofit structure, the necessity of earned-income strategies among nonprofits, and the degree to which social entrepreneurs/enterprises can manage the toughest social and environmental issues.

In light of the blending of entrepreneurial business skills with the desire to improve society, this edition of *A Closer Look* explores how individual schools and their MBA curricula are approaching this goal.

### A FACULTY POINT OF VIEW:

[Greg Dees](#) is often considered the father of Social Entrepreneurship as an academic subject. He is the founding faculty director of the [Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship](#) and an adjunct professor at Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business. He has taught at the Yale School of Management, Harvard Business School, and Stanford’s Graduate School of Business. He spoke to the Aspen Institute on the state of social entrepreneurship in business education.

On teachers being the greatest bottleneck: “Who will teach these courses? There is a lot of confusion surrounding this; there is no clear natural path to develop faculty to teach social entrepreneurship.”

On the obstacles that social entrepreneurship faces in education: “Business schools still view social entrepreneurship as a practice, not a discipline; it is the same difficulty that entrepreneurship was faced with when it began. There is not enough academic research out there right now; there needs to be more in order to advance the credibility of social entrepreneurship as an academic field.”

On what brings students into the classroom: “It’s not just the use of earned income...it’s that the organizations we focus on are engaged in innovative, creative ways to tackle social problems; what attracts students is the innovation and...the willingness to look across sector boundaries for creative solutions. What they’re interested in is using their business skills to solve social problems.”

### THE BOTTOM LINE:

- Most business schools still address social issues by discussing the management of nonprofit organizations as social enterprises.
- Nonprofit management strategies increasingly include traditionally for-profit concepts, including earned-income strategies.
- Courses in Social Entrepreneurship, particularly those that tell stories of especially charismatic leaders, are very popular on campus.
- Social Entrepreneurship coursework and extracurricular activities are rarely connected to the mainstream, for-profit, business training of the rest of the MBA program.

# A Closer Look at Business Education



## NOTABLE COURSEWORK:

The following course descriptions are drawn exclusively from [Beyond Grey Pinstripes](#), a research survey conducted biennially by the Aspen Institute.

- **IMD, [Entrepreneurship Projects](#)** (Core Course)  
“The entrepreneurship course focuses on the problems faced by high-growth companies in general. Some projects focus on social entrepreneurship, two have been launched - a microfinance project in Argentina and a cancer information project.”
- **Babson College, [The Social Entrepreneur](#)** (Elective Course)  
“This course focuses on the role of the social entrepreneur who is primarily concerned with increasing ‘societal wealth’ by improving healthcare, education, cultural institutions and the like.”
- **Columbia University, [Social Entrepreneurship: Financing and Growing Social Ventures](#)** (Elective Course)  
“Students will explore common strategies and pitfalls in creating stable, sustainable, and successful social ventures. This course explores the activities and lessons from some of the nation’s leading financiers in applying entrepreneurial solutions to education, health, environment, energy, workforce development, international development, and other important societal issues.”
- **Duke University, [Social Entrepreneurship](#)** (Elective Course)  
“This course is about the efforts of private citizens to create effective responses to social needs and innovative solutions to social problems. The objectives of this course are: (1) to introduce students to the concepts, practices, and challenges of social entrepreneurship in the U.S. and around the world, (2) to equip students with frameworks and tools that will help them be more effective in their socially entrepreneurial pursuits, and (3) to engage students in a joint learning process as we all develop a better understanding of this emerging field.”
- **London Business School, [Social Entrepreneurship](#)** (Elective Course)  
“The aim of the course is to offer insights into how social value is created; how social impact can be measured, and for students to acquire a strong grasp of the various forms, models and approaches that entrepreneurs are using to create ‘blended value’.”
- **The George Washington University, [Nonprofit Enterprise](#)** (Elective Course)  
“This course focuses on social entrepreneurship and includes the following topics: business methods of NGOs; commercialization by NGOs; non-profit/for-profit relationships; social ventures; philanthropy; cause-related marketing; and non-profit sustainability.”
- **University of California – Berkeley, [Introduction to Social Entrepreneurship](#)** (Elective Course)  
“The course provides an overview of the processes and challenges associated with integrating financial and social/environmental benchmarks of success. Through case studies and presentations by practicing entrepreneurs and investors this course explores the entrepreneurial process and examines specific solutions to education, health, environment, workforce development, and international development.”
- **University of Notre Dame, [Social Entrepreneurship](#)** (Elective Course)  
“Topics include servant leadership, sustainability, and the challenges and opportunities of managing a double (triple) bottom line. Students examine how to create a more socially entrepreneurial culture within organizations by allocating time, talent, and dollars to activities that have the greatest social/environmental/financial impact.”
- **Washington University, [Social Entrepreneurship](#)** (Elective Course)  
“This course is about using entrepreneurial skills to craft innovative solutions to lead and fund efforts to resolve social needs. Entrepreneurs are particularly good at recognizing opportunities, exploring innovative approaches, mobilizing resources, managing risks, and building viable enterprises.”

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## NOTABLE CASE STUDIES / TEACHING MATERIALS\*\*:

Cases referenced are meant to represent the diversity of related teaching materials. All are available for free download to registered faculty members of CasePlace.org.

- [Committee for Democracy in Information Technology](#) (IESE)  
The Comite para Democratizao da Informatica (CDI) was a non-governmental, non-profit organization founded by Rodrigo Baggio in Brazil in 1995. Its mission was to set up schools to teach computer skills to low-income communities.
- [Corposol](#) (Harvard Business School Publishing)  
Analyzes the concept and complexities of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise by looking at Corposol, a nongovernmental organization dedicated primarily to microenterprise.
- [Yla Eason \(A, B\)](#) (The Business Enterprise Trust, dist. by Harvard Business School Publishing)  
This case describes the challenges that Yla met when she attempted to fill what she identified as a social need for African American superheroes.
- [CARE Kenya \(A\): Making Social Enterprise Sustainable](#) (Richard Ivey School of Business)  
After creating an enterprise to support impoverished farmers in Kenya, George Odo has to identify and implement a business model that will be economically sustainable.
- [The Lee David Pesky Center for Learning Enrichment](#) (Tuck School at Dartmouth College)  
An executive seeks to create a center for the diagnosis and treatment of learning disabilities to honor his son. The case traces the hiring, programmatic, and financial decisions that must be made.



## NOTABLE CENTERS/PROGRAMS:

- [Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship](#), Duke University
- [Center for Social Innovation](#), Stanford University
- [The Social Enterprise Program](#), Columbia University
- [Canadian Centre for Social Entrepreneurship](#), University of Alberta
- [Berkley Center for Entrepreneurial Studies](#), New York University
- [Center for Sustainable Enterprise](#), The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## ONGOING QUESTIONS:

- What is the relationship between social enterprise, social entrepreneurship, and the practice of mainstream business that is the core of most MBA education?
- What needs to change in order for faculty to get tenure based on their work in social entrepreneurship?
- Is social entrepreneurship a discipline and, if so, what needs to be done to convince more schools to incorporate this discipline into their curriculum?

## RESOURCES:

[BeyondGreyPinstripes.org](#) – World’s biggest MBA database, including detailed records on 1,672 courses, 1,730 extracurriculars, and 216 research articles at 128 schools on six continents.

[CasePlace.org](#) – Free, online library of business school case studies, including 78 [cases](#) about social entrepreneurship and 5 separate [Featured Collections](#) (teaching modules) on social entrepreneurship, which include cases, background readings, and teaching notes.

*A Closer Look* is an occasional series of briefing papers on topical issues in MBA education, based on the research and programs of the Aspen Institute. The [Aspen Institute Business and Society Program](#) works with senior corporate executives and MBA educators to prepare business leaders who will effectively manage the financial, social, and environmental impacts of the private sector.

→ Contact [Rich.Leimsider@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:Rich.Leimsider@aspeninstitute.org) to order reprints or to offer feedback.