

A Sustainable Environment: Our Obligation to Protect God's Gift

by
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A Unique Sustainability Training Program

Sustainability is of great interest to most corporations, but they are slow to integrate it into their strategy for two primary reasons. One is that there is a lack of understanding how sustainability can enhance the shareholder value of the company. This was addressed recently in an article titled "How Can Sustainability Improve a Company's Value?" The other reason is a lack of truly understanding the sustainability concept and its benefits. It is critical for the concept to be imbedded in the culture of the company so there is a full understanding on how to implement sustainability. As many employees as possible in a corporation must understand the sustainability concept so they can work together to achieve the objectives. Several universities offer excellent programs on sustainability, but the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) in Greece offers a truly unique program taught by world experts.

Beginning in 2015, NTUA will be offering an executive education Masters degree in Sustainability Practice and Policy. The program has been named SUsustainability Policy and practice: an Executive Retraining program – or SUPER. It will consist of nine one-week long courses plus three projects related to the courses. Each course will be delivered about six hours per day for six days. The target audience is the middle manager of a corporation, but it will also be attractive to graduate students, and even some undergraduates, prior to joining the working class. In as much as most working professionals cannot take off from their position more than three weeks at a time, three courses will be offered each summer during consecutive summers. So it will take the student three summers to complete the program, which is really only two years from start to completion.

The first set of three courses will be devoted to sustainability definition, policy and strategy with topics like industrial ecology; business strategy; adaptation and resiliency; and corporate reporting and metrics. The next set of three courses will cover energy and climate change with topics like energy management; energy, environment and economics; and carbon management and climate change. The third set of courses will be devoted to critical resource management and restoration and will cover topics like water, air and soil policy and management; creating integrated and sustainable communities; and environmental sustainability and economics. Of course, the subtopics for each course may be modified from time to time to meet the current concepts, technologies and demand when the course is offered.

In addition to the three courses per summer, the students will be divided into teams to work on a project while they are studying together but will have time to complete the project working virtually for the few weeks following the summer session. The project will be defined to solve a real problem related to the courses being studied. The intent is to have the project solution be available for replication by anyone else having a similar problem. In order to make the solution available to others, it is critical that the problem and solution not be encumbered by

any outside forces that could preclude the solution being adapted in another location where the outside forces may be different. Therefore, the problem to be solved will be that of an island. This program will require a student that is committed to working towards earning the masters degree to attend the classes at three different Greek islands for three consecutive summers. NTUA has selected the first three courses to be offered on the island of Hydra, about a one-hour boat trip from Athens. In the subsequent years of the program, the administrators will select the venue from the island authorities submitting proposals which would include a description of an environmental or social sustainability problem. There are over 1,000 Greek islands of which about 200 are inhabited. So there are many from which to choose.

NTUA is currently accepting applications for this unique masters program which will be launched in June 2015. Although students will have to attend three consecutive summers to earn the masters degree, the program will accept new students every summer. Students may also apply to take one or more courses of interest without pursuing the degree. Anyone interested should go to www.super.chemeng.ntua.gr for details.