Chapter 13

Increasing Graduate Education Relevance through Innovative Marketing:
Interview with Mike Scorzo

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INTRODUCTION

Kaplan University's new Master of Science in Environmental Policy is designed to fill a growing expressed need by governmental, public service, and nonprofit organizations, as well as industry, consulting, and research firms across local, national, and international arenas. One hallmark of this degree is its links to policy-related jobs for graduates. Innovative collaborations encouraging interdisciplinary flexibility such as customized specializations, internships, and transdisciplinary partnerships within and beyond traditional higher education circles allow this program to incorporate the academic rigor needed for a solid foundation with the dynamic disciplinary and experiential learning to maintain relevance to changing real-world requirements.

The aim of this paper is to illustrate innovative interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary implications for marketing for an academically rigorous graduate program that serves the needs of employers in the emerging field of environmental policy. By linking interdisciplinary curriculum design to the transdisciplinary nature of environmental policy work, program design and marketing become interwoven. Transdiciplinarity in this context means a "process in which members of different fields work together over extended periods to develop novel conceptual and methodologic frameworks with the potential to produce transcendent theoretical approaches" (Klein, 2008, p. 117).

One particular facet of environmental policy, sustainability, is currently being integrated into graduate business education as programs incorporate environmental studies into curricula. Some programs also leverage corporate sponsorship from organizations committed to incorporating business leadership with corporate environmental responsibility (The Aspen Institute, 2011) as part of linking programs with businesses that

may provide future employment for program graduates. As evidenced in these business and sustainability programs, environmental policy as a separate, core field of study needs to make its own relationships with disciplines that support its unique goals. Environmental policy problems may require expertise in business, law, environmental science, economics, security, energy, health and more based around the core competencies of the policy professional.

Programs that appropriately prepare these new professionals require that environmental policy, rather than business or science, function as the programmatic focal point, leveraging other disciplines. The model for innovative environmental policy graduate programs borrows from the business and sustainability relationship but must attend to the unique characteristics of a field that requires significant specialized scientific as well as social scientific knowledge and practical experience focused on "government actions that affect or attempt to affect environmental quality and the use of natural resources" (Kraft & Furlong, 2010, p. 342). Traditional campus-based institutions offering programs specifically in environmental policy such as Georgia Tech, George Washington University, The New School, Lund University and Clark University recognize the unique characteristics of environmental policy in explicit program designs. Dedicated online programs in environmental policy are more recent and are well served to incorporate disciplinary and sectoral expectations within online educational marketing and delivery considerations (Columbaro & Monaghan, 2009) in both program and partnership development strategies.

Environmental policy programs committed to this approach must, as a part of their marketing strategy, consciously cultivate relationships with a variety of types of environmental policy professionals as educational resources and as potential employers for program graduates. In this interview, a graduate faculty member who

is a working practitioner in environmental policy asks the Assistant Dean of Curriculum about some of the innovative marketing approaches Kaplan University is using with its new Master of Science in Environmental Policy.

Interview Q&A

Dr. Lynn Wilson interviewed Dr. Mike Scorzo of Kaplan University.

Wilson: Tell me about the new Master of Science degree in Environmental Policy and Administration.

Scorzo: Kaplan University's Master of Science in Environmental Policy was launched in May 2010 through the School of Legal Studies. By design, this program is part of an interdisciplinary focus that harnesses the capacity of Kaplan to incorporate the power of the entire university to foster students' environmental literacy using rigorous, scholarly-based research in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The mission of Kaplan University legal studies programs is to enable students, through the integration of objectives from the core curriculum, to communicate effectively in the legal environment, synthesize important concepts from a variety of areas of legal specialization while demonstrating ethical decision-making skills, develop thorough and effective legal research methods to solve problems, demonstrate legal writing techniques, and apply these techniques to enhance their professional lives.

Wilson: How have you addressed concerns (Sosu, McWilliam, & Gray, 2008) surrounding emerging environmental policy programs about placing them within a social scientific framework in which instructors may have insufficient physical and environmental scientific understanding?

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