Social Entrepreneurship:
21st Century Leaders of Change

Vision and focus:
Social entrepreneurship is the use of entrepreneurial strategies to solve or ameliorate significant societal challenges and advance the public good. As an innovative and entrepreneurial university, situated near the nation’s capital, George Mason University is uniquely positioned to inspire and prepare students to be leaders in a world of change through the development and use of skills associated with social entrepreneurship. It is imperative that students be able to think critically in order to identify problems at their root causes and develop comprehensive and thoughtful solutions to challenges of global, local, and personal magnitude.

To compete and collaborate in a globalized world, educational institutions must transform to meet the growing demands of students and employers in various sectors. More emphasis must be placed on actively helping students to apply the knowledge, skills, and abilities they gain on campus to the tangible, everyday challenges they will face as the leaders of tomorrow. Curricular and co-curricular programs can challenge all scholars to apply the knowledge of their disciplines to today’s most pressing local, national, and international concerns. Through such programs students will learn and practice the skills of critical thinking, problem solving, risk assessment, management, leadership, and innovation, while simultaneously cultivating a spirit of social responsibility and civic engagement.

Student learning outcomes:
1. Students will be able to identify and articulate how their disciplines/fields can address societal challenges on a local, national, and international scale.
2. Students will be able to apply the competencies of successful entrepreneurship, such as critical thinking, problem solving, management strategies, and leadership to meet societal challenges.
3. Students will develop and demonstrate leadership capacity, working cooperatively across disciplines/fields, to effectively create desired change.
4. Students will develop and practice communication skills that are essential to social entrepreneurs in curricular and co-curricular settings.
5. Students will be able to see their work as integrative rather than isolated through experiences that encourage integration of knowledge across cultural, national, and international borders with special attention to social, political, and/or cross-cultural issues.
6. Students will be able to integrate their learning experiences with faculty, mentors, and peers across the co-curriculum and curriculum in order to extend interpretive, analytical, evaluative, and imaginative skills learned in academic courses into larger societal contexts.

Possible avenues for implementation:
• Integrate social entrepreneurship into discipline-specific courses (e.g. special topics, capstone courses, etc.).
• Provide increased opportunities for interdisciplinary study with respect to meeting contemporary local, regional and/or global societal challenges.
• Strengthen opportunities for training and instruction in research methods; increase opportunities to participate in the research process and present research findings that address societal challenges.
• Develop a major, minor, and/or center for social entrepreneurship.
• Expand opportunities for students to become exposed to and actively engaged with social entrepreneurs.
• Expand opportunities for study abroad.
• Establish more partnerships (e.g., internship, research, and creative opportunities) with recognized innovators and social entrepreneurs locally, nationally, and internationally.
• Create more opportunities to participate in cross-cultural communication.
• Develop social entrepreneurship living-learning communities.

February 6, 2009