

2011-2012 Grant Proposals

Claus Diersmeier & John Schatzel
"Social Accounting Simulations"
Classroom Innovation Grant

Project Proposal:

John Schatzel (accounting) and myself (Claus Diersmeier, business ethics) are working on software-based simulations of "social accounting". The purpose is to develop and disseminate simulations that train students in doing ethical/social/environmental accounting according to (but not limited to) the following standards: SA 8000, ISO 26000, SOX 404, and the GRI principles. These global standards aim to bring accountability to the non-financial activities of business and, through enhanced transparency and public awareness, to further corporate responsibility.

Simulations are superior to traditional teaching of said standards, as the problem for students is often not the abstract comprehension of the ethical principles involved but rather the identification and adequate judgment of context for their application in concrete corporate environments. In other words, where traditional teaching can only re-narrate cases, simulations provide first-hand experiences without the risks concomitant to real-life scenarios.

Moreover, simulations are also a very apt feedback tool for the educator. In tracking precisely where students have difficulties, they allow for a custom-made pedagogy that addresses the student's learning problems with heightened sensitivity and thus leads to better capacity building in the classroom. Often, they are the very tool that creates moral awareness in the accounting field in the first place.

We propose to both develop (as well as fine-tune over time) a set of social accounting simulations and promulgate our experience through academic publications so as to have a sustained impact on the pedagogy of accounting and business ethics. As we are working with global standards for social accounting, our possible impact is not limited geographically but has the potential to contribute to a heightened integration of social/ethical/ecological standards into corporate reporting worldwide.

We want to work with a student research assistant to a) test and refine our simulations for pedagogical adequacy, b) to build a research library so as to implement the research of others into our simulations, c) to prepare papers for academic publication.

John and I are planning to use the finalized version of the social accounting simulation both in his accounting classes and in my business ethics classes. Furthermore, we want to use academic publications so as to spread awareness about this didactic tool so as to stimulate adoption in other colleges and universities as well. We believe that a wide adoption of these simulations is possible and that it would lead to a decisive improvement in the ethical acuity of business students.

Budget:

We request 100 hours of support by a student research assistant (priced at 10 USD/hour), to be spread out from the earliest point possible until May 2012.