

An MBA for 2020, & Beyond

Major change is having a moment.

THE NEW MBA IN SUSTAINABLE
INNOVATION WAS BUILT TO DRIVE IT

by Sasha Milam

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has only highlighted what was already becoming clear: “normal” can change shockingly quickly. Simultaneously, other aspects of “normal” – pernicious issues like climate justice and systemic racism – are ascending in public consciousness and have long been demanding reform.

The redesign of our MBA program, which relaunched this fall as the UVic MBA in Sustainable Innovation, addresses this urgency for change with a curriculum focused on sustainable solutions for the challenges unfolding today. Organizations are reimagining their relationship with society and the environment, and the students we welcomed (virtually) this September to our new MBA are embarking on a program centred on this knowledge.

So what does this mean in practice? *Business Class* asked a few of the faculty teaching in the program to share what students can expect in their classes. Here’s the view from the classroom. For a full list of courses and more, visit www.uvic.ca/mba

MBA 514 FOUNDATIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

This foundational course sets up the sustainability knowledge

students will need in order to delve into all the different concepts they’re going to be expected to understand throughout the rest of the program. This class will cover why sustainability is important and how it can work at a fundamental level. It should prepare students well to challenge their professors in thoughtful ways, and understand the materials being shown them through the rest of the program.”

Dr. Matt Murphy

MBA 520/DAYTIME, ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

I am excited to teach and co-create useful combined financial and sustainability reporting that will reflect and magnify the important events that are taking place in our ever-changing world.

ESG reporting is not new, but it requires cultivation to elevate awareness for investors as well as local and global business communities. I am excited to be part of this reporting paradigm shift that will create value, paving the way we weave the importance of the environment, social and governance into the fabric of a successful business organization.”

Mr. Kimball Ketsa

MBA 515 BUSINESS ECONOMICS

I have been looking forward to teaching this course for over a year. As soon as we started redesigning our MBA program to focus on sustainability and innovation, I got really excited about how economics relates to these subjects, and the opportunities we would have to discuss topics I am passionate about. Economics is not dismal, it is not unbridled capitalism, and it has so much to offer in terms of understanding how societies can allocate their scarce resources for greater good.”

Dr. Jen Baggs

MBA 520/WEEKEND, ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Redesigning accounting for a sustainability MBA is such an exciting challenge! What I hope students will take away from this course is how **accounting is integrated into business**: its role, how it works, key concepts and how to use accounting tools effectively. I believe that this understanding will be valuable to them as financially adept sustainability leaders.”

Ms. Mia Maki

MBA 510 MARKETING IN A CONNECTED WORLD

While it is popular to focus on sustainability from the production and supply chain perspectives, **marketing may be most central to reducing the carbon footprint** associated with business practices. That is because for most products, 80 per cent of their impact on the environment is tied to the way they are used and how they are disposed. A central theme of this course will be developing frameworks to educate, encourage and influence customers to behave more sustainably.”

Dr. Steve Tax

MBA 570 GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

As the world faces global problems such as pandemics, pollution and natural disasters, it can be disheartening to see many nations seek nationalistic answers to these problems. **My hope for the Global Sustainable Business course is that students develop skills to seek innovative and sustainable solutions for these global problems.** We need to lean into internationalization and not retreat from that perspective—and do so boldly. If our problems don’t stop at our national borders, our solutions won’t come from within just our borders, either.”

Dr. Sudhir Nair

MBA 553 DESIGNING INNOVATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

I’m extremely excited to teach MBA 553. **Structure, governance, ownership and stakeholder participation are key aspects of any organizational endeavour**, whether it’s a new start-up designed to tackle a sustainability issue or a long-standing consumer cooperative. When designing this course, I paid particular attention to making sure students get exposure to a wide range of different perspectives on these topics, and to be able to explore them in a wide range of contexts. One of the most important things I hope students take away from the course is an appreciation for just how many options are available when (re)designing their ideal organization to help make the kind of change in the world they want to see.”

Dr. Simon Pek

MBA 552 STRATEGIC COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

We know that innovative solutions often involve others; therefore **the focus in the collaboration course is on how we collaborate within organizations and across industries.** The currency of collaboration is relationships and information. In the course we examine the levers and barriers for successful collaboration, as well as when and how to use different types of collaboration including co-opetition, public/ private partnerships, networks, mergers and acquisitions and alliances to create value and address wicked problems.”

Dr. Cheryl Mitchell

MBA 544 TECHNOLOGY AND THE INTERCONNECTED ORGANIZATION

A lot is happening in the world these days, and information technology is usually either part of the problem, or the solution. Often, it’s both. When we work towards a more sustainable future for all, it is important that we develop a critical perspective of how technologies interact with organizational, social, legal, ethical and other drivers. Information technologies are a part of much more complex information systems. This course focuses on understanding these systems, so that we can make informed **IT decisions that help us tackle not only challenges related to achieving organizational goals, but also global issues** such as poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.”

Dr. Jan Kietzmann

MBA 530 FINANCE FOR IMPACT

Every financial decision has an impact on people and the planet. The impact can be positive or negative, and maximizing the social and environmental impact should be a top priority along with pursuing financial returns. This class helps students move away from the trade-off mentality in favour of a long-term and multi-stakeholder perspective when thinking about financial risk and returns. This mind-set is critical to re-orienting capital to finance innovative solutions to the world’s pressing challenges and ensuring an inclusive and resilient future.”

Dr. Basma Majerbi

MBA 550 STRATEGY FOR THE LONG TERM

I am very excited about teaching in our new MBA program because **it allows me an opportunity to teach the subject of strategy in a very different way compared to other schools.** Against the general notion of strategy as a way of outcompeting other firms, we will draw on recent research to understand how creating a unique and shared value to all stakeholders—including customers, employees and society—will naturally lead to superior performance in a way that is sustainable in the long run.”

Dr. Ravee Chittoor

MBA 555 PEOPLE AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

Among so many learnings, one thing this pandemic teaches us is that employment instability is perniciously harmful to people—financially, socially, psychologically, physically. Having been on the curriculum committee for this program, I am excited to teach People and the Future of Work, in part because it will no doubt foster thoughtful and generative discussions with our students on powerful ideas like the intersection of **sustainable employment, ikigai and strengths-based management that can help create better outcomes** for individuals, families, organizations and society.”

Dr. Rick Cotton