

Society, was in attendance during a colloquium on organizational behavior. When someone asked McClelland what he thought about the latest findings in the field, he replied that there had been no good research—at HBS or anywhere else—since the Hawthorne experiments in the 1930s. “You could hear a pin drop,” said one attendee.

Whatever eternal or universal truths there were to be learned about business were learned long ago. It’s been window dressing ever since. To be a professor at HBS is in some ways to be an editor at a personal service magazine, whether it’s about eating healthy, investing wisely, or being part of a runner’s world. There’s only so much to say about any of those things, and yet the editors and writers are forced to come up with new things to say, month in, month out. If you found yourself in that kind of situation, you’d probably convince yourself that you’d discovered confidence, too. Unless, of course, you were under-innovating.

There is movement on some fronts. If HBS demonstrated a remarkable incapacity for understanding the urgency of incorporating ethics into its curriculum over the years, an increasing number of its graduates have demonstrated an understanding that corporate profitability and corporate social responsibility are not, in the end, mutually exclusive goals. Environmental concerns, in particular, have emerged as a focal point for many alumni efforts, and, in the push-pull that is curriculum development, HBS seems to be responding to them.

The students got there first: In 1990, the School’s MBAs formed the HBS Environmental Club, one of the first orders of which was to convince HBS Publishing to begin using recycled paper for case materials.¹³ In 1991, with funding from Teresa Heinz, two professors, Richard Vietor and Forest Reinhardt, began developing teaching materials on environmental issues.¹⁴ Heinz followed that by endowing the Heinz Professorship of Environmental Management in 1992, in memory of her husband John Heinz (’63).¹⁵

After the hiatus that was the bull market of the 1990s, the Internet boom, and then the post-Internet busted housing bubble, the School again turned

its focus to the environment. In 2010, it launched the Business and Environment Initiative, which has achieved at least a modest amount of success at permeating the curriculum with courses and cases that have an eye on the environment, most notably in the second-year electives Building Sustainable Cities and Infrastructure and Reimagining Capitalism: Business and Big Problems.

The leadership role in pointing MBAs toward a sustainable future was surely HBS’s for the taking, but it whiffed. San Francisco’s Presidio Graduate School, a tiny institution by comparison, hasn’t just added an environmental and sustainability component to an existing curriculum. Rather, it started with those premises, and then built the curriculum on top of them. Dight Collins, associate dean of the MBA program and one of Presidio’s founding faculty, explained the idea to the website *Poets & Quants* in 2014: “MBA programs traditionally have an accounting track and a finance track and a marketing track, right? And a sustainability track,” he says. “It’s like on a menu of items. For us, the only way to do business on the planet . . . is to have every one of those topics be done sustainably. Our ultimate aspiration is that every MBA program on the planet should look like us.”¹⁶ Presidio’s curriculum includes such topics as industrial symbiosis, the search for companies and products that fit together in such a way that the waste of one production process becomes the raw material for another. HBS has a long way to go before it is attacking the problem in such a way.

That said, a number of notable alumni have gone ahead and jumped into tackling such problems themselves. The list of high-profile environmentalist alumni includes former Secretary of the Treasury Hank Paulson (’70), whose Paulson Institute promotes sustainable economic growth and a cleaner environment around the world; Mark Tercek (’84), CEO of the Nature Conservancy; and John Replogle (’93), CEO of Seventh Generation, which makes environmentally friendly household products.

When the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB), an organization with the ambition of convincing the market to adopt nonfinancial sustainability metrics, was established in 2010, HBS professor Robert Eccles served as its founding chair. As of 2016, that position was held by Michael Bloomberg, who may have done more toward bringing the business world