The United States has experienced an unprecedented wave of challenges throughout 2020, including the COVID-19 pandemic and movement towards racial equity. At the Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation, we are focusing on the ways that businesses can play a key role, “building back better” to create a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. This is not just an imperative for society’s needs — research shows that businesses who invest in social impact during this volatile time are outperforming their peers.

Our activities throughout the Fall 2020 semester reflected our ongoing commitment to current and future business leaders, engaging them around key local, national, and global issues. We have reached over 2,000 stakeholders this past year through our events and initiatives, such as the New Jersey Brain Drain symposium, the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education conference, and the Questions and “Unanswers” Social Innovation research seminar series. We are also thrilled to share a report written by our students on the Future of Work and COVID-19.

I hope you join us for our upcoming activities in 2021, such as the Future of Work symposium and a debate on “Does Corporate Lobbying Benefit Society?” And, in the interim, we hope you have a peaceful and healthy holiday season, and wish you all well during this challenging time.

Best regards,

Noa Gafni
Executive Director
Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation
This year, the world is dealing with the unprecedented COVID-19 Pandemic. For many in the workforce, the pandemic has prompted new changes in how work gets done. Globally, governments have issued sporadic local, regional, and national stay-at-home orders since March 2020. Many companies are implementing (or relaxing) their telecommuting policies, while an economic decline, the closures of small-businesses, and the recognition of the need for essential workers have each had additional impact. The unforeseen impact on the future of work has accelerated significant changes we believed would not happen for decades.

Positive change is possible in the short and long term. By practicing Corporate Social Innovation (CSI) we can "build back better". Early efforts are promising: we see large firms supporting small business; progress in housing and economic stability; expanded impact for Human Resource functions in companies; and pivotal healthcare initiatives. In each of these areas we are, to date, only seeing the tip of the iceberg.

In the near term, we see potential in these areas:

- Supporting employee mental health
- Reskilling the workforce
- Education for the future
- Sustainability and the Environment
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The pandemic gives us an unprecedented opportunity for positive change, and through CSI the joint efforts of corporations, academia, NGOs, government and other stakeholders can fuel our progress in addressing the issues and challenges facing our society and the world today. The future starts now - let's work together to make progress possible and sustainable.
Along with several other partners, the RICSI hosted the 5th UN PRME NE Virtual Conference - "Sustainable Development Goals: Transforming Business Education and Practice."

Academic, student, corporate, and NGO practitioners spent four days discussing possibilities and challenges pertaining to responsible management education as it relates broadly to all aspects of sustainability - Economic, Environmental, Social and Cultural.

We heard inspiring messages from world renowned scholars and faculty representing business schools across the country and around the world. Keynote speakers included Stuart Hart, Professor at Grossman School of Business at the University of Vermont; Mette Morsing, Head of the Principles for Responsible Management Education; Andrew Hoffman, Holcim Professor of Sustainable Enterprise at the University of Michigan; James Corwell, Master Chef, Chairman and Founder of BlueDot Int'l; Daniel Dart, Activist, artist, photographer, and social entrepreneur; and Jonathan Holloway, President of Rutgers University. Another notable session was a Student Panel comprised of a diverse and committed group of students representing the next generation of leaders who called for systemic changes and generated many forward-looking ideas.

More than 1,000 people from 61 countries and 34 U.S. states registered for the conference.

Read more about this amazing conference.

Questions & Unanswers About Social Innovation (QUASI) Seminar Series
We have been hosting a year-long Questions & Unanswers About Social Innovation (QUASI) Seminar Series. Framed as debates, the QUASI Seminar Series does not provide answers but rather identifies conditions, contingencies, conundrums, and paradoxes that merit further research, to help scholars and students globally develop richer and more refined research questions about social innovations.

Part of the RICSI’s Research and Affiliates Fellows Program, previous session topics included:

- Can Shareholder-owned Corporations Maximize Profits without Harming their Stakeholders?
- Is Capitalism the Most Effective Way to Advance Society?
- Does Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility Create Value for Consumers?

See upcoming topics

See previous sessions

Upcoming Events

Future of Work Multi-Stakeholder Convening

Spring 2021: Monthly QUASI Seminar Series

- Next session: Does Corporate Lobbying Benefit Society? January 22, 2021, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. EST.
- Register to attend future sessions

For more information, please contact us at rcsi.director@business.rutgers.edu.

Learn more about the RICSI
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