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Headline: Leading in the age of climate change and big data

Byline: Jikyeong Kang

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Climate change and big data have two things in common: Both are man-made and have far-reaching consequences that managers must truly understand to effectively address.

Climate change and big data are intertwined. Climate change poses a great threat to mankind, while data science can be a valuable tool to help mankind avert that threat.

Due to these two great events creating such a huge impact on the world as we know it—climate change and the rise of data as the new oil—the inaugural theme of a forum at the Asian Institute of Management, “Leading in the Age of Climate Change and Big Data,” was especially timely.

Attended by experts and key leaders from business, government and the academe, the forum provided much-needed discourse on disaster and crisis preparedness, and the need to invest in mitigation. Proper disaster and crisis management needs integrative, early investment from government, the private sector and civil society. This was clearly established at the forum.

So strongly do we at AIM feel the need to address the issue of climate change that we plan to offer a Master in Disaster Risk and Crisis Management in 2019.

AIM is equally committed to harnessing the power of data science and advanced analytics, bringing it to bear not only on business but also the planet’s problems. That is why we decided to be the first school in the country, and one of the first in Asia, to offer a Master of Science in Data Science (MSDS). Classes have started.

The enthusiastic response to our MSDS program tells us that organizations realize how data science can offer a treasure trove of tools for use in business. Modern tools and technology can indeed give managers an unprecedented toolkit for addressing a wide range of issues; and nowhere is this more necessary than in disaster risk and crisis management.

Already, scientific studies have shown that climate change is a burgeoning problem, affecting us in many disastrous ways. In a paper distributed at the forum, Vinod Thomas, a visiting professor at AIM, pointed out that the increase in extreme weather was the new normal.

The poor are the most vulnerable during natural calamities and it is often the women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly who are most susceptible.

The Philippines is one of the countries that is most at risk from earthquakes, floods, typhoons and pandemics. As climate change intensifies, the risk will likely increase, and it is up to managers from all parts of society to act and ensure that our organizations and communities are resilient.

As a business school, it is AIM’s goal to produce a generation of managers able to effectively lead in the era of climate change and big data; managers whose methods and actions are interdisciplinary and intergenerational; managers who strategically and systematically approach organizational and societal issues to create disaster-resilient organizations and societies.

Despite all our scientific advancements, there still remain important management gaps that make our societies vulnerable to impending disasters. Many organizations, projects, and programs still operate in silos, although they are highly interdependent. For instance, we keep our phone systems running, but what good does it do if all our phone batteries are drained because the electricity grid goes down?

The public and private sector must come together to achieve a higher level of disaster resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change. We need to create a business environment where the private sector is incentivized to invest in the human resources required to make the ecosystem work efficiently. A disaster-resilient world is where equitable economic growth and ecological well-being exist hand in hand.

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In the same paper, Thomas advises that resilience-building be at the center of development plans. I believe we can take that one step further and say that resilience-building should be at the center of every business plan. As extreme events become more frequent, only those businesses that are prepared will actually be able to stay in business. —CONTRIBUTED