

## OUR EDUCATIONAL AND ACTION RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Through deep engagement with the social enterprise movement, our Education and Action Research program creates opportunities for students and faculty who want to learn from, and with, social entrepreneurs serving the global poor, and provide it practical research. Unlike other universities, our program accesses the GSBI platform and its social enterprises worldwide to develop practice-based learning and action research projects.

Through our Education and Action Research program we support goal 3 of the SCU strategic plan, to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in service to humanity. We cultivate social entrepreneurship competencies listed at the end of this document among faculty, students, volunteers, and social entrepreneurs.

The 200+ GSBI social enterprises provide Santa Clara University and the Jesuit university network worldwide a unique learning asset. We learn from our social enterprise partners, and we organize and support research in practical service to them. The research may be of immediate operational support (e.g., conducting a customer satisfaction survey) or to advance the understanding of the broader social enterprise movement and its ecosystems of support. We use scholarly literature, business case studies, white papers, and traditional teaching techniques, but privilege the hard earned practical lessons of our social enterprise partners. Whether in classroom learning or field research, we extend the GSBI platform to include university-based learners (whether students or faculty). We are careful to ensure that our engagement with social entrepreneurs provides a net benefit to them. We do not support research that detracts from the daily work of our social entrepreneurs.

The fellowship is our fullest expression of our open access learning lab. We are not satisfied with learning theories about social enterprises. We want our students to develop the skills, competencies, and moral imagination of social enterprises. We would be happy if the fellows became social entrepreneurs, but more realistically, we want all of them applied entrepreneurial thinking to addressing society's most pressing needs, i.e., express the social entrepreneurship competencies at the end of this document. We conjoin education with action research because we believe the best learning is engaged in meeting the needs of others. Heart and hands can and should be integrated with head. This is why vocational discernment is at the heart of our program. All the education and action research activities beyond the classroom are designed to benefit others, and to stimulate growth in self-awareness, of one's passions and gifts, and needs of the world.

Action research blends the best of service learning with participatory action research (or PAR). The rise of service learning is tied to a number of trends in higher education, here and around the world. The Center believes that social

entrepreneurship education, when combined with action research, has the potential to foster integrated education in service to the poor – in a way that is superior to most community based learning programs. The combination of these two concepts and their ideals provides action research its dynamism. The key difference between “action research” and participatory action research is that PAR is with a community and community leaders, and community members participate in the research activities. Action research is the same as PAR in that it is participatory, and focused on social change, however instead of a community (organized or in need of organization), action research partners with an existing enterprise. Of critical importance: someone outside of academic institutions/academic disciplines sets the research agenda, and determines success. This is where we introduce tensions. We believe that social entrepreneurs have an important role in determining the kind of research that the social enterprise movement needs. However, public intellectual work/service to a community outside of academia is not seen as valuable by hard-nosed academic evaluators. This kind of work does not demonstrate superior academic achievement by faculty and scholars.

The Center could never have developed the programs that it has were it an academic department. SCU’s Centers of Distinction were conceived as vehicles for advancing the social justice goals of Jesuit higher education – without the resources provided by tuition, but also without the burden of external academic evaluation of our programs. We can effectively represent our GSBI social enterprises and the social entrepreneur movement, and drive campus engagement as that representative.

The Center follows a Prime Directive: action research projects must add net value to the social entrepreneur, and not impose burdens. We do need the entrepreneur to be engaged, and to provide a clear sense of what needs to be done, why, and how. But action research is not really an internship. Students and faculty are not interns. They have to have clear sense of research goals and activities, with input from the entrepreneur but structured by us. To provide any value through action research imposes a burden on the Center to prepare students and faculty to understand the social needs of communities they serve, and the business model strategy of the enterprise. This is a big difference from service learning. We require students and faculty to research and master these concepts before we ask the enterprise to do anything with our students. Fundamental task for designing action research with SEs is to creatively, intelligently and realistically conduct a research needs assessment of a social enterprise.

This kind of action research structure can inspire moral imagination among our students and faculty. As you know, presenting a compelling vision to others is a key leadership strategy of entrepreneurs! We use vocational discernment as the primary template for conceptualizing their personal transformation: growth in self-

knowledge in order to put one's gifts at the service of others. May be religious, may be spiritual, may be neither. Vocational discernment is an open template.

## SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR COMPETENCIES

1. **Opportunity Recognition:** the capacity to perceive changed conditions or overlooked possibilities in the environment that represent potential sources of value.
2. **Opportunity Assessment:** ability to evaluate the content structure of opportunities to accurately determine their relative attractiveness.
3. **Conveying a Compelling Vision:** the ability to conceive an image of a future organizational state and to articulate that image in a manner that empowers followers to enact it.
4. **Tenacity/perseverance:** ability to sustain goal-directed action and energy when confronting difficulties and obstacles that impede goal achievement.
5. **Creative Problem Solving/Imaginativeness:** the ability to relate previously unrelated objects or variables to produce novel and appropriate or useful outcomes.
6. **Resource Leveraging:** skills at accessing resource one does not necessarily own or control to accomplish personal goals.
7. **Guerrilla Skills:** the capacity to advantage of one's surroundings, employ unconventional, low-cost tactics not recognized by others, and do more with less.
8. **Social Value Creation:** capabilities of developing new products, services or business models that bring benefits to users (with revenues greater than costs).
9. **Maintain Focus yet Adapt:** ability to balance an emphasis on goal achievement and the strategic direction of an organization while addressing the need to identify and pursue actions to improve the fit between an organization and developments in the external environment.
10. **Resilience:** ability to cope with stresses and disturbances such that one remains well, recovers, or even thrives in the face of adversity.
11. **Self-efficacy:** ability to maintain a sense of self-confidence regarding one's ability to accomplish a particular task or attain a level of performance.
12. **Building and Using Networks:** social interaction skills that enable an individual to establish, develop, and maintain sets of relationships with others who assist them in advancing their work or career.

Adapted from a presentation at the California Entrepreneurship Education Conference by [Michael Morris of the University of Florida](#), based on his co-authored publication (with Justin W. Webb, Jun Fu and Sujata Singha) [A Competency-Based Perspective on Entrepreneurship Education: Conceptual and Empirical Insights](#) in Journal of Small Business Management, [Volume 51, Issue 3](#), pages 352–369, July 2013.