



Client Projects

Sustainable Business Strategy

As organizations continue to address a wide range of sustainability and corporate social responsibility challenges, clients with short-term strategic questions that can be addressed using strategic analysis tools such as stakeholder analysis, benchmarking, SWOT and multi-criteria decision analysis help students participating in the Sustainable Business Strategy course apply their knowledge and give clients the opportunity to address pressing business questions.

Sample Past Projects

Darden Restaurants

Darden is a restaurant company – featuring a unique portfolio of businesses that include Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, Bahama Breeze, Seasons 52, The Capital Grille, Eddie V’s and Yard House. A core part of sustainability at Darden is a commitment to reducing the environmental impact of our physical footprint – including energy efficiency, water conservation and food waste reduction at our restaurants.

Darden has made strong progress toward its ambitious goal to reduce per-restaurant energy and water use and work toward sending zero waste to landfills over time. Since organic material is the largest component of its restaurants’ waste stream, reducing it must be a key part of any strategy to get to zero waste.

Kristine Young, a 2009 Nicholas Master of Environmental Management graduate, arranged for a team of MEM students in Deb Gallagher’s Sustainable Business Strategy course to analyze current organic recycling programs and develop a business case for expanding in new communities.

The Nicholas student team assessed the sustainability and business impacts of Darden’s organics recycling program in Massachusetts, where mandatory organic waste diversion from landfills went into effect in 2014, and provided comparative analysis for diverting organic material at other restaurant sites. The students presented their findings to Darden, who are using the analysis to inform future organic recycling efforts.

“The water topic is gaining more visibility with our senior management, so this project definitely helped us have in-depth understanding of the situation and provide suggestions on how to strengthen our water strategy.”

-Sona Stenclova

Environmental Program
Manager, Lenovo

Lenovo

Lenovo's Environmental Management System (EMS) reflects the multinational technology company's commitment to design and manufacture environmentally conscious products in facilities that minimize the environmental impact on their surroundings and to continually improve its performance in this area. As part of this EMS, Lenovo sought to develop water risk maps for the company's global sites, and to use those maps to understand and identify water opportunities and risks worldwide.

Lenovo Environmental Project Manager and Staff Engineer Sona Stenclova, a 2010 Nicholas Master of Environmental Management graduate, asked a team of Nicholas master's students in the Sustainable Business Strategy course to create these maps using World Resource Institute's Aqueduct™ and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development's Global Water Tool®. The students also developed strategic recommendations for Lenovo to capitalize on this data. Stenclova and her colleagues are using this information to evaluate Lenovo's water management approach and strategy to ensure water-related impacts are appropriately addressed through both business and environmental management.

Haven Hill Brands

When Heaven Hills Brands, one of America's largest independent distilled spirits companies, sought to expand its Austin, Texas production facility for its newly acquired Deep Eddy Vodka, the company wanted to know how it could best contribute to Austin's citywide sustainability culture. Heaven Hill's Corporate Environmental, Health & Safety Manager, Kim Harmon, asked a group of Nicholas School professional environmental master's students to explore opportunities for corporate stewardship in the Greater Austin area to inform her company's strategic decisions.

Harmon, a 2015 Nicholas MEM graduate herself, partnered with students in Deb Gallagher's Sustainable Business Strategy course, in which students use the tools of strategic analysis to help a client achieve a real-world objective. Corporate clients can accelerate projects they may not have time or manpower to advance themselves, while students gain experience that increases their marketability and adds value for future employers.

The MEM team presented their findings on community and sustainability measures that could be incorporated in the Deep Eddy expansion – including opportunities in energy, transportation and protection of water and other natural resources – to Harmon and other Heaven Hill executives. Harmon has used this information to help make a case for several new sustainability-related investments in the Austin plant and the surrounding community

Additional previous clients:

- AdvanSix
- Timothy Belitz
- Matthew Burks
- Cree, Inc.
- E-Source
- Mary Jacques
- Donna Lazzari
- Lenovo



Faculty Lead: Deb Gallagher

Associate Professor of the Practice of Resource and Environmental Policy

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Areas of Expertise

- Business
- Business Law
- Environmental Policy
- Environmental Values

Education

Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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