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# SHiFT

*Support Systems for Sustainable  
Entrepreneurship and Transformation*

## *Good practice collection University support for sustainable entrepreneurship*

*Presidio Graduate School  
San Francisco, California, USA*



**PRESIDIO**  
GRADUATE SCHOOL

## Good practice collection

SHIFT (“Support Systems for Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Transformation”) is a unique research project and is funded through the EU programme ECO-INNOVERA: [www.eco-innova.eu](http://www.eco-innova.eu). SHIFT’s main goal is to enable universities, incubators, business development organizations, financial institutions and other relevant actors to support eco-innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship more effectively. On the basis of thorough empirical analysis of the status quo and the identification of good practices world-wide, concrete and realistic recommendations have been developed for policy makers and actors of the support systems: [www.shift-project.eu](http://www.shift-project.eu)

Presidio Graduate School is part of a selection of good practice examples the Borderstep Institute has collated in the context of the SHIFT project to highlight exemplary activities of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Finland, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the USA that have successfully integrated sustainability in their respective entrepreneurship support system.

## Presidio Graduate School San Francisco – California, USA

**Characterization:** Graduate school with sustainable management focus (in business, public policy and law)



### Good practice highlights

#### **MBA, MPA, and a Dual MBA/MPA programme in**

**“Sustainable Management”:** JD/MBA in partnership with the University of California Hastings College of the Law: Sustainable management is a comprehensive management framework that bridges the gap between commerce and the common good. It is a strategic approach to management and policy that requires a blending of social, natural and financial capital to create an integrated bottom line. This means sustainable management considers not just the financial benefits of a decision, but also its economic, environmental and social impact. As a part of the integrated and entrepreneurship-focused MPA and MBA Capstone programme, students design and launch new social ventures, conceive and propose transformative public administration and public policy innovations, and collaborate on product design prototypes.

In each **Experiential Learning course**, student teams partner with external organizations to create a custom-made project based on the specific needs of their partner. Additionally, there are **field study partnerships in the sustainable energy sector**.

PGS offers **several specialized certificate options for professionals:** Certificate in Sustainable Management, Certificate in Sustainable Energy Management.



### Key data

**Location:** San Francisco, California, USA

**Founded:** 2003

**Number of students (2015):** 150

**Profile:** Among the world’s first and leading sustainability graduate schools, Presidio Graduate School (PGS) looks at private enterprise and the public sector, commerce and the common good, as companions, not competitors. PGS looks at sustainable management as an integrated, applied approach to learning that sees problems as a whole and designs solutions that account for human, economic and environmental concerns. A whole-systems orientation rests on coursework in systems thinking, sustainability literacy, ethics and social justice. The integrated curriculum is designed around three fundamental concepts that define competence in sustainable management: sustainable systems, sustainable leadership and business excellence.

# *Interview with Dwight Collins, Ph.D.*

*Founding Faculty Member and Professor Emeritus  
Presidio Graduate School*



## *Why did your university/business school start to support sustainable entrepreneurship and/or eco-innovation endeavours?*

Sustainable entrepreneurship and eco-innovation were the main themes underlying the founding of Presidio Graduate School (PGS) in 2003.

## *Who initiated your programmes, what were the milestones of their evolution?*

PGS was founded by a noted educator, Richard Gray, PhD, and a leading San Francisco business man, Steven Swig, to change the way business is done on the planet. It opened in 2003 with a class of 22 students, and incorporated sustainability in every MBA course. It is offered in a hybrid format in which students meet with faculty in a face-to-face residency each month, and complete assignments and interact with faculty in an online environment in the weeks in between. For its first 11 years, PGS was accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) through its affiliation with Alliant International University. Its fourth semester integrated Capstone course provided a springboard for launching its students as highly skilled social entrepreneurs and practitioners of sustainable management solutions. In 2006, the school introduced its highly acclaimed Experiential Learning Program in which students work closely with three to four companies, non-profits, or government agencies as part of their MBA experience. In 2009, the PGS core faculty re-designed its MBA curriculum around a set of 10 programme learning outcomes (PLOs). Each course is largely defined in terms of which PLOs it teaches and assesses student performance against. In 2009, the school also introduced its acclaimed Master of Public Administration (MPA) and Dual MBA/MPA Degree offerings. In 2013, the school introduced a number of Certificate programme offerings in addition to its degree programmes. Also, a new core course, Market Failures and the Regulatory Environment, was introduced. This course teaches tools for establishing strategic co-operation between business and government as an often necessary vehicle to ensure success of its social entrepreneurs. The year 2014 was historic in that PGS became WASC accredited independent of its Alliant parent.

## *What can other universities learn from it?*

PGS demonstrates how to design MBA and MPA programmes in which sustainability and social entrepreneurship values and tools are taught in every course. Its leaders believe that every MBA and MPA programme needs to share these attributes in order to solve our society's most pressing sustainability problems.

## *What are your next steps/future plans?*

PGS enrolments are growing. Its leaders are examining a number of vehicles to bring its brand to scale. These include partnerships with other programmes that can facilitate this growth, and fully online offerings.

## *What has been the impact of your sustainable entrepreneurship support?*

PGS has close to 800 graduates. Many have started up new social enterprises. Others are "social intrapreneurs", serving in sustainable leadership positions in many of the world's best companies and organizations, e.g., Apple, Cisco Systems, Facebook, Google, PG&E, SolarCity and Environmental Defense. Some are leading sustainability initiatives for innovative, forward-thinking cities like Austin, TX, Baltimore, MD and Berkeley, CA. A number occupy Director of Sustainability positions at major universities including University of California at Riverside, Wake Forest University, and the University of Texas at Arlington. A number of Presidians have launched category-creating companies. One, EOS Climate, for example, has built a market in destruction of CFC-based refrigerants, in effect, reducing the earth's ozone hole at a profit. Another, Mission Motors, develops cutting edge electric powertrain systems for high-performance vehicles. A third, Ecohome Improvement, is a 10-year old highly successful Berkeley, CA-based showroom and design studio offering ecologically friendly and healthy home improvement products.



## Additional Information

Presidio Graduate School:

<http://www.presidio.edu>

Approach:

<http://www.presidio.edu/about>

Strategic Plan 2012-2021:

[http://www.presidio.edu/userfiles/file/PGS\\_StrategicPlan\\_Final2012.pdf](http://www.presidio.edu/userfiles/file/PGS_StrategicPlan_Final2012.pdf)

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[www.borderstep.org](http://www.borderstep.org)

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