

CBERN Newsletter Number 1

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The purpose of this email is to bring you up to date on Research Network developments. I have been working extensively with a wide group of people to keep things moving along. There have been important and encouraging developments. Funds are now in place to begin to build a research network. And planning for next steps has begun. Here briefly is what has been happening.

Last fall, the original team of academics, Alex Michalos (University of Northern British Columbia), Noel Simard (Universite St. Paul), Len Brooks (University of Toronto) and Fred Bird (Concordia) and myself supported by Jim Cooney (Placer Dome), Kernaghan Webb (Industry Canada) and Joy Kennedy (KAİROS) applied for a second year of funding for the Research Network Project. In early January of this year, I received word from SSHRC that we had received a \$25,000 grant to support our work over the coming year.

In early January, a workshop was held in Calgary to review progress and set an agenda for the next few months. That workshop was attended by myself, Alex Michalos, Noel Simard, Jim Cooney, Kernaghan Webb, and Joy Kennedy as well as a number of Calgarians who have contributed in different ways to the development of the network: Loren Falkenberg (Haskayne School of Business) Jaana Woiceshyn (Haskayne School of Business), Allen Pedden and Paul Makosz (Canadian Ethical Leadership Forum), and Donna Kennedy Glans (Integrity Bridges). We were joined also by Deborah Poff (University of Northern British Columbia). The workshop was very productive and ran for a day and a half.

Placer Dome provided generous financial support for the workshop. Place Dome has been generous in support of this project from the inception of the idea. Placer Dome has now been acquired by Barrick Gold. Hopefully, Barrick will continue Placer Dome's support for research in the field of business ethics.

While in Calgary, Donna Kennedy Glans and I met with Mac Van Wielingen of ARC Financial who has now agreed to match the SSHRC Grant in support of the project. This means we now have \$50,000 to begin to develop the Network.

The Calgary Workshop Agenda is being posted on the York CSR web site.

Here are the ideas that emerged from the workshop that will guide our activities over the next few months. As you will recall, we propose to build three nodes of program activity, research, capacity building and public dialogue around a Hub that will have a data gathering and coordination function.

At the Hub we will be concentrating on the following things:

We are now undertaking to develop an interactive web based data base that will include:

- information about people working in the field
- research projects underway in Canada
- projects underway in the private, government and NGO sectors
- a public dialogue event list with a thumb nail sketch of the organization initiating the vent and the target audience
- and the capacity to support electronic dialogue forums around network and network cluster activity.

Workshop participants also suggested that:

- we analyse the types of public dialogue events currently taking place
- assign events catalogued on the web site to categories
- identify gaps which are not currently being filled
- and build an inventory of tools and public dialogue models

A second topic of discussion was how best to disseminate information about the Research Network. One proposal namely that we hold network workshops in conjunction with meetings of the Administrative Studies Association of Canada (ASAC) in Banff in late May as well as the Congress of the Humanities also taking place in late May and June at York University in Toronto. Proposals have been submitted to ASAC and the Canadian Philosophical Association. We are also looking at the possibility of organizing a session at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in cooperation with the Federation of the Humanities.

The concept paper which is available now on our web site (www.yorku.ca/csr) calls for activity around three nodes: research; capacity building; and public dialogue. The Calgary workshop looked at ideas for each of these areas.

Research

There are three sets of ideas that we will be attempting to develop over the next few months.

1. One of the network tools will be retreat workshops on topics and issues where there is a need but also potential for serious research on the part of Canadian researchers. We have had two suggestions for a first research oriented workshop. Donna Kennedy Glans has suggested a workshop on the UN Human Rights Norms for business. The UN draft proposed norms attempt to identify and specify the human rights responsibilities of corporations. Although there are references to respect for human rights in a wide variety of corporate, and international codes of ethics, the draft UN Human Rights Norms proposal has met with significant corporate resistance. One of the very contentious elements for corporations is the concept of "spheres of Influence". Donna has suggested that the draft norms and the concept of spheres of interest would be a useful topic for a retreat workshop.

A second possible topic suggested in this case by Jim Cooney would look at the intersection of ethics and risk analysis. Themes for this workshop might be the creation of social capital through for example conflict anticipation, prevention, management and resolution.

These ideas require development and refinement. However, the Calgary workshop concluded that the two topics were related in interesting ways and proposed that we think about organizing a retreat workshop that integrates these two themes.

A second possible retreat workshop theme would focus on the intersection of corporate culture and ethics, an area of significant experience on the part of several of the participants.

The purpose of the Network as described by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) is to facilitate research. The idea for retreat workshops comes from experience with workshops acquired in conjunction with SSHRC funded interdisciplinary research projects that included multi sectoral retreats involving about thirty people in a structured dialogue for two and a half or three days. (A description of a workshop of this nature is on the York CSR website)The reason for organizing workshops of this nature for the Network Project would be to identify areas of research of significant interest and importance to business, government, the voluntary sector and academic researchers and provide support for research projects aimed at those topics.

2. One of the areas of importance that needs more research attention lies at the intersection of health care and business ethics. Currently there is a good deal of research on topics in the areas of medial ethics and bioethics. However, there appears to be little funding support at the present time for research that looks at the ethical issues that arise where business ethics and medical ethics meet. There are significant ethical dimensions to the business/healthcare interface.

As it turns out, the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) is very interested in exploring this dimension of health care ethics. However, currently, it is not clear how to fit research projects with this focus into the granting structures of CIHR or SSHRC. A second project for the network discussed at the workshop is to look creatively at stimulating research in this area.

3. Finally, in preparation for the writing of the cluster paper (also on the York CSR web site) workshops were held across the country. One of the themes that emerged from workshop discussions was business and spirituality. There are a number of project proposals for funding in this area that have gone to American Foundations (e.g. the Templeton Foundation). This is a third area where the Network has an opportunity to play a facilitating role.

Capacity Building

Calgary workshop attention focused for the most part on the need for good case studies. The workshop participants spent a good deal of time discussing the idea of a case study of Talisman in the Sudan. It would appear that Talisman (the Canadian oil and gas company) is prepared to support a case study of this nature. Loren Falkenberg has worked extensively with Talisman. She introduced a proposal for a case study built around an electronic format that linked users to relevant web sites for in depth analysis of the Sudan experience from multiple perspectives.

The workshop participants agreed that this is a project well worth supporting. Loren Falkenberg is heading that initiative. There is a proposal for a case writing workshop to be held in conjunction with the annual meeting of ASAC (Administrative Studies Association of Canada) in Banff in the late spring.

The resolution of a variety of issues raised in the course of discussion of the proposal is set out on the York CSR web site in the form of a memo prepared by Kernaghan Webb.

Public Dialogue

For the moment, the focus on this aspect of the network will lie in developing a data base on the part of the network's Hub. The relevant initiatives are described above.

Work is now proceeding on all of these fronts. Up-dates will be posted in a timely fashion as work progresses on the CSR web site. One of the final questions that is the focus of work at the Hub is how best to organize a Network web site. Currently, discussion of this issue is being guided by Stephanie Allen who is providing staff support for the Network. Information on developments will be shared as with the network as the various challenges being addressed are resolved.

We will be posting on the York CSR web site as quickly as possible:

1. The Agenda for the Calgary workshop held in January 2006.
2. The suggested structure for proceeding with the Talisman/Sudan case study
3. This email outlining the results of the Calgary workshop.
4. Timely accounts of workshop activity.

Many thanks for your continued interest

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