

Organizations team up to foster socially responsible work

Teaming up with the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Duke University and a local foundation, the charitable arm of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce is set to launch an initiative to help employers and communities pay more attention to the connection among environmental stewardship, social equity and economic prosperity.



PHILANTHROPY NOTEBOOK

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Set to open Oct. 1, the new Institute for Sustainable Development plans early next year to offer a new tool that employers and communities can use to gauge their "triple bottom line" of environmental, social and economic impact, and obtain a certification if their enter-

prise is "sustainable."

"We think if we can help change the way individuals engage their community and engage their environment, then they'll be more successful," says Aaron Nelson, president and CEO of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber and executive director of its Foundation for a Sustainable Community.

The foundation is launching the new institute in partnership with the Center for Global Initiatives, the School of Social Work and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, all at UNC-CH, and with the Duke Center for International Development and other public and private investors, including The Fenwick Foundation in Chapel Hill.

Working with graduate students studying city and regional planning, public-policy analysis, social work and economics, mainly at UNC-CH, and with some community leaders, Nelson says, the new institute has developed a metric to measure the triple bottom line, and now is testing it with employers.

Anne McKune, director of the institute, says she is working with the Kenan-Flagler business school at UNC-CH to develop a business plan.

That plan will help the institute name its new tool and set a price it will charge for its use.

The institute also plans to hold an employment and networking fair, probably in January, and an annual sustainability conference, probably next spring, and also will offer seminars and consulting services.

The institute, which expects its annual operating budget to total \$90,000, has secured \$40,000 in support for its first year and \$30,000 for its second year from institutional partners.

By connecting employers, academics, students and policymakers in North Carolina with their counterparts doing business, teaching or studying in the state, Nelson says, the institute aims to help them share information and expertise to better understand the interconnection of local and global enterprise, as well as the value of an integrated focus on environmental, social and economic impact.

In the old model of doing business, Nelson says, environmentalists typically criticized business, and business typically resisted the work of social-justice activists.

"We're going to talk to organizations and activists about finding the intersection of interests and holistic approaches to long-term community success," he says.

Sustainability, he says, is "the most likely way for communities to be successful over the long term."

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AARON NELSON
CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE