Executive Night Speaker Series The Meaning of Sustainability By Dr. Luka Powanga, Professor, School of Management Regis University, Denver USA

Sustainability encompasses all facets of an organization's functions, a fusion of all traditional disciplines (examples-education, business, science, engineering and mining) and functional areas (examples-finance, marketing, human resources management, and operations management) designed to meet the present needs of the consumers without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The sustainability area is a rapidly expanding field and organizations are hiring within organizations due to a lack of the availability of graduates who both have the functional skills as well as the knowledge and skills in sustainability. This document briefly discusses sustainability to enlighten the reader on this important topic.

## **Defining Sustainability**

Sustainability, now a credible management function, evolved from sustainable development, the product of the World Commission on Environment and Development, which sought to respond to the increasing concern regarding "the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development. " Sustainable development is framed in the notion that the economic activities designed to meet our current needs should not and must not impair the ability of future generations from meeting their own needs. In short, sustainable development seeks to balance economic success, social equity and ecological (environmental) integrity as illustrated below.



Source: Christopher A. Bradlee, Manager, Product Stewardship and Sustainability Programs, BASF Corporation- Presentation at the 20th Anniversary Responsible Care<sup>®</sup> Conference: "The Impact of Marketplace Demands on EHS Programs" April 30, 2008

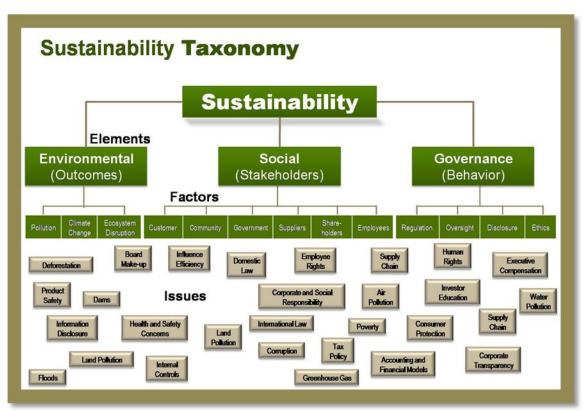
Within an organization or commerce framework, there is a realization that corporations have an obligation to not just act in their own self-interests but to also consider the needs of society and to make ethical and sometimes legal decisions for an organization that explain, justify, and report its actions in addition to the notion that the stronger the organization's relationships are with stakeholders, the easier it becomes to meet its own organizational objectives.

In this vein, sustainability blends the traditional business functions (human resource management, marketing, and finance and operations management) with social entrepreneurship, environmental business practices; ethical growth strategies, and energy technologies defined within three elements:

- 1 **Outcomes**-Environmental stewardship and the Impact of the operations of an organization on the environment,
- Social element-Consideration of stakeholders (shareholders, customers, individuals along the supply chain, and the community reach of a business) in the business decision making process and strategy

formulation concerning all dimensions of business such as operations, resource utilization, technology and investments and,

**3. Governance**-the behavior of the organizations business decision makers including issues ranging from oversight, ethical conduct, corporate social responsibility, to disclosure as illustrated in the sustainability taxonomy diagram below.



Source: Sustainability Taxonomy was developed by the Fox School Of Business Enterprise Management Team; James W. Hutchin, Clinical Professor, Joseph Mirabile, Jessy Joyce Nadar, Ya-Ting Chuang, Scott Ciammaichella, and Adam Dotson (2008). Presented at the 2009 United Nations Environmental Program: Finance Initiatives Global Finance Roundtable

In the above context, the Executive nights at Regis University will feature a variety of speakers from different industries to talk about the challenges confronting them and the leadership these executives provided in the context of sustainability. Consequently, an array of topics including leadership, strategy, human resources, competitiveness, energy, efficiency, and technology will be addressed to broaden the understanding of sustainability by the attendees.