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Consulting agency sets out to produce community-minded corporate managers

Hoping to integrate business minds with social mission organizations, students at the U of T Rotman business school created Rotman Nexus, a student-run consulting agency for the non-profit sector, in the spring of 2005.

“[Graduates] from here usually become managers and leaders, and we want to see people who are more holistic in their decision-making, socially-oriented, and are concerned about the needs of a broader range of stakeholders,” says Liz McBeth, the agency’s founder.

The agency was also created, says McBeth, who currently owns a communications agency, in recognition of the need for MBA students to engage in meaningful work early in their careers.

“Often people in management positions find their way into the non-profit sector later in their careers,” says McBeth. “This was a way to tap into that desire [for more meaningful work], and to recognize the important role played by social mission organizations.”

Last summer, five Rotman Nexus students provided consultation for eleven different non-profit organizations. Older, seasoned management professionals provided support for the students.

“Many of these students are going to have future opportunities to influence positive change,” says McBeth, who was an active volunteer in social mission organizations like “Big Issue” – a British magazine published by and on behalf of homeless people – before completing the MBA program herself in 2005. She was motivated to create the agency after noting a general lack of appreciation in the corporate world for the nationwide impact of Canada’s social mission sector.

“Many non-profit organizations are run very professionally, and for an MBA student this is a potential career path. We are making students more aware that socially-oriented management approaches are entirely legitimate,” says McBeth.

Although McBeth points out that currently it is still those industries that have the greatest environmental impact – like the energy industry – who are most likely to become fully engaged with stakeholders and more accountable to the community, a generational shift towards greater corporate social responsibility is in the offing.

“I think that this generation will increasingly demand social performance, and will want to be a part of a social mission,” she says.