

# Merage

STRATEGIC INNOVATION AT WORK

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## Shifting Gears: Profit *Plus* Planet



NO LONGER SIMPLY BLACK OR RED,  
TODAY'S CORPORATE FOCUS IS GREEN

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# A SUSTAINABLE ALLIANCE: Prosperitas & Net Impact

by Julianne Alfe

**DURING THE LAST DECADE**, a new movement has emerged that is gaining traction throughout the world and driving businesses to shift their thinking from financially-based business models to models more inclusive of sustainable practices and socially responsible performance. This paradigm shift has drawn worldwide attention to such essentials as subsistence, worker's rights, pollution prevention, education, economic growth, healthcare, and the list goes on.

Accordingly, as "for-profit" businesses move toward solidifying their investment in sustainability, their leaders – in alliance with the world's scholars and entrepreneurial innovators – are presented with a unique opportunity to create partnerships and positive dialog for change.

It was within this context, the Merage School-based organization Prosperitas, composed of entrepreneurial self-starters from an extensive range of industries, called to action their pledge to raise awareness about the critical topics of our times. Their promise was fulfilled with a gift to underwrite Merage School student participation in the 18th Annual Net Impact Conference. Titled, *2020: Vision for a Sustainable Decade*, the conference challenges attendees to envision their role in working toward

a sustainable future. Hosted this year by the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan, the conference is one of the largest and most attended conferences in the world, drawing more than 2,500 people, with representation from 20 countries.

"Net Impact is an organization composed of students fully committed not only to being successful in business, but also in making a positive impact on the globe, the community, and the environment," said Mary Patrick, executive director of Prosperitas. "Because their mission aligns so nicely with our group's purpose, we are thrilled to support the students in their attendance of the conference."

Net Impact representative Matthew Souther added, "Our organization covers topics that are directed toward using business skills for the greater good. These include, among many others, corporate responsibility, social entrepreneurship, international development, and clean technology."

Gary Lindblad, assistant dean of the Merage School's Full-Time MBA program, recognized the value the Net Impact conference offered students and introduced the concept to Mary Patrick. Through Prosperitas, Patrick facilitated funding for a group of five Merage School stu-

dents to attend this year's conference including: Bonnie Chen, George Huang and Wendy Wu from the Full-Time MBA program, and John Ritchey and Vikram Moorjani from the Fully-Employed MBA program.

"This was an outstanding opportunity for Prosperitas to benefit the Merage School and its students, and to demonstrate our commitment to sustainability," said Patrick.

Interested students applied for Prosperitas' support by providing a statement of interest including: why they wished to attend the conference, how they have been involved in sustainability and corporate social responsibility in their careers, and how their involvement with Net Impact would continue.

Lindblad commented, "This generation of MBA students has an interest in socially and environmentally sustainable business practices. When this interest and enthusiasm is informed and guided by the knowledge and insights gained at the Merage School MBA Program, and it is coupled with involvement in global organizations like Net Impact, graduates have the real opportunity to make significant positive impact over the lifetime of their career. The financial support that our MBA students are receiving from Prosperitas to attend the

2010 Net Impact Conference is an investment that will pay dividends for years to come.”

“As one who has experience in corporate social responsibility on the side of ‘for-profit’ business as well as experience working at a company that offers sustainability solutions, I am very interested in learning about the latest in technology advancements and industry trends from the meetings at the Net Impact Conference,” said Chen. “I am also eager to meet with chapter leaders from other schools and learn about their activities on campus.”

Huang, emphasizing the managerial and financial aspects of this relationship added, “We are extremely grateful that Prosperitas has underwritten our expenses. As a direct result, we expect a 100% increase in attendees at the confer-

ence from The Paul Merage School of Business. In addition, this sponsorship gives us the opportunity to meet with the members of Prosperitas and share our ideas.”

This concept, Huang points out, is truly important because it formalizes to the students the mission Prosperitas has set for its members to ignite ideas, create connections, and raise awareness about critical topics of our times.

“Personally, I cannot wait to share what I learned from attending the conference,” said Huang. “Through Prosperitas, we can share the ideas generated from the Net Impact Conference with our local community.”

Prosperitas is an intimate peer-based organization of 25 innovators, leaders, and entrepreneurs. Operating under the

umbrella of The Paul Merage School of Business at the University of California, Irvine, the group hosts bi-weekly meetings designed to provide members with the place, space, and diverse peer input to learn about and debate the critical topics of our times. For more information, visit [merage.uci.edu/go/prosperitas](http://merage.uci.edu/go/prosperitas).

Net Impact is a global organization of 200 students and professional chapters with over 10,000 members. The Paul Merage School of Business Net Impact Chapter is dedicated to growing and strengthening a network of leaders to use the power of business to make a positive net social, environment, and economic impact in Orange County communities. For more information, visit [merage.uci.edu/go/clubs](http://merage.uci.edu/go/clubs). 