

# ADVANCED DEGREES

## Executives in Pursuit of CSR Experience

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY** (CSR) is no passing fad. In the past, CSR activities were “largely reactive, attempting to stem or prevent criticism rather than promote real development,” wrote Daniel F. Runde half a dozen years ago for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a nonprofit policy research organization based in Washington, D.C. Most businesses used to be responsible only to their stakeholders. Not anymore. Today, companies are actively creating corporate halos in the marketplace, eager to curry favor with their customers and the community at large. This approach offers a competitive advantage by improving a company’s public image, boosting employee engagement, and attracting and retaining investors.

Executive MBA and PhD programs are primed for professionals and top-level managers seeking to learn more about the advantag-

es that CSR provides. They can examine the social, ethical, and environmental questions that all organizations face day to day and with long-term transactions. Because these professionals are pursuing an advanced degree while working full-time, they have the advantage of blending their real-world experience with academia’s deep dive into data. And the information they can bring back to their companies is timely, relevant, and quite often actionable.

While many ideas about best practices are often shared over cocktails or a game of golf, most are anecdotal. What’s needed, says Toby Joplin, director of Executive Doctoral Programs at Oklahoma State University, is data-based decision-making. “The idea behind a PhD is that it’s a science degree,” he says. “We do research, collect data, and then ask, ‘What does this data say is the truth?’”

Advanced degrees in business are an investment in the individuals who pursue them and the companies they work for, both now and in the future. Corporate social responsibility is really about taking the long view. It’s about companies making informed decisions from multiple vantage points, not just the bottom line. As CSR becomes more integral to companies’ long-term strategies, the need for executives steeped in the intricacies of this particular subject will be paramount. ●





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