From the Editor: Doing the Right Thing

by Amanda Hankel, editor

In this issue, we focus on social responsibility (SR) in higher education. What is SR? What can higher education organizations do to be socially responsible and instill those values into their students? According to ASQ:

> Being socially responsible means that people and organizations must behave ethically and with sensitivity toward social, cultural, economic and environmental issues. Striving for SR helps individuals, organizations and governments have a positive impact on development, business and society with a positive contribution to bottom-line results.[1]

So what can higher education organizations do to be socially responsible and teach its students to do the same? As shown in the variety of articles in this month's issue, there is a wide range of efforts higher education institutions can make to contribute to SR. From environmental changes to enhancing culture and diversity awareness to improving the educational experience for students—there are multiple ways higher education organizations can increase their SR efforts and setting an example for students.

In the article, [“Student Leadership: Environmental Stewardship Through Leading by Example,”](#) I.A. Bas Blankenstijn and Meredith R. Atchinson, two graduate students at Western Michigan University, write about their efforts to eliminate printed materials distributed to students in a program on campus. Instead, the information is now distributed to students via USB drives.

Not only does this change save paper and eliminate unnecessary waste, but it also sets an example for the program's to be aware of the effect their actions have on the environment and sustainability. "We are setting the stage by showing it is our social responsibility to eliminate wasteful processes and to improve our efforts of creating a meaningful environment of sustainability at our university," the authors write.

In the article, "Curriculum, Undergraduate Research and Social Responsibility," read how assistant biology professor Jen Grant steered her SR efforts in the direction of making coursework more relevant and meaningful for her students. She created a unique scientific research experience that helped her students get more out of their educational experience.

In the article, "The SR Paradigm," ASQ Education Division Chair Cindy P. Veenstra discusses how SR can help to create a paradigm that helps disadvantaged students succeed in higher education. She connects quality systems thinking for student success with SR. The article provides links to some helpful ASQ resources on SR and provides tips for how SR can be further incorporated into higher education to help disadvantaged students succeed.

Enhancing diversity and cultural awareness is also considered an important SR effort. In the article, "Diversity Awareness Education to Promote Social Responsibility," read how the University of Wisconsin-Stout incorporated diversity awareness education into a freshman seminar course. Doing this helped promote SR by helping students become more aware of ways they can support an inclusive campus community and an increasingly culturally diverse working environment.

Finally, be sure to check out the two higher education institutions highlighted in the 2012 Pathways to Social Responsibility document. Ramaiah Institute of Management Studies, an institute of higher business education in Bangalore, India, embarked on a project to improve the employability of its graduates. And read how the University of Virginia-Darden School of Business is working to accomplish its sustainability vision with goals to be a zero-waste, carbon-neutral enterprise by 2020, and a top-10 business school for teaching and research on sustainability by 2013.

In today's society, we know there are steps we can implement into our lifestyles to be socially responsible. Some of them are easy and convenient, but some are not, and that's when sticking to the SR mission becomes more difficult.

As this issue of the *Higher Education Brief* shows, it sometimes takes a little creativity— and a lot of work—to make those SR goals reality. But, it's about doing the right thing. In the

higher education sector, it's more important than ever to not only be a socially responsible organization, but also to instill those values and goals in the students who will lead us in the future.

How is your organization being socially responsible? Why is it important in the higher education world to be socially responsible? Email me at ahankel@asq.org.

References

1. ASQ, "What Does ASQ Mean by 'Social Responsibility?'" http://asq.org/social-responsibility/about/what-is-it.html