



MI/MBA graduate Daniel Bowman Simon (in background) stands with children from a remote village in the Philippines. Bowman points out that children are most vulnerable to environmentally unsound practices.

MBA with a Mission

The Masters International program combines MBA training with Peace Corps service.

For business students seeking a sense of purpose with their MBAs, a program that pairs business training with a philanthropic mission may be an intriguing option. The Masters International Program, which the Peace Corps offers in partnership with nearly 50 U.S. colleges, gives students just that opportunity.

Although the MI program offers concentrations in subjects ranging from entomology to forestry to health, several schools offer degrees with an orientation in business, agribusiness, or economics, including the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. UP invites interested students to apply to the Pacific MBA and Peace Corps MI programs. Once accepted to both programs, students complete a one-year, full-time course of study on campus. Then, they travel overseas for two-year commitments as Peace Corps volunteers, choosing assignments specifically suited to their management training.

The rigor and intensity of the dual program can be intimidating,

says Chris Lozano, MBA director, student recruitment and admissions, at the University of the Pacific. “The Peace Corps process can be rather grueling,” he says. “We’ve only had a limited number of students who have made it through both the service aspect and the MBA.”

One recent MI/MBA graduate, Daniel Bowman Simon, chose the program specifically because of its Peace Corps tie-in. “In developing countries, there are problems everywhere you look,” says Simon. “I thought if I got an MBA and learned the skills to find the root causes of complex problems and identify better business solutions, I would be a better Peace Corps volunteer.”

Simon’s Peace Corps assignment sent him to a village in the Philippines, where fishermen had overfished the ocean and had to find a new livelihood. Villagers turned to loom-weaving, using locally grown raffia fiber, to generate income to support their families. Unfortunately, they were harvesting the raffia faster than it could grow

back; coloring the raffia with dyes that contaminated the groundwater; and dumping their garbage into the ocean and excavated mining areas.

“I explained to them that their garbage would be toxic to their children, which would increase health costs later,” says Simon. “I told them that from an economic standpoint, they needed to find new ways to deal with their trash.” Simon worked with villagers to reduce the garbage they generated and find more sustainable ways to grow and harvest raffia.

After Simon returned from the Philippines, he received a \$50,000 grant from New York University’s Stern School of Business to launch a new company, GaiaSoil. His company converts conventional black-tar roofs to “green roofs,” which use rooftop vegetation to reduce water runoff, capture pollution, and lower rising heat in urban areas.

Simon also wants to use the expertise he gained in the MI/MBA program to encourage American businesses to adopt environmentally friendly practices, not just to save money and improve the environment, but also set an example for the rest of the world to follow. “Citizens in developing countries hear about our fancy garbage trucks and expensive landfills, and they want what we have,” Simon explains. “They think, ‘If America isn’t using environmentally sound practices, why should we?’ If I can introduce natural solutions to businesses in America, these practices are more likely to be adopted in Third World countries.”

For information on the MI Program and a complete list of participating schools, visit www.peacecorps.gov and click on “Grad School” to reach the Masters International Program link. [Z](#)