No conflict

An organization at Rutgers Business School is out to show that conservation goals do not have to come at the expense of business growth

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Gary Cohen, a 35-year veteran of medical technology company Becton Dickinson & Co., founded the Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation to promote the idea that sustainability does not conflict with growth.

“Corporate social innovation integrates a company’s full range of capabilities and assets within innovative business models to achieve positive societal impact while advancing the success and sustainability of society,” Cohen said. “You will find yourself with a purpose-driven life.”

Jeana Wirtenberg, the institute’s associate director, explained at a sustainability conference held March 1 at Rutgers Business School in Newark that the goal is to help the whole world win.

The sustainable development goals are about creating a better future for everyone on the planet.

“Unlike the goals that preceded them, these were focused on developing countries,” Cohen said. “There are challenges. These problems are too big for any one sector of society to solve on its own. Any company in any industry can contribute to the global development goals.”

“In order not to leave anyone behind, we want to achieve them by the year 2030,” Wirtenberg said. “Today we are focusing on fostering global development goals through community development in Newark. You are the pioneers locally and internationally. This is all about collaboration across sectors.”

“This is a preview of what the Rutgers Institute is going to do,” Cohen said. “Human rights work is not at odds with business.”

“A vast problem”

Rutgers University students Katie Parrish and Krishna Gotur are part of the Rutgers Sustainability Coalition and helped organize the sustainability conference. Parrish is studying microbiology in New Brunswick and has been helping to create a similar conference on that campus.

“My mantra for the past two years has always been sustainability,” Gotur said. “When it comes to building sustainable solutions, it is about understanding the problem, the people behind the problem, the community you are implementing it in, and the resources available. It requires a holistic top-down view. Sustainability is a vast problem that requires people from a variety of disciplines.”

Sustainability can co-exist with business, Gotur said.

“Business is a vital part of our society today,” Gotur explained. “Much of our society runs around financial business. The markets are how resources get moved around. It is important for sustainability to enter the discourse of business.”

Nathaly Agosto-Filion is the chief sustainability officer for the city of Newark. She is tasked with advancing the sustainability agenda.

“A lot of the ideas that are going to play themselves out will have to align with what the city is doing,” Agosto-Filion said.

Her goals for 2020 include making Newark cleaner and better prepared to face climate change, ending a legacy of contaminated industrial sites known as brownfields and reducing stormwater run-off.

“Newark is an urban heat island,” Agosto-Filion said. “All our work is founded on improving the quality of life for Newarkers. A lot of kids spend more time indoors than outdoors. Indoor air quality is important.”

Tobias Fox, founder and director of Newark Science and Sustainability Inc., is part of the Collective Impact for the 12 teams that will work collaboratively on a seven-week project in Newark that will illustrate the concept for a Sustainable Development Goals project.

Walking the walk

Jens Molbak founded WinWin, a nonprofit funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. WinWin uses a data-driven approach to align the resources available in the private, social, and public sectors to generate better societal and financial outcomes for everyone.

“We all contribute to all the sectors,” said Molbak, who also founded CoinStar. “Our philosophy is we need the best resources from all three sectors: nonprofit, government, and private sectors.”

“There are a wide range of other organizations that are being presented today,” Fox said. “Get involved.”

Gary Cohen, a 35-year veteran of medical technology company Becton Dickinson & Co., founded the Rutgers Institute for Corporate Social Innovation and an executive vice president at medical technology company Becton Dickinson, discusses sustainability at Rutgers University in Newark.

“I am excited to be a part of this great initiative and personally thankful to Professor Wirtenberg and Gary Cohen for making this opportunity possible at Rutgers Business School,” Joyce said.

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