Good morning everyone, and thank you Tim for a great speech and an engaging Q&A. My name is Mark Boffa, and I am an MBA candidate here at Rutgers Business School. I am the President of the RBS chapter of Net Impact, and I am very grateful to have the chance to speak to you for a few short minutes.

For those of you who are not familiar with Net Impact, it is a 40,000 member-strong organization of students and professionals who are dedicated to bringing about positive social and environmental change in their communities, their workplaces, and the world. There are 300-plus local chapters that focus on a diverse set of issues within CSR, sustainability, and social entrepreneurship.

Our chapter is meant to be a resource for students during their time spent at Rutgers Business School. We accomplish this by hosting speakers, organizing volunteer events, connecting students to case competitions, and serving as a link to the Net Impact national chapter and its many resources. We frequently collaborate with other student organizations and Rutgers stakeholders, including the Institute for Ethical Leadership (IEL), in order to advance our common cause.

When you stop to think about it, the Net Impact story really is quite incredible, and it mirrors the overall success of CSR over the past few decades. What was once considered a distraction from profits (at best), and corporate mismanagement (at worst), is now an integrated and essential part of many corporations. And, on the campuses of the most prominent business schools in the world, Net Impact has played a large part in making CSR and sustainability mainstream.

So, where did these 40,000 members come from? For an increasing number of prospective MBA candidates, a university’s engagement with CSR and ethical business is an important factor in selecting a school. I recently spoke with one of the co-founders of our Net Impact chapter, who said that when she was applying to schools, she was surprised that Rutgers didn’t have a chapter – so she started it herself! When I was researching MBA programs, I took note of the fact that Rutgers had a formed a Net Impact chapter and had established the IEL – these were important signals to me that the university was engaged with “business beyond the numbers.” And just recently, a prospective student was put in touch with me, as she wanted to know more about how Rutgers could help her attain her career goal, which is to work directly in CSR for a major corporation.

In some ways, my generation is rather spoiled…I’m sure there are some parents here who would agree! But our desire to have nearly everything we want, the way we want it, can be a good thing – so long as what we want extends to causes beyond ourselves. As consumers, my peers have been pressing corporations to produce the goods and services that they want, but in a way that is beneficial to multiple stakeholders – consumers, producers, investors, employees, and communities. And, as employees, we want to work for companies that make us feel proud about more than our paychecks.
My generation is indebted to the activists and idealists who forged a path for us over the last few decades. The corporate whistleblowers and environmental activists, the protesters and ethical business advocates, reshaped the CSR landscape through determination, creativity, and hard work. Today, thanks to these activists (and I’m sure there are many in this room), my generation has the opportunity to work with the business community, as opposed to against it, on CSR issues. So, thank you for handling the hard work…I guess we are a bit spoiled!

One recurring thought comes to mind when I think about how much the landscape has changed for businesses and CSR – consumer demand. A shopper who purchases sustainably-sourced materials, a consumer who withholds support from an unethical business, or a prospective student who searches for a more well-rounded business education – these are the drivers of CSR today. And in a competitive marketplace, they are ultimately the most powerful ones. Thankfully, we have the support of organizations like Net Impact, institutions like the IEL, businesses such as those in attendance here today, and activists such as yourselves. It’s a good place to be! Thank you.