

University Social Responsibility Alliance:  
**Driving Universities' Collaboration toward  
the New Era of Sustainable Social Responsibility**

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# Driving Universities' Collaboration toward the New Era of Sustainable Social Responsibility

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## Abstract

This paper addresses a specific aspect of University Social Responsibility, or USR, which is a concept currently being put forth in collaboration with universities throughout the world. USR's first step is to provide a framework for all universities to unite in a single network with the purpose of understanding the harsh realities of our world today. Every university graduate should not only be well versed in her major, but much more, each and every students' attitude toward her true life-goal must first be centered on the fundamental desire and ultimate goal of acting only with complete social responsibility. This empathetic, altruistic, benevolent, unselfish and caring mind-set is essential to the survival of all living things, including our planet itself.

The absolute requirement of constant, complete and universal altruism, as set forth by USR, is a clearly revolutionary change now required of all human beings. We must be ready to give back to our planet without any desire to receive anything in return. We must put everything in front of our own selfish desires and measure our success by how much we contribute to the sustainability of all well-being living things. The USR revolution will require fundamental changes in our education, economic and social structures as well as our belief systems.

University Social Responsibility Alliance incorporates multiple models for utilizing the Alliance and linkage to universities that have expressed interest in finding solutions for sustainable development. USR's foremost belief that we must all work together to save the world.

## Introduction

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> University Social Responsibility International Conference 2009, held earlier this year, University Social Responsibility Alliance has achieved great success in establishing collaboration among universities throughout the world. USR allows for the interchange of ideas, methods, problems and solutions through the network. All our current members are energized and excited with this new ability to connect with others across the globe with which they share the same belief that our society requires fundamental change through the use of social responsibility.

Given the extremely tense and distressing social, economic and political conditions of the world today, as well as the ever-mounting needs of society everywhere in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, University Social Responsibility has become a central topic of positive discussion among organizations relating to higher education. It is already a permanent addition to the curriculum and management structure of many universities. The ever-increasing belief that the operation of universities in relation to their permanent affect on students must be in keeping with how we must operate our societies as a whole. Universities must now assist in the installation of the basic belief in altruism to their entire student bodies thereby providing the fundamental demand required for a benevolent and self-sustaining society.

Ricardo Díez-Hochleitner, (*President of the Club of Rome, UNESCO Sources, No. 78, April 1996*), said:

*“Education is still living in the past because its present social context is totally different from the situation for which it was designed. Education must not only be adapted to the needs of our age, it must also make a real effort to look ahead some twenty-five years.”*

Today scientists and politicians are very belatedly realizing that our past methods of sustaining ourselves can no longer be carried on into the indefinite future. We must now be ready to learn from these mistakes and work toward finding new solutions for the current and ever-growing global economic, environmental, social and political crisis. Society now requires that we all become united in the need to set new belief systems and to look with great earnestness into what is good for the future of our world. All nations are now very much in this together. And it is USR’s belief that the fundamental and essential method for moving towards these necessary solutions must be carried out through the efforts of higher education. The new university leadership model has been set forth by University Social Responsibility Alliance. All of us must immediately commence working together and coordinating our efforts in order to change our world to become a much better place.

## **Background**

Throughout all of mankind’s history, advancement was essentially selfish, with each individual’s main purpose in life to attempt to acquire as much personal wealth, position and power as possible for her own, private enjoyment and benefit. Now this perhaps innate human selfishness, an obviously negative trait, must be challenged and hopefully rooted out or at least drastically modified if global citizens truly wish to survive on Planet Earth. Perhaps our most massive problem to resolve is the exponential growth of the human herd, already counted in the billions, who exist without sufficient food, water, shelter, or, obviously, any education whatsoever. Now

is the time for all universities to reach out with open hands to the world and its masses with all the learning they possess and simply give.

In its ancient beginnings, education was simply the passing down of knowledge from the old to the young. Even today, this “experiential” learning is an essential part of education. Today, formal, higher education is the most important and essential foundation of the entirety of modern society. Education, previously the privilege of the elite, now reaches out universally to all peoples, no matter what age, race, social position, financial status, or sex. In the new 21<sup>st</sup> Century, education is now seen as a requirement and opportunity open to everyone. Now educational institutions must add a fundamental course of study inculcated into every subject: the absolute belief in ethical and altruistic behavior as necessary for our very survival. (Exhibit 1)

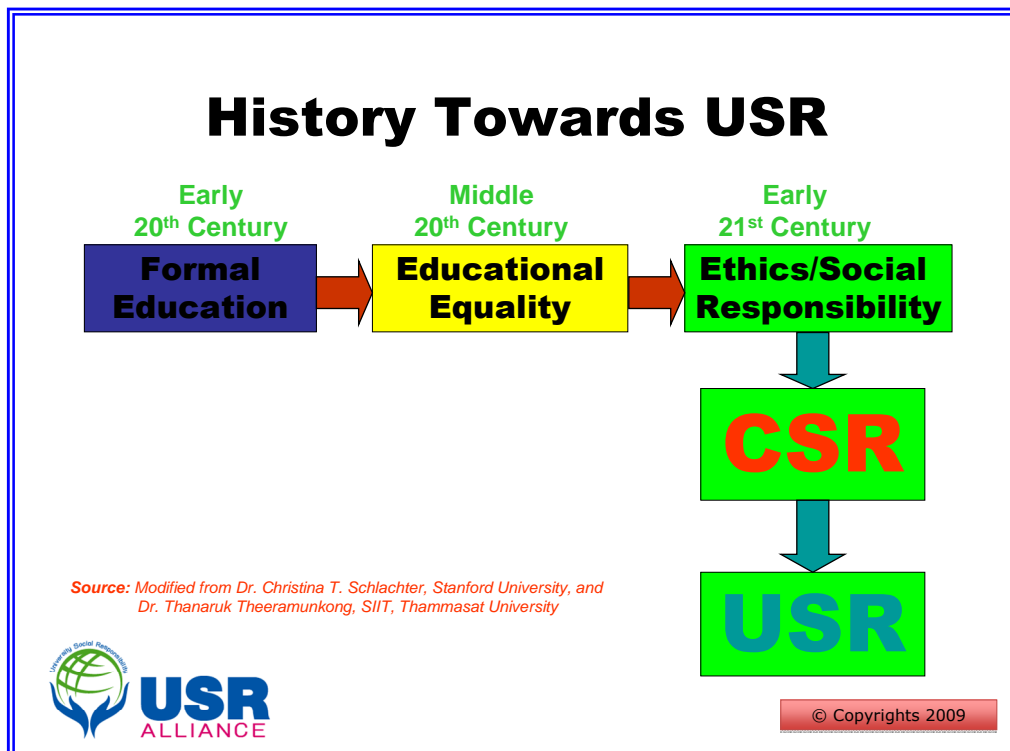


Exhibit 1: History toward USR

Heretofore, educators assumed that the university and the business sector had very different and totally separate roles to play in society. The university thought proudly of itself as an isolated bastion of intellectual superiority, totally unattached to the sordidness of the capitalist. This can no longer be carried on. Now USR believes that the functional structures of the university will make them good leaders able to set a good example for all human activities that go on beyond the university campus. Thus it is essential that universities inculcate their students with socially responsible mentalities, even to the perhaps humorous degree of ensuring that all graduates have “Social Responsibility” pounded into their very DNA.

## What is University Social Responsibility?

University Social Responsibility is a new concept launched in 2008 and now spreading throughout institutions of higher learning around the world. In the beginning of 2009, University Social Responsibility Alliance held the 1<sup>st</sup> University Social Responsibility International Conference to set forth and explain this new concept of USR to all interested universities. The organizing committee and basic framework was established and endorsed by the multi-national attendees at that conference.

The Internet web site Wikipedia gives the definition of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. The CSR policy would function as a built-in, self-regulating mechanism whereby business would monitor and ensure its adherence to law, ethical standards, and international norms. Business would embrace responsibility for the impact of their activities on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and all other members of the public sphere. A full account can be seen at the following web site: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate\\_social\\_responsibility](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_social_responsibility)

Since USR is still a very new concept directed exclusively toward institutions of higher education, not enough work has yet to be done relating to specific USR concepts. At the USRIC 2009 conference, USR modified the concepts of Corporate Social Responsibility where several models and frameworks were already available and adaptable. Aurilla Aurelie Bechina Arnzten from Norway presented in USRIC2009 that:

*“An ethical approach to develop a sense of civic citizenship and socially responsible students, academic staffs and faculty members in other to promote social, ecological, environmental, technical and economical engagement for a long lasting and sustainable local and global community”.*

Ms. Arnzten also mentioned in her presentation that Reiser (2008) defines the USR concept as follow:

*“A policy of ethical quality of the performance of the university community (students, faculty, administrative and employees) via the responsible management of the educational, cognitive, labor and environmental impacts produced by the University, in an interactive dialogue with society to promote a Sustainable Human Development”*

With society's current and prevalent ills, now is an opportune time for university restructuring to make ethical behavior training a mandatory part of all course instruction. Thus USR should be made an essential and overall element of university policy.

Molly N. N. Lee, APEID-UNESCO, Bangkok, Thailand, stated at USRIC2009 that if you want to make people more concern on social responsibility, we need to restructure higher education, changes must first be made in university governance and management. She believes that the university must restructure itself in part by integrating these two structures in order for each of them to be more efficient and effective.

One of the basic activities of University Social Responsibility Alliance is to establish a collaboration network of universities across the world that focuses on the teaching of social responsibility in all curriculums; to allow for the free exchange of USR ideas, methods, problems, and solutions; and to shift the fundamental teaching purpose to inculcating altruism as a deep-seated purpose to govern their students' future lives. Inasmuch as it is by no means an easy task to change the behavior of human beings, even to a slight degree, the mission before educators is daunting in the extreme. Much very difficult work lies ahead, particularly the formulation of effective teaching structures that will be meaningful and effective long-term. Realizing that a student's first teacher is his family, so that too is an experiential, pre-programmed attitude that we must work to change wherever possible and necessary. In other words, not only our students need this change in their mind-set, but somehow we must find a way to reach their parents. The importance of this cannot be over-stated. It must be made a core element of all citizens' responsibility. Indeed, social responsibility is a moral obligation appertaining to all students, teachers, university administration, reaching out to communities and wider society (Macfarlane, 2007). It is time for global society to work toward finding the solutions for all the problems that citizens face today through the spirit of giving.

Perhaps there will be even the inevitable close linkage between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and University Social Responsibility (USR). Such collaboration between USR and CSR would well serve the essential need to change the thinking of all peoples to encourage them to reform their lives by first using the measuring stick of unselfishness and altruism. How will what I do have only a beneficial affect on society and the Earth? Furthermore, now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we have wireless Internet instant global connectivity making the difficulties of communication of the past no longer applicable. By its means responsible citizens of every nation are already familiar with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and hopefully, for us all, they will govern all their actions according to its mandates.

University Social Responsibility could well be another tool to assist Corporate Social Responsibility to accelerate its own goals. Prior to CSR, USR will have already engrained every university student with the desire and goal to be completely socially responsible. Unfortunately we are in this grave global mess only because of man's trait of ignoring the consequences of his actions until the last and perhaps final moment. Hopefully, yet again, he can save himself from himself! Whatever is done, it will take CSR many years and

decades to accomplish its goals. With a collaboration of efforts between USR and CSR, USR can facilitate this rescue effort by educating a new generation of students who will understand the necessity of using sustainable social responsibility to root out all the mistakes made by earlier generations of mankind. USR and CSR could even extend their efforts to include the rehabilitation of all global citizens with social responsibility awareness. These two organizations can act as platforms by which they can work to motivate all individuals and organizations around the globe. They can instill self-regulation, a universal code of excellent conduct, moral imperatives and good governance that will resolve the entire host of difficulties in which we have now placed ourselves. It cannot be emphasized enough that the work of these two organizations represent a razor-sharp line of demarcation between man's behavior up through pre-history unto today, and the revolutionary and radical change of our behavior going forward into our yet to be foreseen future as the only intelligent beings in the Universe we inhabit. We must do this. It is absolutely essential for our very survival. We must honor ourselves by accepting this torch of revolutionary giving.

### **University Social Responsibility (USR) in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

With the stresses found in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the primary stakeholders of the university, its administration, professors and student body, have their own personal and selfish interests as paramount reasons for being part of the university. They all want to use the university as a tool to help them survive within the ever-increasing hardships presented by our current economic system. Benson, Harkavy, & Hartley, 2005; and Kezar, 2005, states that:

*“As neoliberalism and economic rationalism overwhelm our society, universities also naturally accommodate themselves to what society demands for their own survival. Therefore, universities get more increasingly commercialized and privatized, which legitimates professors and students to be a self-interest pursuer in economic term.”*

Today, the typical university, in order to survive financially due to lack of adequate funding, ever-increasing costs and fellow institution competition, now must give its main concern to existing within this new set of pressures. To do so the university represents itself within a commercial, business-oriented image thereby gradually becoming obsessed with profit-making as its paramount priority instead of the education of young minds. By this commercial subjugation of their *raison d'être*, the university perversely benefits in terms of corporate prestige, private largesse, government grants and waived taxation. Thus the university is pro-actively encouraged to continue to the point where it can lose its entire perspective of what the original reason was for the university's existence in the first place. A good but horrible example is the paramount importance given to the game of American football as a means of financing their universities. Given these seemingly iron-clad restraints to its true purpose, now more than ever,

good work must be done to save the institution of higher learning, even from itself. The university needs to be re-grounded on its original purpose, vision, and values as the primary foundation of providing the most excellent learning experience possible to all of its students. If mankind is to propel itself forward and to overcome its present predicaments, universities are the essential tool. Only educated minds will allow man to progress, to improve, to succeed, even against all odds to the contrary. Here again, I must clearly and emphatically state that it must be the duty of USR to provide the leadership throughout all peoples and societies to bring about the revolution of selflessness and altruism. Universities must be the point of stimulus where this revolution will find its full creative force, its humanitarian armies made up of unselfish soldiers.

On the practical, foot soldier, ground-level, this new era of social responsibility must also be forcefully brought to bear. It is not only on the university community itself that needs transformation, but the surrounding community, district, and province as well, as in Thailand's governmental structure. These responsible steps are simple ones and clearly obvious, and it is the essential job of USR to propagate these specific, first-step actions that will promote sustainability. USR begins by educating the primary stakeholders in these various jurisdictions. Once these are reformed, it is presumed that the national, international and global governing bodies will follow suit to maintain their positions of leadership. (Exhibit 2)



**Exhibit 2:** Responsible steps on USR



Noeleen Hayzer, under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, stated in her opening ceremony speech at the Regional Conference on Corporate Responsibility on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009, Bangkok, Thailand:

*“I have many awards for social responsibility to give away. But sadly, I have found that every single organization absolutely and completely failed to put social responsibility into effective use. They certainly used it as PR to promote their organizations. So, I hold these awards back until I find the right one.”*

Distressingly, Ms. Hayzer’s statement is clear evidence that, even now, most educated people themselves still do not understand the term “Social Responsibility” or, much worse, are simply not giving it sufficient credence. Furthermore, this example is dead-certain proof of the epic job ahead of both CSR and USR. Leaders in business and education must themselves be re-wired to think of Earth first. How this and all the concomitant problems that follow upon this wrong-thinking is USR’s chief and first priority. How we make individuals, leaders, corporations and universities do the “right thing” from deep down and from the heart. How we make them genuinely care for our planet and our society. How can USR inspire them? What we do today and in all the tomorrows ahead of us will decide whether global citizens passes into extinction like the dinosaurs or finally reaches the stars and all eternity.

### **University Social Responsibility Network**

Initially, at its inception in 2008, University Social Responsibility Alliance connected member universities in Southeast Asia, North America and Europe, and then quickly moved on to include additional members in South America, Africa, Australia and Asia. (Exhibit 3) USR Alliance solicits memberships directly from individual universities as well as through existing regional USR networks and international organizations that support social responsibility in higher education. A more detailed growth strategy will be developed as part of our non-profit business plan. This incredibly ambitious goal is to ensure that all universities throughout the world speedily take their rightful place as one of the preeminent foundation pillars for forging social responsibility as the new revolutionary truth for humanity’s true realm. USR will cooperate and coordinate its teachings together with all governments, NGOs, religions, businesses and every other organization of any sort. Whatever ultimately benefits mankind, USR must be a member of that team, as our goal requires that we reach every single individual. Our goal is to save the Earth and an intelligent and educated mankind.

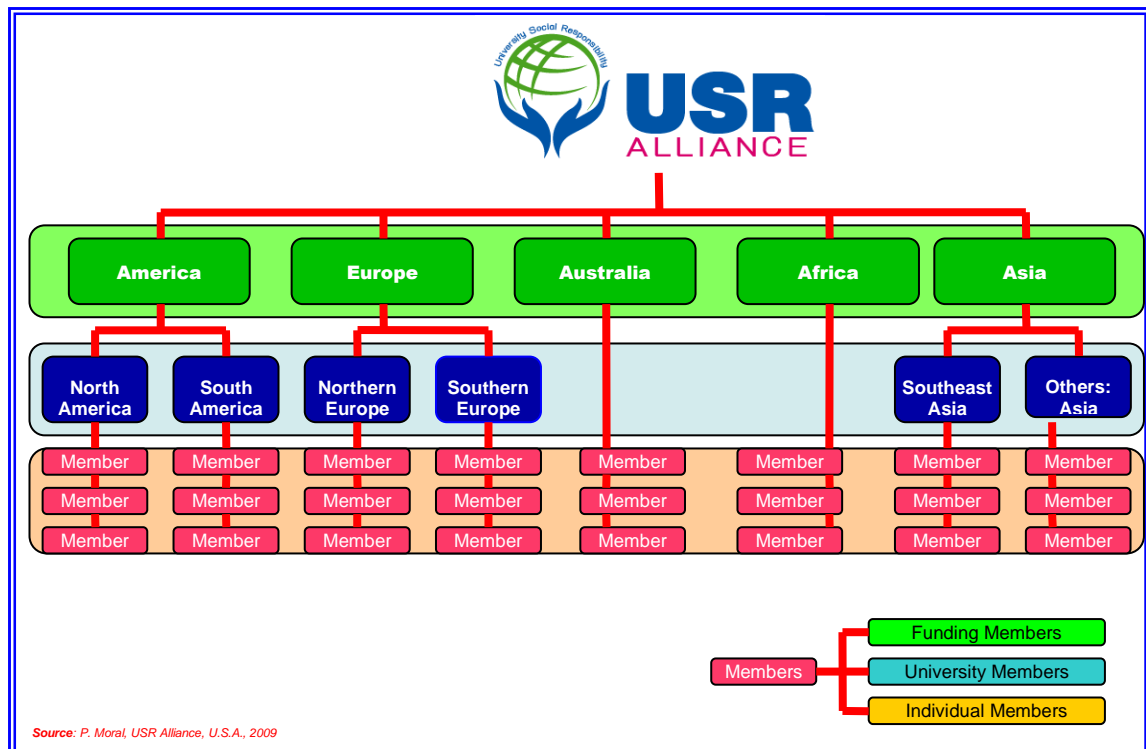


Exhibit 3: USR Alliance network

University Social Responsibility Alliance provides its members with the tools necessary to promote social responsibility at universities worldwide, including the following:

- The Declaration of USR.
- Implementation programs and materials to assist universities in the acquisition and institution of social responsibility teaching.
- Best Practice Reports and innovations for university campuses.
- USR Course Referendums.
- Listings of USR Specialists and their contact information.
- Exchange of USR knowledge base.
- Regional and international meetings, conferences and symposia on USR.
- Regional and international USR ranking.
- Regional and international USR awards.

When universities have utilized all of the above information, they will tab into the USR circle, and they will be able to restructure their university curriculum and governance to become yet another responsible agency for university social responsibility across the planet on into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and those beyond.

## USR Paradigm Shift and Framework

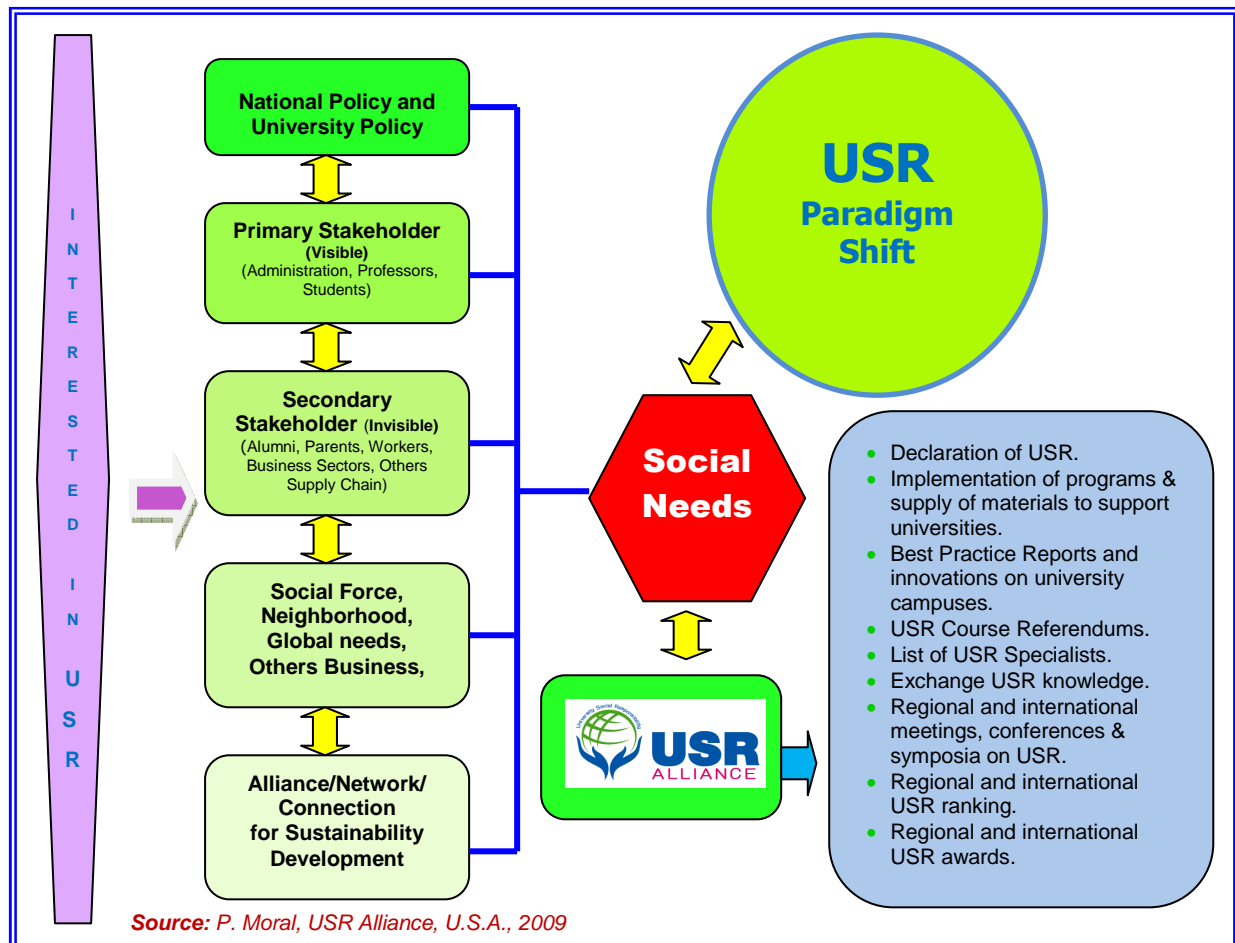


Exhibit 4: USR Paradigm Shift

As shown above in exhibit 4, USR Paradigm Shift, one of our concerns is to focus on the specific needs of each distinct society. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all societies will be required to be based on ethical behavior and altruistic attitudes. And it follows that this mindset must be incorporated and maintained in all bodies of good governance. To make it straightforward, the university must vigorously put forth USR's tenets, policies and practices from a position of globally recognized leadership. If USR is found to be widely effective and accepted within universities and their surrounding communities, then it is to be earnestly hoped that the government sector will want to assist its citizenry by proclaiming university social responsibility as a national policy and priority.

Given the support from all of USR's ever-increasing connections, networks and alliances, global citizens will someday be the recipients of enormous benefits as a result of this revolutionary and fundamental shift in all human behavior. Mankind will learn to simply give rather than receive, to return all things to the Earth. These ideals must become our realities if man is to survive and prosper.

When I first mentioned a university's stakeholders earlier, I stated that these included the administration, the professors and the student body. However, in many ways equal or even superior in importance as stakeholders are those individuals who are "invisible". Inasmuch as all universities must utilize every possible resource with which to acquire additional funding sources, maintain a robust esprit de corps, and attract the very best faculty and students, these invisible stakeholders are essential. Whereas the first group mentioned are "visible" or primary stakeholders, it is the alumni, the parents of current students, all the firms doing business with the university, as well as the non-teaching employees who also are, if "invisible" or "secondary stakeholders", absolutely essential for their support. Thus USR must certainly reach out to re-educate and acquire the support of these invisible stakeholders as well, if it is to be successful.

After the shift to the new USR paradigm, the teaching of altruism in the university must stand stalwart against the enormous weight of man's previous propensity for selfish behavior as the primary world-ethic. The framework (Exhibit 5) illustrates that the personal quality of graduating students will be much changed for the better; they will have social awareness governing their lives, and as an example of the benefits of USR, the solution for global warming will be accelerated, governments and businesses will act with complete transparency, and the new "sufficiency" economy will be accepted by all as the best ingredient for a happy life.

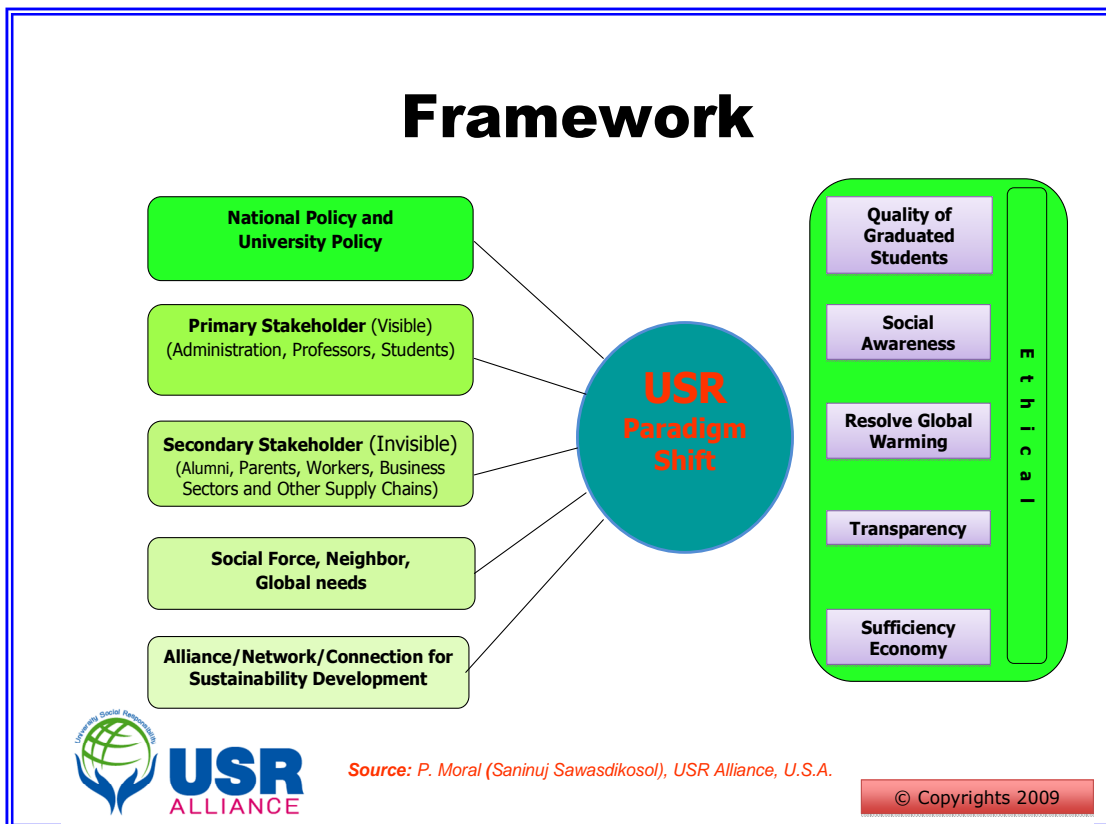


Exhibit 5: USR Framework

## University Social Responsibility Ranking

University and student ranking is one of the most important accounting tools for analyzing the effectiveness of USR. By maintaining a university and student ranking history, USR can measure the quality of a student's USR training, her job placement level, her measure of personal self-regulation, her maintenance of the USR code of conduct, and finally an evaluation of the means by which she achieved her place in life even decades later.

A prospective student makes her decision to attend a particular university based on several factors. In the very near future USR hopes that one of the most important factors a student considers will be the teaching of altruism and overall social responsibility.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, school ranking has become the most important gear to drive the university forward, much more so than in the past. Also each country has different national policies on education as suits their particular situation. But all governments are trying very hard to meet the new global standards made pervasive by the steady advance of globalization and multi-national corporations. From an economic point of view, a nation can increase its student population and improve the quality of their education in order to crassly and simply make a commercial profit. However, the educators' point of view must first require that universities set their basic and fundamental standard as instruction in educational learning to ensure that global citizen's proceed in a way that benefits all. Certainly not just to make riches. University Social Responsibility ranking and awards are essential tools to motivate the university to inculcate the teachings of social responsibility as the essential means of man's survival and advancement. As globalization continues around the Earth and the instantaneous Internet reaches out to every human being, USR will be there in the forefront to lead humanity in the revolution of giving.

To further illustrate the impetus for university improvement, Junya Pookayaporn, Assistant to the President and Director of USR at Sripatum University, Bangkok, Thailand, 2009, mentioned in a recent speech that:

*"Today's universities are under ever-increasing ranking competition from like institutions. What had been local and regional pressure to achieve a high standing has now become worldwide, thus astronomically increasing the need for excellence".*

Given this situation, it is necessary to set up a mutually agreed upon system to insure proper world-wide university ranking. Many aggressive educational institutions are determined to be the very best or at least to move into the top levels globally. All universities are greatly affected by this global ranking appraisal as it has a direct effect on their funding levels. To become world-class, universities must now fulfill all of their varied responsibilities with the utmost of distinction. To assist in the achievement of excellence, universities must now include a university-wide program incorporating social

responsibility into their entire curriculum. The vast majority of intelligent and educated peoples around the globe today know all too well that the Earth is in enormous trouble for an endless host of reasons; especially the end-point of destroying the very planet on which all life depends. Any university that has incorporated superior courses of instruction pertaining to USR will quite naturally be selected as the most advantageous school of higher education to attend. No young person today has any doubt about the importance of revolutionary change. To save ourselves, we must teach these young and eager prophets to go out into the world and make change, make revolution.

### **Training and Knowledge Exchange**

Ramaley (2000, p. 174) identifies the common characteristics of universities engaged in fulfilling social responsibility toward communities where that is the priority of the university's mission and strategies. Each university listens to their society's needs and adjusts the curriculum so that those needs will be met by their graduates.

USR Alliance initiated training projects for specific universities to help them shift their policies and to include USR in their curriculum. Our training includes the following six main modules:

1. Brainstorming and discussion of all facets of USR.
2. Quality of university graduates.
3. Social awareness and altruistic behavior.
4. Resolution of global warming and ecological well-being.
5. Transparency and truth.
6. Sufficiency economy.

From a USR Internet survey made earlier this year, among participants who showed interest in university social responsibility, 81% agreed with the basic USR university ranking methodology. From these 81%, 76% agreed on all of the above six modules.

Brainstorming and discussion on USR is the most popular module. We will start with this module in each university specifically to discuss what its particular society urgently needs first. At the conclusion of the first module, we will have a two-week evaluation period of all received information before going on to the next module. All six modules will link information together and drive USR in a unified direction. The result and the improvement of each university will be evaluated on a balance score card that will count the percentage of success rate. The second generation of key performance indicators, balance score cards, and complete questionnaires for USR are currently under development. USR will launch all of the above at the beginning of 2010 and the data processing will be completed no later than the end of 2010.

## **Conclusion**

The understanding and fulfillment of the precepts of University Social Responsibility will require a very long and difficult journey filled with many seemingly insurmountable challenges and intractable obstacles. But through it all, USR will represent a shining hope for universities by which they will be assisted and supported in the accomplishment of their new and radical social responsibilities. USR Alliance will engage, motivate, support and offer every possible tool by which institutions of higher learning can achieve this revolutionary altruistic shift in the make-up of man and his society.

USR will center all its efforts to instill social responsibility into all future university graduates of all nations. We look forward with a positive and confident state of mind that USR will contribute to the elimination of the current problems besetting our global society. With the collaboration of USR with CSR and hoped-for additional fellow organizations, we know that on some future bright, shiny day human society will be made up of only socially responsible citizens.

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