



Attention News/Business/Education Reporters and Assignment Editors:

Corporate Knights releases 2009 Knight School Survey; examines industrial design programs for the first time

(Toronto, Canada, June 24, 2009) Today, Corporate Knights Magazine unveils the sixth-annual Knight Schools ranking. The ranking analyzes how Canadian universities and colleges fare in integrating sustainability into the school experience.

This is the first time Corporate Knights has evaluated industrial design programs, supported financially by Industry Canada. In reviewing the schools, the researchers adopted a broad definition of sustainability that encompassed environmental and social concerns. Issues of eco-design, waste, product life cycle, health and safety, and accessibility were all considered.

The survey, modeled after the US-based Beyond Grey Pinstripes Survey, scored the programs in the areas of institutional support, student initiatives, and course work.

Industrial Design touches nearly all the objects in our lives – your car, your coffee mug, your PDA. Part engineer and part artist, industrial designers are behind all of the mass-produced items we buy, use, and discard. It is imperative that the people who will one day be designing our office furniture and mobile phones understand the importance of creating goods that won't have a negative impact on the earth.

One of the trends noticed in researching the schools was the emphasis on environmental issues. Schools that invited guest speakers, housed institutes, and taught sustainability-based courses tended to focus on issues such as recyclable materials, ecology, and green design.

Four out of the seven programs (57%) required all industrial design students to take a core course that is entirely dedicated to sustainability-based issues. These courses were overwhelmingly environmental. When schools did look at social sustainability, they often did so in the context of accessibility – how to make sure people of all ages and abilities can continue to be independent and mobile, important features considering our rapidly aging population.

Humber College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning, the survey's frontrunner, scored 43.75%. Some initiatives the school was involved with include internships at DIRT Environmental Solutions, a "Living Wall" research group, and courses in Environmental Practices and the Sociology of Consumption. Emily Carr University of Art and Design followed at 42.85%, and offered courses in Environmental Ethics and Eco-Collaboration, as well as a specialization in Sustainable Design.

The average school score was 30% - not a high number, but a good start to including social concerns and the environment into the foundation of design.

“Researching these programs has been an eye-opening experience,” says Monika Warzecha, primary researcher of the Knight Schools survey. “Most people don’t know what industrial designers do, let alone their role in creating so many of the products we buy. It’s important that designers make the environment a priority if we want to live in a greener world.”

The full results and methodology of the Ranking are available at www.corporateknights.ca/knightschools and are summarized in the Best 50/Education issue (Vol. 8.1) of Corporate Knights, distributed in the Globe and Mail yesterday.

Industrial Design (7 schools studied)

1. Humber College: 43.75%
2. Emily Carr University of Art and Design: 42.85%
3. Carleton University: 39.35%
4. Ontario College of Art and Design: 29.05%
5. Université de Montréal: 22.2%
6. Université du Québec à Montréal: 16.75%
7. University of Alberta: 16.2%

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To schedule interviews with Melissa Shin, the Managing Editor of Corporate Knights, or Monika Warzecha, Editorial Assistant, contact: Don Huff, 416-972-7404, huffd@ecostrategy.ca

About Corporate Knights: Founded in 2002, Corporate Knights Inc. is an independent Canadian-based media company focused on promoting and reinforcing sustainable development in Canada.