

THE PURPOSE- DRIVEN UNIVERSITY

A stylized illustration of a university campus. At the top, a large yellow circle contains the title 'THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN UNIVERSITY' in dark purple, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below the circle is a large, red, classical-style university building with a central portico supported by four columns. The building has multiple windows and arched entrances at the ground level. In front of the building is a wide, light blue path that leads towards the viewer. The path is flanked by green lawns and various types of trees, including rounded bushes and tall, pointed evergreens. Several small, dark purple silhouettes of people are scattered across the path and lawn, suggesting a busy campus environment. The background is a solid teal color.

Transforming lives and
creating impact through
academic social responsibility

DEBBIE HASKI-LEVENTHAL

The Purpose-Driven University

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The Purpose-Driven University: Transforming Lives and Creating Impact Through Higher Education

BY

DEBBIE HASKI-LEVENTHAL

Macquarie University, Australia



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*To Emily and Ella, my beautiful girls, who make the journey
towards purpose even more purposeful*

*To the thousands of students whom I have had the privilege
to teach and learn from*

*To all the change-makers in universities who strive
to ignite this movement*

And

*To the little boy whom I tutored all these years ago and who
made me understand what a meaningful life can look like*

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About the Author

Debbie Haski-Leventhal is a Professor of Management at Macquarie Business School, and an expert in corporate social responsibility (CSR), responsible management education and volunteerism. Together with the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education, she conducts studies on business students around the world and their attitudes towards responsible management. In 2011, Debbie co-wrote the United Nations State of the World Volunteerism Report. She has published over 100 papers, and her work was frequently covered by the media, including the *New York Times* and the *Financial Review*. She is the author of *Strategic CSR: Tools and Theories for Responsible Management* (SAGE, 2018) and the editor-in-chief of *Society and Business Review* (Emerald). She is a TED speaker and a public speaker on CSR and purpose.

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Introduction: The Time for Purpose Is Now*

What is the purpose of universities, and what is their role in our world? Many would say that it is to educate students and conduct research. This is true, but somehow, the narrow focus on these two goals led universities to be perceived as ivory towers and detached elitist institutions. Many universities still focus too narrowly on ranking, profits and graduate income, instead of on real societal impact. An increasing number of graduates are now saying that their education was a waste of time and money (Hall, 2019). I have recently discovered the top Google search results for ‘Universities are’ (Fig. I.1).

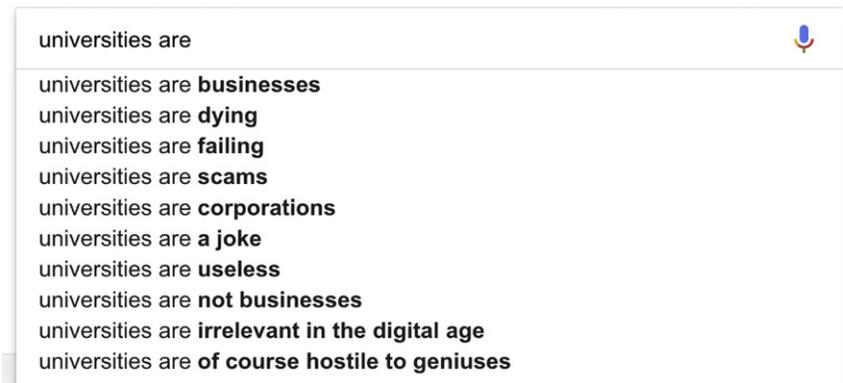


Fig. I.1. Top Google Search Results for ‘Universities are’, November 2018.

The results in Fig. I.1 are very revealing. To me, these results indicate a broken system, something that needs to change profoundly and urgently. No university wants to be failing, a scam and, of course, hostile to geniuses. How did we get to

*Part of this introduction was presented in my TEDx talk ‘The Purpose-Driven University’: www.ted.com/talks/debbie_haski_leventhal_the_purpose_driven_university.

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this situation? The recent admissions scandal in the USA; alleged academic leadership corruption in several universities in the last few years elsewhere; caring more about impact factors than real social impact and about how much our graduates make instead of the impact that they can make, are all factors that have led to these negative results. What we need are universities that are impactful and purposeful and that reconnect with the community. What we need are purpose-driven universities.

My personal journey towards the idea of the purpose-driven university started when I was 20. I left my home in Tel Aviv to study philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I came from a family in which my mother only had 10 years of schooling, and her mother was never allowed to go to school and was illiterate. I was the first person in my entire family, including my many cousins, to go to university and my parents could not understand why it was so important for me to obtain higher education, particularly studying something as ‘impractical’ as philosophy. Not only did I not have their emotional support, but I had no financial support either. For the three years of my first degree, I often went through the day hungry, as I had no money to support myself. To manage financially, I took on some odd student jobs. In an entrepreneurial spirit, I spread ads all around the campus and started typing students’ assignments, as back in those days not every student had a laptop. What I did next changed my life.

I joined a student tutoring project, *PERACH* (an acronym for a tutoring project in Hebrew, meaning ‘flower’). Similar to Big-Brother-Big-Sister, *PERACH* is an Israeli not-for-profit organisation which involves tens of thousands of university students each year in mentoring and assisting children, usually from disadvantaged families. For this work, the students receive enough to cover nearly half their university tuition fees. I desperately needed the financial assistance, so I committed to working with an 8-year-old boy for a year, spending four hours a week teaching him and helping him through his struggles. He was sweet and talented but a little ‘nerdy’ and he was bullied. His teacher told me she was anxious about his future, something that stayed with me for years. I often wondered what happened to him.

I felt that I made a difference in this boy’s life and I was emotionally engaged with this work, so I ended up volunteering for another year, to later become a volunteer coordinator, managing 40 volunteers, and in the following year 60 students. At the age of 24, I became the vice-manageress of the entire project in Jerusalem, in charge of over 50 coordinators, 1000 students and the children with whom they worked. Although I was determined to be a writer since the age of 8, after finding my purpose and passion I decided to change my career path, studied a Master of Management of Not-for-profit Organisations and later wrote a PhD on volunteering. My first degree was important, and while much of it remains with me until this very day, it was the extra-curricular volunteering that changed my life. It helped me to develop a meaningful career, leading, nowadays, to being a professor of corporate social responsibility and volunteering.

After finishing my PhD on the organisational socialisation of volunteers, I published many papers on the pro-social behaviour of individuals and co-wrote the United Nations State of the World Volunteerism Report in 2011. During these

years, I also started taking a great interest in the pro-social behaviour of companies. I learned that many large multinational corporations have been irresponsible, focusing mainly on short-term profits and harming humans, animals and our planet. However, at the same time, there were many companies that were using the power of business as a force for good, companies such as Patagonia, an apparel company that cares so much about the environment that it tells people not to buy its products; and Ben & Jerry's, a leading ice-cream company with a robust set of values which uses its brand to fight for what is right – 'we are a company with a social mission, we just happen to make ice-cream'. I have also seen CEOs like Paul Polman of Unilever completely changing the direction of a large multinational corporation towards sustainability and positive impact.

In my book, *Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility: Tools and Theories for Responsible Management* (2018), I used these inspirational examples and discussed this shift. I discovered that when companies genuinely focus on the positive impact they can create in the world, they attract talent, engage their employees, create consumer loyalty and enhance their reputation in the community. The global issues that we currently face cannot be addressed by governments alone, and business has an incredible power to be a force for good. Why cannot universities do the same?

If I could work anywhere, I would work for a company that is strongly led by purpose. However, I am an academic – I worked hard to become a professor, and I love what I do. Subsequently, three years ago, I started asking myself 'what if...?'. What if universities can be as purpose-driven as Patagonia and Ben & Jerry's? What if universities used their power, resources, people, incredible intellect and even their physical campuses to create a positive impact in the world? I wanted to discover the unique impact purpose of my own university and that of other universities, in order to play with the idea that universities are, or can become, a force for good. I worked with others to discuss these ideas and further develop them.

On diving into this, I discovered an emerging movement. While many universities around the globe are still obsessed with ranking and excellence and being 'the best in the world', a growing number of universities care about being 'the best for the world'. Stanford University is using its incredible research capabilities for social innovation and impact and to fight poverty. The University of Auckland is devoting itself to the Sustainable Development Goals, to help the world achieve these global goals by 2030. The University of Technology Sydney has an outstanding social impact framework, centred around the notion of it being an agent for social change. These and others are not only working to change the world, they are also changing the essence of higher education.

These universities lead with a strong sense of purpose: the reason for which something exists, and the reason it is done, made or used. Purpose is our reason for being, which rarely changes over time, although it may inspire and enable change. This led me to think about the reason for which universities were created and about the similarity between the words 'university' and 'universe' (defined as 'combined into one, whole'). Universities were established to create *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* – a whole community of scholars combined into one to enhance knowledge and impact the world. Furthermore, 'to educate' means to

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open minds and lead forth (Helfand, 2011). We have somewhat shifted away from these original purposes.

In the context of the purpose-driven university, I refer to ‘impact purpose’: the purpose of helping others, creating a positive impact and making a difference in someone else’s life, like that little boy I tutored all these years ago. Impact purpose provides fulfilment, a sense of meaningfulness and even happiness.

As such, and as will be explained in this book, *a purpose-driven university utilises its resources, knowledge, talent and people to continuously and intentionally contribute to the communities and the environment in which it operates: through research, education, programmes and service.*

Leading with purpose is important because many universities are public organisations and/or they are using the money of students, governments or even wealthy donors, and, as such, they have a responsibility to play a role beyond providing students with degrees and conducting research. It is about *how* we educate students and how we provide them with graduate capabilities that enable them to contribute to the world. It is about measuring research impact beyond citation numbers and top-tier journals: How does this research lead to an improvement in life quality around the world? It is about caring about the impact that teaching is creating, beyond teaching evaluations.

It is not about marketing and public relations (PR) although communication and storytelling are an essential element of it. To become a purpose-driven university, a holistic approach is required, one that is embedded in every aspect of the university: from its mission statement, through its teaching and research, to managing people, profits and the planet. It is about discovering and rediscovering the purpose of each university, living by it and sharing an incredible story of change and impact. Of course, it may have a positive impact on marketing, students and staff attraction and profits, but these are not the reasons to embark on this journey.

This book is, therefore, based on the decision to share everything that I have learned through this work, together with my knowledge on corporate social responsibility, so that other universities can implement it. The goal of this book is to capture the shift towards purpose in higher education and to offer a new approach. The book offers the why, how and what of a purpose-driven university, utilising cases, research, concepts and a framework which can be implemented in any university interested in being different by genuinely making a difference. This book tells the stories of purpose-driven universities and other organisations and serves as a call for action by academic leadership.

I concluded all my interviews with purpose-driven university leaders around the world with one question: ‘what other universities are doing remarkable work on purpose?’ To my surprise, most interviewees could not name any other universities who are striving to create a social impact, sustainable development or stakeholder engagement. Most of the universities featured in the book are making outstanding efforts, but they do it in silos. To create a movement, it is vital to have a shared concept with other actors. Therefore, the book aims to connect all current and future purpose-driven universities, provide them with a common name and definition, and demonstrate what is happening outside the campus of each university.

The time for the purpose-driven university movement is now. Businesses have been focusing on increasing engagement around purpose for the last 20 years, but many universities still stand by educating students and conducting research as their sole purpose. However, teaching and research are their ‘what’, not their ‘why’. If we continue down this path, we expose ourselves to more criticism and scrutiny, and we may lose even more legitimacy. We can change public perception of higher education by asking ourselves: Why do we teach? Why do we conduct research? And how can both become more impactful and meaningful?

About this Book

The book has nine chapters. It begins by examining what purpose is, the different layers of purpose and the differences between purpose, mission, vision and values to define the concept of a purpose-driven university. The second chapter details the multi-level benefits of a purpose-driven organisation for people, the organisation and society, to present a rationale, or a ‘business case’, for changing an organisation into a purpose-driven one. The following chapter, Chapter 3, applies knowledge from corporate social responsibility, ethics, conscious capitalism and sustainability to offer a holistic approach to the purpose-driven university. Chapter 4 discusses the prominence of responsible, ethical and conscious leadership in the context of higher education. This is followed by Chapter 5 which focuses on the purpose-related stakeholders of any university, from students and staff to government and donors. It discusses the impact of stakeholder integration as a new approach to working with and involving all the university’s stakeholders in this shift towards an impact purpose. Chapter 6 examines the ways in which universities can create, measure and communicate their social impact, and how storytelling is becoming such a core component of purpose-driven marketing. For those universities that desire to implement all these ideas, Chapter 7 sheds light on organisational changes and presents inspirational frameworks, such as The Appreciative Inquiry, to lead the charge towards purpose. Chapter 8 is central to the whole book, as it presents the purpose-driven university framework – a step-by-step guide to implementing everything discussed in the book and creating a purpose-driven university. Finally, Chapter 9 considers the way forward – the future of higher education, the future of purpose and the future of the purpose-driven university – to end the book with some concluding thoughts.

Each chapter begins with an inspirational case study of a university that exemplifies the aspects of that chapter. None of these universities is perfect or flawless, but they do lead the way in some aspect of a purpose-driven organisation. As per my book on corporate social responsibility, it was an intentional decision to focus on the positive examples which can inspire change and action, and not on the scandals or unethical behaviour. We can learn more from positive illustrations that pave the way, than from negative examples which do not leave us with solutions.

Each chapter also includes many other cases and examples, related ideas and concepts, research and frameworks. The book is based on numerous interviews

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with university leaders, academic staff, students and others, as well as on a document analysis of public reports and universities' websites. It also presents examples of businesses and social enterprises where these are relevant and applicable to higher education. To avoid over referencing, most of these examples have one or two links to their websites, as most of this information is publicly available.

The book was mainly written for university leaders: presidents and vice presidents; chancellors, vice chancellors and deputy vice chancellors; and deans and deputy deans. However, by university leaders, we also refer to informal leaders – from academic staff who care deeply about the purpose of the university to professional staff who can be the heroes of implementation. It also includes the millions of students who are purpose-driven and would like to revolutionise higher education, so it becomes more purposeful and meaningful – to them and others. Let the revolution of purpose in higher education begin.

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Chapter 1

On Purpose, Impact, Vision and Mission

Changing Lives and Changing the World at Stanford University

Founded in 1885 by California senator Leland Stanford and his wife, Jane, Stanford is an American private research university, known for its academic excellence, its ability to raise large funds and its connection to Silicon Valley. Ranked as one of the world's top universities, Stanford University comprises seven schools and 18 interdisciplinary institutes, with more than 16,000 students, 2100 faculty and 1800 postdoctoral scholars. It is one of the most sought-after universities in the USA, leading to very low acceptance rates in student admissions. As of October 2018, 83 Nobel laureates, 27 Turing Award laureates and eight Fields Medallists have been affiliated with Stanford as students, alumni, faculty or staff. Its annual research budget in 2016 was a staggering US\$1.6 billion (Stanford, 2019).

However, Stanford was not always this successful. After the death of its founder only a few years after it was founded, the University struggled financially. It also had difficulties following the extensive damage caused to it by the 1906 and the 1989 San Francisco earthquakes. Stanford University became the success story that it is today by leading academic, research and teaching excellence; by holding a close relationship with Silicon Valley; and by becoming a purpose-driven university. Stanford leads with this mission statement:

To promote the public welfare by exercising an influence on behalf of humanity and civilization, teaching the blessings of liberty regulated by law, and inculcating love and reverence for the great principles of government as derived from the inalienable rights of man to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

As such, Stanford aims to create a large-scale impact on humanity and global society. Its core values are: Ethics – to anchor education and research in ethics and human welfare; Boldness – to advance its mission boldly but with an eagerness to collaborate and learn from others; and Foundations – to stay true to its values, including integrity, diversity, respect, freedom of inquiry and expression, tenacity and optimism. Stanford's current president, Marc Tessier-Lavigne, introduced the IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity

and Access in a Learning community) Initiative to achieve a purpose, mission and values for the ‘betterment of humanity’.

Stanford University is known for its experiential and impactful learning. One of its outstanding examples is ‘The Alternative Breaks @ Stanford Program’, which exposes students to complex social and cultural issues through community visits, experiential learning, direct service, group discussion and reflection. The purpose of this programme is to transform students into advocates of social change on issues affecting local communities. In 2019, the programme offered courses such as ‘Saving the World? Exploring the Ethics of International Service and Aid’, ‘Design Thinking for Social Innovation’ and ‘Capital or Community: Housing Inequality in the Bay Area’. In addition, students can participate in ‘Impact Abroad’, an international volunteering programme in which students are involved in a ‘meaningful and enriching’ project in developing nations.

The University leads research centres and schools aimed at creating a social impact. For example, Stanford’s *Center for Social Innovation* educates future leaders about social and environmental change in order to strengthen the capacity of individuals and organisations to develop innovative solutions to complex problems. Stanford Graduate School of Business aims to ‘Change lives. Change organizations. Change the world’. Its *Corporations and Society Initiative* explores the interactions between private and public sector institutions and the rest of society. Moreover, the *Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality* is committed to providing research, policy analysis and training on issues of poverty and inequality.

With its strong purpose, mission statement, values, impactful curriculum, experiential learning, research centres and collaboration with all sectors of the economy, Stanford University shows that a university can leverage its resources, knowledge, talent and power to make a positive impact on society and the world.

Introduction: The Journey towards Purpose

Three people were crushing rocks side by side on a construction site. Another person walked by and asked each of them what their job is. The first person answered, ‘My job is to do what I am told for eight hours a day so I can get paid’. The second person replied, ‘My job is to crush rocks’. The third person said, ‘My job is to build a cathedral’. The cathedral is not only the third person’s job, but a motivator, a sense of being part of something greater than ourselves, and a purpose.

Purpose is the new black. Books and media on purpose, such as *Start with Why* (Sinek, 2011), *The Purpose Driven Life* (Warren, 2002) and *Conscious Capitalism* (Mackey & Sisodia, 2014), are gaining popularity. People, particularly millennials, are looking to live a meaningful life and have a meaningful job. Purpose-driven organisations can offer this to help create motivation, engagement and impact. After decades of being told that happiness will be brought by consumerism, people have begun to discover that consumption provides only a short-term pleasure – not happiness – and that it can also have devastating