Oakland University
School of Business Administration
Issues in Marketing Forum
“It’s Not Easy Being Green; Lessons from Emerging Consumer Trends”

Statement of Purpose
Is being green a fad that will go away? Is the backing from Bill Gates and Michael Dell of the (Red) movement, the beginning of the next meaningful trend? And, what about Bill Gates' "creative capitalism", a new approach to finding ways that generate profits and a sustainable way to reduce poverty he urged every company at the Davos World Economic Forum to follow during the early decades of the 21st century? There is no crystal ball that can tell us if green environmentalism, the (Red) concern for AIDS in Africa, or Creative Capitalism is a fad or will become a long-term trend. But it is clear that some societal movements in the past have had a profound impact on consumers and their behavior in the marketplace, while other initially tumultuous movements have quietly faded into the background. The uncertainty of the future of movements that initially create considerable public interest, as well as, substantial initial business backing pose a significant challenge for businesses. How can a business tell what movement is going to become a long-lived trend and which will fade away?

The objective of this year's Forum is to provide some insights into how businesses should respond to the uncertainty of societal movements. The Forum will achieve this objective by bringing together business people and academics who will share their experiences and research findings to help increase understanding of how businesses should evaluate and subsequently respond to major environmental, social, and geo-political movements that are re-shaping or have the potential of re-shaping the nature of consumer demand.

The Situation Business is Facing
The Forum will provide for increasing academic and professional understanding of societal movements as influencing forces in consumer behavior. It also will examine the role of strategic marketing as it bears on the business problem of evaluating consumer trends and developing responses to those trends. The goal is to help businesses evaluate societal movements for legitimacy and utilize their ability to motivate marketplace behavior with regard to these movements.

Forum Focus
The Forum is not about which movement is most important. It is not about how to predict what movement might come next. Nor is it about how to respond to any one of the current movements, green, red, or any other color.

The Forum is about how businesses should analyze societal movements and their impact on consumer behavior, how to respond to consumer expectations that are the
result of strong advocacy efforts and/or politicized interests, how to consider the motivating capabilities of advocacy groups, and, most important, how firms can insure that they act in ways that are in the best interests of consumers, while not contrary to the firm’s best interests.

Among the many topics that are to be covered at the Forum are:
- Recognizing meaningful trends as opposed to flavor-of-the month happenings.
- Learn how evaluating Internet activities can indicate what consumers do relative to what they say they want?
- How you can take the hysteria out of an issue and develop a rational view.
- Information versus advocacy: research that can help or hinder.
- Creating a marketing mix for periods of uncertainty.
- Case studies of company / government responses:
  - Trends that persist versus issue fads and fashion.
  - Getting suppliers to support your firm's response in a positive manner
  - Trends that “morph” into regulation vs. good product development
  - Lessons learned from responding to societal movements.
- What is the role of government in responding to societal movements?
- Should firms lead change or follow trends?
- Do firms have any social obligation to provide alternatives for consumers when the potential financial performance of such alternatives is uncertain or goes against the interest of the firm?
- And, learn what the experts believe the future holds for meaningful sustainable consumer movements.

**Forum Value for Attendees**
For attendees who are faculty, student, or policy-makers, the Forum will help to identify the problems firms face when consumer demand experiences dramatic shifts, while identifying opportunities for research and conceptual development.

For business attendees, the Forum will identify the relevant elements of the strategic marketing process that should be considered in turbulent times, how business should apply these elements in determining how to respond to uncertain societal movements, and provide insights into the marketing strategies followed by some businesses in response to the changing times they faced.