### Faculty Member Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dr. Yuping Zeng</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Department</td>
<td>Management and Marketing</td>
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### 1 Funded, 2 Unfunded URCA Assistants

<table>
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<tr>
<th>X</th>
<th>This position is <strong>ONLY</strong> open to students who have declared a major in this discipline.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This project deals with social justice issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>This project deals with sustainability (green) issues.</td>
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<td>This project deals with human health and wellness issues.</td>
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<td>This project deals with community outreach.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This mentor’s project is interdisciplinary in nature.</td>
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Are you willing to work with students from outside of your discipline? If yes, which other disciplines?

- No

How many hours per week will your student(s) be required to work in this position?
(Minimum is 6 hours per week; typical is 9)

- 9 hours

Will it be possible for your student(s) to earn course credit?

- No
Brief description of the nature of the research/creative activity?

Research Question

Can companies balance financial profits and social/environmental impacts? Certified B Corporations (B Corps) are a group of companies that strive to achieve such a balance. Nevertheless, around a quarter of certified B Corps became de-certified. This high decertification rate raises a meaningful question: what factors may impact firms’ ability to maintain their commitments to social and environmental impacts as certified B-Corps? This project aims to address this question and provides insights that may help companies successfully balance financial profits and social/environmental impacts.

Background

The B Corp certification is granted by the B Lab to for-profit companies that balance financial profit and social purpose. B Lab is a nonprofit organization founded in 2006 with the mission to “serve a global community of people using businesses as a force for good.” (https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us). B Lab uses the B Impact Assessment tool to evaluate companies on five dimensions, including governance, workers, customers, community, and environment. Companies must achieve B Lab’s minimum standard (a score of 80 points) in order to be certified as B Corps. After becoming a certified B Corp, a company must publicize its B Impact Report and amend its legal governing document to require the company’s Board of Directors to balance profit and purpose (https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us). Certified B Corps pay annual certification fees and are audited every three years by B Lab to maintain their certifications.

According to B Corp’s website (https://bcorporation.eu/), as of March 2022, there are 4,799 certified B Corps located in 78 countries. Companies that apply for the B Corp certification typically have a strong social mission. The B Corp certification allows companies to benchmark their social and environmental performance and identify areas to improve. Meanwhile, the B Corp status can serve as a means for the company to differentiate itself from the competition and establish a positive brand image. Nevertheless, the data provided by B Lab shows that about 25% of B Corps became decertified between 2007 and 2021. There are apparent reasons that might have caused desertification, for instance, companies could be decertified if they failed to pay their annual certification fees or modify their governing document. However, it is unclear why certain companies chose to, whereas some chose not to, fulfill the requirements to stay certified.

Research Method

We will use a longitudinal database of B Corps published by B Lab. The data includes information on the year when a company became certified, the year(s) in which a company was recertified or decertified, and the company’s scores on the different dimensions of the B Impact
Assessment during each assessment cycle. The data also provides demographic information such as company name, location, number of employees, and website of each company. We will combine this data with state-level data (e.g., whether a state has passed benefit corporation legislation, the number of B-Corps in the state, etc.). We also hope to interview certified B Corps that have gone through multiple rounds of certifications as well as those that had only one round of certification to gain a better understanding of factors that may impact their decisions to maintain or stop applying for the certification. Finally, we will obtain additional information about the company, the founders, and possibly employees from company websites and social media platforms.

**Brief description of student responsibilities?**

The URCA assistants will help with collecting additional data from companies’ websites and social media platforms, scheduling and participating in interviews with regional B Corps, and coding data. The work can be largely done remotely. The student is expected to meet (most virtually) with the research team on a weekly basis and participate in company interviews.

**URCA Assistant positions are designed to provide students with research or creative activities experience. As such, there should be measurable, appropriate outcome goals.**

**What exactly should your student(s) have learned by the end of this experience?**

My research assistant should have learned the following by the end of the URCA experience.

1. How to obtain useful information from companies’ websites and social media platforms. I will teach the research assistant the needed techniques and tools for this activity. The outcome of this learning experience can be measured by the student’s productivity in locating key information on companies’ websites/social media accounts and codifying the information into useful data.

2. How to request and schedule research interviews with companies professionally using the contact information provided on company websites. I will provide the research assistant with professionally written email templates for communicating with company representatives. The outcome of this earning activity can be measured by the number of requests and interviews that the student(s) has(have) successfully conducted.

3. How to conduct semi-structured research interviews. I will involve the research assistant in all interviews if his/hers schedule allows it. I will demonstrate how to: (1) prepare interview questions, (2) communicate the objectives and expectations to the interviewees; (3) interact with the interviewees to encourage information sharing; (4) use the information obtained from the interview to inform theory building. The outcome of this learning activity can be measured by the student’s ability to describe or demonstrate a semi-structured research interview.

4. How to collaborate and communicate remotely with other team members. The research assistant’s work will be done primarily remotely. He/she will learn the skills of communicating
with the research team and company representatives virtually (via emails and online meetings) in a professional and timely manner. This should help the student enhance written and oral communication skills as well as develop the ability to complete tasks without being closely monitored. This learning outcome can be measured by the student’s proficiency in communicating professionally and managing the time for unmonitored tasks.

Requirements of Students

If the position(s) require students to be available at certain times each week (as opposed to them being able to set their own hours) please indicate all required days and times:

- N/A

If the location of the research/creative activities involves off campus work, must students provide their own transportation?

- N/A

Must students have taken any prerequisite classes? Please list classes and preferred grades:

- N/A

Other requirements or notes to applicants:

- Desired assistants should have good time management skills because the work will be completed without close monitoring. A weekly meeting will be required to discuss the progress of the project.