

Big business

Universities groom students for today's global marketplace

By Carol Sorgen
Contributing Writer

Susan Downs has both an undergraduate degree in biology and a graduate degree in human genetics, and has been applying that knowledge in the business world for almost 15 years. But Downs, who is the regional sales director for Myriad Genetic Laboratories, decided that to continue to advance her career, she needed to learn "business speak." That's just what Loyola University Maryland's Executive MBA program is helping her do.

The objective of the Executive MBA program is to educate "seasoned" executive leaders and "make them better," says Manette Freese, MBA, assistant dean for part-time graduate business programs.

The 21-month curriculum is held on alternate Fridays or Saturdays, and students are in class from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. "This is a schedule that fits into people's busy lives," says Freese. Students learn the functions of running a business, from operations to marketing, planning and more, all of which they can apply in a real-life workplace.

"We use the classroom as a lab so that the students can go back to work on Monday morning and really make a difference," says Freese.

Among the highlights of the program are field study tours – Downs recently returned from a 10-day international study tour to China, which she calls a "life-changing" opportunity – and pro bono consulting projects where the students tackle real business situations. "It's a way for us to give back to the Baltimore business community," says Freese of the pro bono work.

Downs, who is 40 and lives in Clarksville, looked into several Baltimore and Washington-area graduate business programs and found Loyola's to be the most interesting. After attending an information session, she was convinced. "I really felt like I would be well suited for the program," says Downs.

"The coursework, faculty, and schedule of the Loyola program was great for me, and I'm really enjoying the Jesuit impact on education because reflection on what you've just learned is so important," Downs continues.

While recruiters are always calling, Downs hopes that with her science background, a business degree and 15 years of industry experience, she will be able to advance her career within her current company to a business development position or an executive level management position in the corporate office.

Whatever she decides in the future, though, "The bottom line is that I know I will have many more choices with an MBA," says Downs.

Taking students out of the classroom

Developing the skills needed to work in a glob-

al marketplace is also an important element of business education at Stevenson University. To help students see their classroom lessons in action, this past spring Stevenson sponsored its first Progressive Cultural Immersion Experiential Learning Initiative. Over the course of 16 days, 10 students, led by Lawrence Burgee, Ph.D., information systems department chair in Stevenson's Howard S. Brown School of Business and Leadership, visited approximately a dozen companies in London, Paris, Cologne and Prague. The students learned the dynamics of the international marketplace, interacted with corporate executives and business leaders facing the challenges of today's global market, and at the same time, had the opportunity to explore the historical, cultural and aesthetic dimensions of the host cities.

Visiting such companies as 3M and GE Healthcare, the students got a first-hand look at such marketing functions as product development, channels of distribution, pricing issues, advertising, promotions, e-Marketing, etc.

While many study abroad programs last an entire semester, the advantage of such short-term study tours as those offered at both Loyola and Stevenson is that students who may already be working or have other responsibilities outside of school also have the opportunity to participate, says Burgee.

The tour is part of Stevenson's larger "Learning Beyond" initiative, which brings students out of the classroom into settings such as study tours, community service and internships.

"It's a way to expand on what the students learn in the classroom," says Burgee. "The students get to live the experience."

Marrying business and technology

Business skills are also important to those in technology-related fields that University of Baltimore has expanded its educational offerings to prepare students for both current and future workplace demands.

UB offers a B.S. in Management Information Systems (MIS) degree within the Merrick School of Business. In addition to its dedicated undergraduate program, UB also offers a specialization within the B.S. in business administration degree called Computer Information Systems. At the graduate level, there is an MIS specialization within the MBA.

According to Danielle Fowler, Ph.D., assistant professor of management information systems, UB completely redesigned the B.S. in MIS this year, with the help of its MIS board, to match the skills that are in strong demand in the marketplace. "We spent a year gathering feedback from local companies on their needs, and they were consistent: that knowledge of issues on the busi-

ness side, such as vendor management, contract negotiation, and regulation and governance, in addition to core information systems skills, are crucial," says Fowler, adding that Baltimore has a thriving high-tech industry and a lot of entrepreneurial interest and expertise in IT (not just in tech companies).

"We've incorporated that into the program," Fowler continues, adding that the three areas UB sees as the hottest emerging IT skills areas are: project management, IT service delivery and business intelligence. As a result, the school added new courses in each of these areas to the core curriculum. The project management and service delivery courses are both designed to align with certification exams that are in demand: PMI and ITIL.

UB also added an internship to the curriculum for all Merrick School students, to aid graduates in securing both industry exposure/experience and jobs. "Because IT is increasingly about liaison with the rest of the business (delivery of a service, not just technology management)," says Fowler, "that business focus is also important, and we focus on giving students a sound business core also, with courses in subjects such as accounting, decision science and HR management. •



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