



Will business executives become profs?

MBA enrollments are soaring, and business schools face a severe shortage of qualified professors. According to the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB), the supply shortage is a result of several simultaneous factors. Doctoral candidates feed the professorial ranks, and they have dropped in number by 25 percent in just ten years. Today, half of the students enrolled in the U.S. as business Ph.D. candidates are foreigners with student visas who will return to their home countries with their degrees. Meanwhile, baby-boomer business professors are retiring in significant numbers.

When *Business Week* and other media began ranking business schools in the 1990s, campuses shifted resources. "Full-time MBA programs became the cachet for business schools," says Andrew Policano, dean of the school of business at the University of California, Irvine. "The frenzy came because you had to be number 10 instead of number 12 on those media lists. We made many silly allocation decisions because of that."

The shortage has driven starting salaries from \$64,000 in 1997 to \$93,780 in 2005, according to AACSB. Salaries for Ph.D.s in accounting are now as high as \$160,000. Comments Policano, "As a result, we generally hire fewer people. Or we hire individuals who are not going to be permanent members of our faculty."

Albert Niemi, dean of the Cox School of Business at Southern Methodist University, reports that he

is paying well into the six figures for new Ph.D.s. "The pool of available talent is thin," he says. "We have to pay more to play the game."

Shortcut to the classroom

AACSB is trying to help business deans who are searching for creative ways to replenish their faculties. One such involves a five-day 'Bridge Program' to lure business executives into the classroom as teachers. Participants must have a master's degree in business or a closely related discipline, along with 5 or more years of managerial work experience. Upon completion each successful participant receives a certificate from AACSB that he or she is professionally qualified to teach.

The first-ever Bridge seminar was conducted at the University of California for 28 candidates who paid \$5,000 each to attend. A second seminar will be held soon at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business.

Edward Siebbald, a participant in the Irvine session, is a seasoned banking industry executive with an MBA from Columbia. Unlike most of his Bridge colleagues, he is already teaching at the College of Business at Georgia Southern University. "I wanted to enhance and refine my teaching skills," he says. "The Bridge session on how to make a good first impression was great. I'm going to incorporate it my spring semester class."

Too short a shortcut?

Critics question whether a five-day crash course can adequately prepare business executives to teach. "We're not trying to teach them their subject matter of expertise," says John Fernandes, president of AACSB. "We don't try to teach accounting or auditing to a CPA. We're developing their teaching skills, such as how develop a course syllabus or how to motivate students."

Don Pallais is a CPA and Bridge attendee with three decades of professional experience and an MBA from the College of William and Mary. "It's silly to think that after a five day course, I'd have the equivalent of a Ph.D.," he says. "My competence comes from 30 years of experience. Bridge shows me how to get across what I already know.

I'm not sure how many Ph.D.s receive that kind of training."

Will business deans hire Bridge graduates? Fernandes is confident that that they will, especially at state universities where the shortage of qualified faculty is most acute. "The Harvards and Whartons can cherry pick leaders with big names and hire them without much trouble," he says. "The real challenge comes where most management education is provided. State and regional institutions have thousands of undergraduate and graduate students and not enough faculty to teach them. They're much more likely to recruit professionally qualified faculty, especially individuals pre-qualified by the AACSB program."

Irvine's Policano agrees. "I will certainly look closely at an executive

“ The shortage has driven starting salaries from \$64,000 in 1997 to \$93,780 in 2005, according to AACSB. Salaries for Ph.D.s in accounting are now as high as \$160,000.

who's willing to take a week of his or her life to get AACSB certification." But Niemi of SMU is skeptical. "I'm not saying that we wouldn't hire Bridge graduates," he says. "They get a good skill-set from the program that enhances the expertise they already have. But five days of training will not make someone a star faculty member. No one can give you the equivalent of a Ph.D. in such a short time."

Pallais, the Bridge Program participant is pragmatic. "We'll have to see if academics will accept the concept. Or will they say if you don't have the Ph.D., it's been nice knowing you." ■



SUSAN FEINBERG is a freelance writer specializing in higher education. Contact her at sdfe@aol.com.