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In Response to Faculty Shortages, Program Offers a Five-Day Course to Train Business-School Professors

By [KATHERINE MANGAN](#)

As an accountant who specializes in helping companies sail through the most stringent audits, Jill D. Race has carved out a satisfying and well-paying career over the past 15 years. But for five days this week, she ditched that job for a crash course in college teaching and the chance to switch to a field where her skills are in even greater demand.

Around the world, business schools are facing a severe shortage of qualified professors with doctorates at a time when interest in M.B.A. programs is booming. As a result, the schools are having to come up with creative recruiting strategies, like wooing senior business executives who have hinted they would like to teach, and promising them résumé-boosting credentials in less than a week.

This week at the University of California at Irvine's Paul Merage School of Business, Ms. Race has joined 25 other executives in the inaugural Bridge Program, sponsored by AACSB International: the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. A second session, for a different cohort, will be held in May at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business, with sessions to follow in other parts of the country.

"I've mentored and managed people over the years, spoken at conferences, and written a few articles, but I don't know anything about putting a syllabus together, giving a three-hour lecture, or working with the challenges of today's students," Ms. Race said in an interview. "I liked the idea of having a crash course in the basics and then just jumping right in."

She received a scholarship from an accounting group that covered half of the \$5,000 fee, then embarked on an intensive week of studying learning styles, effective teaching methods, the nuts and bolts of structuring a semester-long class, creating a syllabus, and presenting case studies.

Leaving the Rat Race for the Paper Chase

The program is not available to just any business leader yearning to leave the rat race behind for a nine-month academic appointment. Program participants are expected to have a master's degree and at least five to seven years of senior-level professional experience. Many of the participants also have some kind of teaching experience, as mentors to junior colleagues, guest lecturers at universities, or instructors in corporate training programs.

Those who successfully complete the course receive a certificate with the seals of the AACSB, which is a prestigious accreditor, as well as the two participating business schools that helped develop the program.

Participants in the Bridge Program are assumed to be "professionally qualified" to teach at an accredited business school, which gives them a leg up when they apply for academic openings. The AACSB's accrediting standards require that half of all classes be taught by "academically qualified" faculty members. Forty percent can be "professionally qualified" instructors, and a business school can have 10 percent who do not fall into either category.

Questions From Skeptics

But skeptics question whether a five-day course can make a person qualified to teach. Albert W. Niemi Jr., dean of the Cox School of Business at Southern Methodist University, said he would not hire someone straight out of the Bridge Program unless he or she had spent a semester sitting in the back of a classroom learning from one of his school's best professors.

"You can't learn how to be a professor in five days," he said. "If you could, all of the Ph.D. programs would go out of business. In a city like Dallas, we get a lot of people who think they can teach, but they have no idea how difficult teaching is. Many of our faculty members have spent two to three decades at it, and it would be an insult to throw someone in the classroom and say, 'You can do it as well as they can.'"

He said the AACSB should be commended for "trying to find a solution to a difficult problem," but added that a five-day course should be considered only a starting point.

Andrew J. Policano, dean of the business school at Irvine, said the program's graduates are expected to continue their education as teachers by attending conferences and teaching workshops.

"We're not training fully developed or research-oriented faculty members," he said. "This is a first step that will allow an executive to make the transition into the classroom much more effectively and efficiently."

The Bridge Program is a response to the 2002 report "Management Education at Risk," published by the AACSB (*The Chronicle*, July 19, 2002). The report cited the shortage of doctorates being produced in business fields as the most critical problem facing business schools -- one that would exacerbate the faculty shortage as baby-boom professors retired and enrollments in M.B.A. programs increased.

Two years ago, business schools in the United States graduated 907 Ph.D. students, down from 973 six years ago, the U.S. Department of Education reports. To make matters worse, about a third of those students do not end up teaching at universities, most opting instead for higher-paying corporate careers.

Among other strategies, an AACSB panel recommended that business schools recruit doctoral students from related disciplines, like mathematics or psychology; rely more on "professionally qualified" business executives; and find ways to graduate more business Ph.D.'s.

Sources of the Shortage

For all their talk about the need to produce more doctorates, business schools have been reluctant to funnel more money into Ph.D. programs, which tend to be financial drains. Instead, beginning in the 1990s, schools switched some of those resources into their moneymaking M.B.A. programs. That shift became more pronounced as business schools increasingly focused on how they fared in news-media rankings, which rely heavily on the selectivity and popularity of M.B.A. programs.

The resulting faculty shortage has driven the average starting salary for new doctorates from \$64,000 in 1997 to \$93,780 in 2005, the AACSB reports. Graduates of doctoral programs in high-demand fields, like accounting or finance, can earn as much as \$160,000 in their first year of teaching.

The AACSB plans to start a course similar to the Bridge Program to help people with doctorates in nonbusiness fields make the transition to teaching in a business school. The association is considering a variety of approaches, including a course that would take 12 weeks to complete.

Another Bridge participant, Guy S. Mills, has spent the past 18 years as an industrial engineer and management consultant. He said his forays into teaching in staff-development workshops fueled his desire to become a professor.

"As an African-American from New York City, I've seen the transformative effect of education on friends who grew up in the projects," he said. Graduating from the Bridge Program will be like getting his pilot's license, he reasoned: "I'll learn how to take off and land, but the only way I'll become proficient is by spending years continuing to learn and improve."