

WELCOME

to the Spring 2014 edition of The Washington Post's Ed.U Guide to Business and Graduate Education.

In the following pages, we take a look at how women who have non-business degrees are attending the University of Virginia's School of Business in search of a MBA in business with a focus on entrepreneurship and leadership skills. In addition to building leadership skills, students are learning the business of corporate social responsibility at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business and George Washington University through programs such as Consulting Abroad. On page 6, read about George Washington University's Consulting Abroad program in Lima, Peru. Students not only created a micro-insurance plan, but also saw how their work impacted society.

To become a leader and make an impact on society, it is important to continue to learn. This is especially true in the ever-expanding health care graduate programs across the country. Georgetown University is providing their students with real life work experience to help students gauge what their day to day would look like. Some students find that in this practice, they are more interested in Health Care Systems or Health Care Policy.

In the final feature, we take a look at the Professional Science Masters degree at the University of the District of Columbia. We also learn just how important it is to bridge the gap between scientific know-how and business savvy to take students to the next level of their careers.

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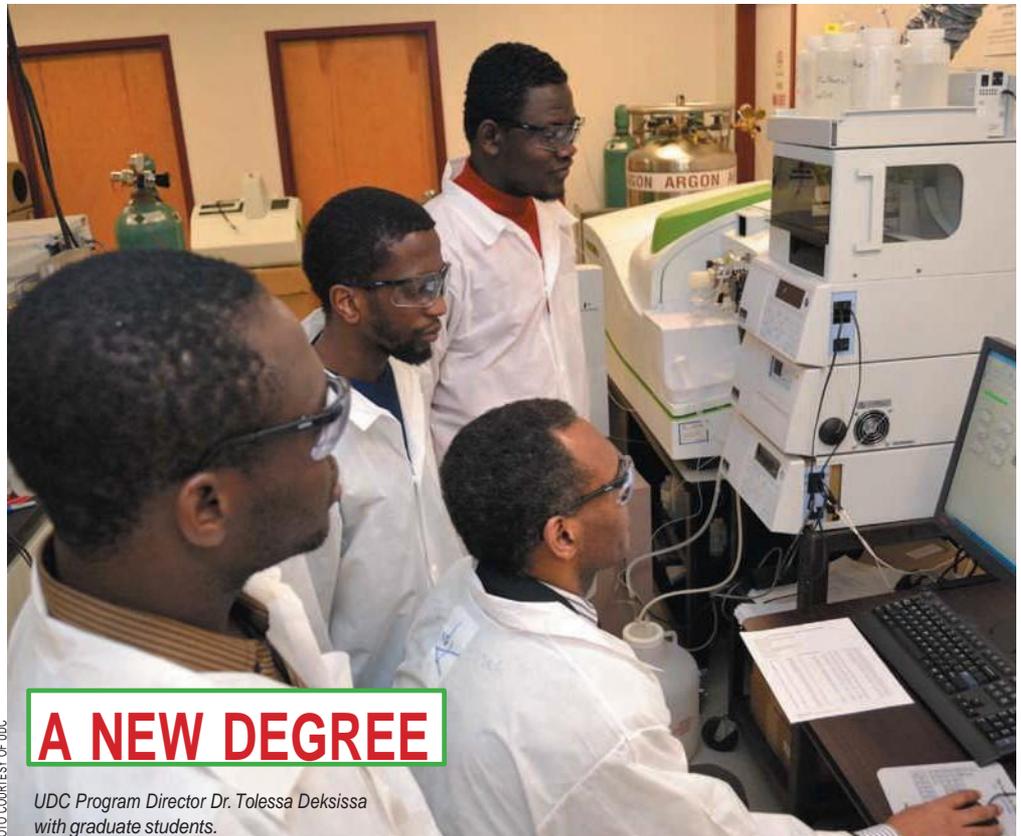
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“Companies all over the world realize that they need to act in a socially responsible manner in order to survive.”

— *Tim McClimon, President of the American Express Foundation and vice president for corporate responsibility at American Express, designer of the Social Responsibility curriculum at Johns Hopkins University.*



A NEW DEGREE

UDC Program Director Dr. Tolessa Deksissa with graduate students.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UDC

Bridging the gap between scientific know-how & business savvy

It's easy for scientists to delve into a problem, said Sabine O'Hara, dean of the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability & Environmental Sciences of the University of the District of Columbia.

Communicating it, though, is another matter. "Scientists do a great job of collecting data but less so explaining," O'Hara said.

There's a new academic program cropping up across campuses nationwide — including at UDC — that bridges the gap by creating professionals who pair scientific know-how with business savvy.

It's called the Professional Science Master's degree (PSM). Created in 1997, PSM programs educate students in scientific, engineering or mathematical disciplines while also training them in management, communications, policy, regulatory issues and leadership.

Though the degrees are highly marketable, O'Hara sees student demand as the real driving force.

"Students are doing a lot of the pushing," O'Hara said. "They want to learn to solve problems. They want practical skills. And real-life problems never fit in one academic field. They're too messy."

Tolessa Deksissa is director of the Water Resources Institute at the University of the

District of Columbia as well as director of the school's PSM in water resources management. He said a PSM helps job applicants answer the question, "what can you do for me if I hire you?"

"They not only know the content, but they also know how it works," Deksissa said. "They know why you have to do things a certain way."

He said most of his PSM students have been in the workforce for a few years and want to grow professionally or learn how to make changes at their companies.

"A PSM gives them another dimension of skills that lets them get to the next level of the job," Deksissa said.

It's a program that Debra Stewart, president of the Council of Graduate Schools, said might be a model for training professionals across a number of disciplines.

"America is better than anyone else in the world about training people in the core, the content," Stewart said. "But we haven't spent as much time thinking about how people will take that advantage, that knowledge into the work setting."

Nationally, PSM programs have been highly successful for graduates. "People get first placements at remarkably high rates — 80 percent of them within months," Stewart said.

Some programs see 100 percent placement, such as the PSM in bioinformatics at Virginia Commonwealth University. Program director Gregory Buck says the field is so hot he can't find enough people to support his own research grants. F

ABOUT THE SECTION

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"Big Data is not something that's going to happen. It's here. Trying to handle it right now is like trying to drink from a fire hose," he said.

Bioinformatics, which Buck



BIO:
TONI DAVIDSON
Age: 63
Hometown:
Richmond, Va.

DEGREES: Professional Science Master's, water resource management, University of the District of Columbia; master's in anthropology/archeology, the Catholic University of America
CAREER: Works for the District of Columbia Department of the Environment.

QUOTE: As part of the University of the District of Columbia's first PSM class in water resources management, she told program director Tolessa Deksissa that her group would be different. "Pioneers are always weird and wild. Everyone else will be more conventional."



Dr. Tolessa Deksissa

described as taking mathematical and statistical approaches to biological questions, makes information more manageable. "We use it when traditional reductive approaches no longer work," harnessing computing power to delve more deeply into data than ever before possible, he said.

For example, there are 8 billion people on the planet with 3 billion genomes each, Buck said. What if bioinformatics could predict health? One day that could be possible, though ethical concerns will have to be addressed, he said.

The University of Maryland College Campus offers PSMs in bioinformatics and six other disciplines, including biotechnology management, regulatory affairs and biosecurity

and biodefense.

Rana Khan, who chairs the university's Information and Technology Systems Department, said the PSM's interdisciplinary approach appeals to students. "How is a drug approved? How does that happen? Having that understanding helps you be a better manager in a range of positions."

UMUC students have worked on a variety of projects, from creating a resume-parsing application for a consulting firm to drawing up a development plan for a gelatin-based biomaterial for corneal transplants.

These capstone products — which all PSM students are required to complete — create a well-rounded employee who can jump into the job market, Khan said.

"Students learn a lot because they're working with real business problems. They're working on a team project, and that's part of any job today."

Toni Davidson, who holds a PSM in water resource management from UDC, sees the degree as a great opportunity for career-changers such as herself. She also



UDC Program Director Dr. Tolessa Deksissa with graduate student and graduate assistant Siaka Nuah.

holds a master's in anthropology and archeology, working in that field until the economy soured.

She decided on the program after meeting Deksissa at a job fair. She liked the idea of continuing to work outside, as she did as an archeologist.

"And then I found out it was going to be a lot harder than I thought, because I'd never done science before," she said.

She credits Deksissa with helping her pull through, making sure she had what she needed to catch up.

Today she creates databases for the District of Columbia Department of the Environment, a job she also sees as having similarities to her previous work.

"I've always created databases, but as an archeologist it was on paper."

Deksissa is high on the PSM program as both a way to educate business leaders and as an entrée to job opportunities.

"Students are using the PSM with the same pride they would a PhD," Deksissa said. "It's that marketable." r

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