The Scholarship of Business
Students and Faculty Excel in Research, Publishing, and Teaching in Ph.D. Programs in Business

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Guest Author

Named for a distinguished 1954 alum, the Eli Broad College of Business enrolls over 700 graduate students in the Eli Broad Graduate School of Management, attracting a wide variety of students to study at the master’s and doctoral levels and then guiding their development into outstanding professionals and scholars. Students are drawn to business graduate studies at MSU in part by the three unique Master in Business Administration (M.B.A.) programs and five specialized Masters programs (see inset box for details - page 9) that are designed to make the most of students’ learning experiences in and outside the workplace.

While the Masters programs have earned a high profile on the MSU campus and beyond, what many people do not know is that the students and faculty in the Broad School’s doctoral programs have continually distinguished themselves nationally and internationally as researchers, scholars and teachers at the forefront of their respective fields. The Broad School is in fact home to just over 100 doctoral students who are engaging in research and teaching activities that have earned the program an outstanding ranking from the Financial Times Ltd: ninth out of the top 100 schools in the world. This doctoral rating is based on the number of doctoral graduates from the last three academic years with additional weighting for those graduates taking up a faculty position at one of the top 50 schools in the 2002 survey.

COLLABORATION IS KEY

The Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration, begun at MSU in 1951, offers advanced degrees in one interdisciplinary unit, the Information Technology Management Program, and in four departments: Accounting and Information Systems; Finance; Management; and Marketing and Supply Chain Management. There are several majors, or specializations, available within each department. These degrees are clearly distinct from the M.B.A. track, which is an applied degree for the business sector. Rather, the doctoral studies focus on research and university scholarship and the programs aim to place their Ph.D. graduates in research-oriented universities.

Alison Barber, Senior Associate Dean in the Broad College, describes how the doctoral programs foster a unique atmosphere of close collaboration between students and faculty. “There are strong mentorship relationships between doctoral students and faculty members here. It is very common for doctoral students to partner with faculty members in co-authoring and publishing a research project, presenting work at a conference or attending colloquia.”

These valuable mentoring relationships flourish in part because of the relatively small number of students admitted into each of the doctoral departments. The program in Finance admits students into its program only every other year in order to maintain a “critical mass” within each cohort of students. “Typically no more than 12 students are in residence at any point in time. This allows the students to work closely with faculty on cutting edge research very early in their academic careers,” explains Associate Professor Charles Hadlock, head of the program in Finance and Philip J. May Endowed Professor of Finance. “Several of our students have co-authored published papers with faculty advisors while they are still doctoral students, a rarity at most schools. Compared to our peer schools we offer a very broad range of courses that expose our students to many of the different subfields of finance. The breadth of exposure in our curriculum and the small size of our program are features that we believe distinguish us from many other programs.”

THE PUSH TO PUBLISH

Echoing this concept, Professor John Hollenbeck, Director of the doctoral program in Management and the Eli Broad Professor of Management, articulates the advantages that students enjoy in their “culture that supports and demands” that they publish while still in graduate school. “The short-term advantage is that some of our alum have published 5 or 6 papers while still in graduate school and this makes them highly attractive on the job market. The long term advantage is that they publish throughout their career, which helps them advance.”

And the numbers clearly demonstrate that Broad School doctoral students are making their mark early on in their respective fields through their contributions to research and publications while at MSU. Professor Mike Shields, Director of the program in Accounting, cites several studies that find the accounting graduates to have very successful research publication records. “Depending on how research
publications are measured, our graduates are ranked from number 5 to number 22 among graduates of all doctoral programs in accounting. Our graduates are also distinguished by the frequency with which they are members of the Editorial Boards of leading accounting journals, being ranked from number 4 to number 13, depending on the journals considered.”

**INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAMS**

These Ph.D. programs are full-time commitments for students, most of whom enter their respective departments with full funding or with a research assistantship. At some point during their five years at MSU—the typical length of time for degree completion—most students gain teaching experience by heading up their own undergraduate course in the Broad School. Each of the doctoral “majors” carries its own set of requirements and yet each shares the common advantage of allowing students to tailor their coursework and research according to their individual needs and interests. Students often choose minors in departments or colleges outside of the School, allowing them to bring their unique interests or background to their research and scholarship. It is quite common for students to come to the Ph.D. after several years of experience in the business world. Other students arrive directly to the program from their undergraduate institutions.

Doctoral student Stephen Humphrey majored in Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management and minors in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. Humphrey came to the Broad School directly after receiving his undergraduate degree in Psychology from James Madison University. Humphrey credits the professors in the doctoral program for drawing him to the MSU program and for making his educational experience an outstanding one. His major professor is John Hollenbeck, although he appreciates the flexibility that allows students in the doctoral program to work with faculty across all business majors.

Discussing the faculty of the Broad School, Humphrey notes that “although they have already achieved success and received these accolades and thus they do not have to continue to publish research, they all have a passion for research. One thing that they have learned is the best way to remain fresh, interested, and excited about research is to work extensively with doctoral students, as we are hungry to learn the research process.”

**A BUSINESS “LAB”**

Humphrey takes an active role in conducting research projects in the unique Team Effectiveness Research Laboratory, or TeamLab, which is directed by Hollenbeck and colleague Daniel R. Ilgen, John A. Hannah Professor of Psychology and Management. The research center’s primary goal is to examine basic psychological issues related to how people perform in teams structured in alternative ways. TeamLab began in 1990 with funding from the Office of Naval Research (ONR) directed at understanding how teams working under stress make decisions. Over the years, the TeamLab has run over a thousand teams and published about 30 research papers. Hollenbeck, Ilgen, and their students, including Humphrey, continue to use the lab as a research tool to uncover new knowledge about teams and leadership effectiveness. TeamLab research work serves the dual purpose of illuminating the evolving, complex relationships between and among teams and tasks while serving as a teaching resource in the M.B.A. program, which places a heavy emphasis on teams.

Recently, a course for M.B.A. students was designed using the team simulation in the TeamLab as a vehicle for teaching teamwork and leadership through hands-on experience. A valuable outgrowth of this experience is that the students are perfecting their participation in and appreciation for teamwork while they earn their degrees and then are able to put these skills to the test in their future careers. In terms of exposing new people to the lab, there are exciting possibilities with both undergraduate students and executives involved in the Broad School’s Executive Development Program. “The TeamLab is a wonderful place for our students to learn leadership and teamwork skills,” said Dean Robert Duncan. “I’ve been teaching leadership for 30 years, and I’ve never seen a more effective way for students to learn hands-on what it’s like to lead and work with a team.”

Speaking specifically about his experiences in the TeamLab environment, Humphrey reports that it is “one of the best opportunities that I could ever have hoped for. John Hollenbeck and Dan Ilgen really see the lab as an opportunity to get doctoral students involved in research, from the conceptualization stage, through the data collection and analysis stage, and on to the final publication of the paper. When doctoral students first get involved with the TeamLab, our initial role is to help collect data and just observe the research process in action. Soon after that, we have the opportunity to take the data we

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helped collect and develop a paper based on it.”

“During this time, you get to work extensively with John and Dan in the data analysis and paper writing process. This hands-on experience, where you are working one-on-one with a professor to develop a paper provides you with knowledge that you would be much more difficult to get otherwise. Moreover, it also provides a context in which you can be free to make mistakes in the development process, as you are working with very talented individuals who can help you learn from your mistakes and correct them,” says Humphrey.

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

The Broad School is also home to other cutting-edge research programs, including The Center for International Business Education and Research, or MSU-CIBER. The Center was designated in 1990 as one of the pioneer National Resource Centers in international business by the U.S. Department of Education. In this capacity, the mission of MSU-CIBER is to provide world-class education, research, and assistance to businesses on issues of importance to international trade and global competitiveness. Under the guidance of its Business Advisory Council, MSU-CIBER carries out research that generates best-practice knowledge on global business operations and global competitiveness, offers professional development and academic outreach programs on contemporary international business techniques, strategies, and methodologies, and provides innovative, technology-driven dissemination of international business knowledge to business executives, public policy makers, scholars, and students.

Tomas Hult, Director of MSU-CIBER, states that the Center has served as an integral part of doctoral education in the Broad Graduate School of Management since its inception in 1990: “To enrich Ph.D. students’ educational experiences, we offer graduate assistantships, research and travel grants, and the opportunity to interact with world-leading academics through guest lectures and visiting professorships. MSU-CIBER also serves as a link to the business community for doctoral students via its executive-in-residence program, monthly business luncheons, and speaker series.”

Dr. S. Tamer Cavusgil serves as Executive Director of the Center as well as Director of Ph.D. Programs in Marketing and International Business. Cavusgil is also recognized as University Distinguished Faculty and is The John William Byington Endowed Chair in Global Marketing. Ph.D. student Janell Townsend, a Marketing major with an International Business minor, identifies Cavusgil’s stature among international research professionals and his development of CIBER as one of the reasons that MSU was “a particularly strong choice for studying international business issues.” Prior to pursuing an academic career, Townsend worked as a Business Manager for a global automotive audio and electronics supplier. She has an M.B.A. and a BA from Wayne State University.

BLENDING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Townsend is particularly pleased with the progressive structure of her department that encourages her to blend theory and practice. “The strategic orientation of the marketing department as a whole allows for the development of research that supports an important juncture where theory meets practical relevance. The combination of these attributes, I believe, allows for academic development that enables students to become researchers who can make a significant contribution to knowledge, while also becoming teachers who can convey knowledge in a meaningful and effective manner.”

And Broad School doctoral students do excel in their teaching at MSU and have been recognized with teaching awards such as the University’s Excellence in Teaching Citation. Two Accounting students earned this honor—Terence Pitre, a fourth-year student, and Anne Farrell, a recent graduate who recently began a position as Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which boasts the highest-ranked undergraduate accounting program in the country.

Farrell credits her doctorate experience at MSU with making her a strong teacher and researcher. “Because MSU also offered me the chance to teach when I was a doctoral student (both as a T.A. and in stand-alone classes), I could perfect those skills before I finished the program. As a result, my teaching ratings in my first course at the University of Illinois were extremely high, so I can take the energy that might otherwise have been directed at teaching and put it into my research.”

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Recent Ph.D. graduate Anne Farrell, now Assistant Professor of Accounting at the University of Illinois
and their subsequent success in academia. “We look for students who have some industry experience, good analytical skills and good communication skills in addition to the traditional academic credentials such as a high GMAT score, high GPA, and appropriate academic preparation.” Once the students arrive at MSU, they immediately are given opportunities to stretch themselves academically and professionally. Explains Narasimhan, “The strength of the doctoral program is the emphasis we place on early immersion into academic research. Students are expected to get themselves involved in research projects in their first year.”

John Hanson is a student in Narasimhan’s Operations Management program and began his doctoral work after earning a B.A.S. in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Toronto and an M.B.A. from MSU. He brought with him 27 years of industry experience in the fields of engineering, sales and marketing, R&D, product and strategic planning, mostly in the automotive industry.

Hanson acknowledges that while the academia route is not necessarily right for those who want to establish their career in business, it is an excellent fit for him. “I’ve reached the stage in my career where I want to be able to think more deeply about the issues that face business and to express those thoughts through writing and teaching.” In particular, MSU has proven to be the appropriate place for him to pursue his interests. “The doctoral program provides both the training and the credentials to be able to do those things in the appropriate forums.”

Hanson adds that the faculty in the Broad School “are not only very active in their fields, but also very determined that their students should publish in top-tier journals and secure positions at top-level schools. That certainly creates a challenging but desirable environment.”

**JOB PLACEMENT SUCCESS**

This challenging but desirable environment produces graduates who have continually excelled in the area of post-graduate job placement, making temporary post-doctoral positions virtually unnecessary. Recent alum Farrell believes the doctoral program prepared her extremely well for the job market beginning with “day one” with an exceptional research workshop series for faculty and doctoral students. “The workshops provided exposure to the latest in research, but even more importantly, gave me the opportunity to meet with established scholars from other institutions on a one-on-one basis. As a result, I forged relationships that no doubt helped me in my job search; the academic community is so small, and to have the chance to build a reputation before I even finished the program was invaluable.”

“Secondly, I was given many opportunities throughout the doctoral program to present my own research to both groups of fellow students in seminar classes and to the full faculty of my department. Without the ability to hone my skills presenting academic research, I believe my job talks would not have been so strong,” says Farrell, and then adds that the third advantage she enjoyed was, “when entering the job market, faculty throughout my department and from other departments within Broad were invaluable when it came to helping me develop a list of schools to target. No one hesitated to give their frank assessments of opportunities available at different programs and whether they believed I would “fit” with the existing faculty. In fact, the members of my dissertation committee went further and briefed me in detail before each job talk I made.”

Another recent alum, Frank Montabon is now an assistant professor in the Department of Logistics, Operations and Management Information Systems at Iowa State University. Montabon thrives on the demanding schedule of teaching and research in his new academic responsibilities. “Certainly, one of the things I learned at Michigan State was maintaining a good pace of work. As an academic, you can’t allow yourself to get stuck in a rut. You must keep moving forward to ensure that your research will break some new ground,” he says.

Since accepting the faculty position at Iowa State in 2001, Montabon has received recognition as the business college’s outstanding researcher; outstanding faculty member, awarded by the Greek Community; and teacher of the month, presented by the Business Council at Iowa State. He was nominated VEISHEA Professor of the Year 2001; VEISHEA nominees come from among professors in five college at Iowa State: Veterinary Medicine, Engineering, Industrial Science, Home Economics and Agriculture.

Montabon credits the outstanding reputation of the Operations Management program at MSU with helping him land his position and enjoy professional success at Iowa State. “Going into the interview process, I was confident that my academic pedigree would open doors for me. Since then, my connections to the Broad School have been very helpful in networking with other colleagues to plan future research projects. The Broad School taught me very clearly what I needed to do in order to have a successful academic career, and I have done my best to follow those lessons.”

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**GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN THE ELI BROAD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**

http://www.bus.msu.edu/graduate

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