

Boston Business Journal

MBA programs court minority Ph.D.s

Boston Business Journal - by [Mary Moore](#)

Five Massachusetts business schools have formed a collaborative to increase their ranks of minority professors, mainly African-American and Hispanics.

Signed on to the collaborative are the [University of Massachusetts Boston](#), [University of Massachusetts Lowell](#), [Bentley University](#), [Salem State College](#) and [Northeastern University](#). The bottom line for the group is to “increase the pool of people who see Greater Boston as a destination for their careers,” said Michael Page, dean of business at Bentley University.

First on the group’s agenda is sharing information about their respective Ph.D. candidates in business who are close to completing their doctoral programs, a shift in thinking for colleges and universities, which tend not to immediately hire their own graduates yet rarely actively market their graduates to competing institutions. Bentley, for one, has three minority doctoral candidates in the pipeline, said Page.

In addition, candidates who interview for faculty positions at one of the colleges or universities in the collaborative but who are not a good fit will be referred to the other schools for consideration. And when a member of the collaborative is ready to make an offer to a minority faculty candidate, but the candidate’s acceptance and relocation to Boston comes down to finding a job for a spouse, the members of the collaborative would consider the spouse for positions on their campuses.

Formed under the umbrella of the Commonwealth Compact, the state’s diversity initiative based at [UMass Boston](#), the collaborative held an inaugural meeting in March, attended by approximately nine local colleges and universities, some of which have not yet joined. Those that did sign on contributed \$1,000 to fund startup and administrative costs, said Page.

“Despite our natural competitiveness, what you’re seeing in the campus compact is a marvelous effort to be attentive to this issue (of diversity),” said Philip Quaglieri, dean of UMass Boston’s College of Management.

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The new business school collaborative is a sharp break in academic tradition — which is based on competing for the best talent — for faculty and students alike. Colleges and universities typically fear that by sharing, they will lose their edge.

In this case, the deep impact of having little racial diversity on business faculties has trumped competition. Minority business students have few role models among their professors, and the dominance of white male professors does not accurately reflect the racial mix of the business world, several business school deans said.

The business schools in the group generally have 10 or fewer African-American and Hispanic professors on their faculties, according to the deans. Only by including Asians and other more prevalent minorities do the numbers of minority professors increase into the double digits.

“We understand that students need diverse educational experience to make them culturally aware,” said William Crittenden, dean of faculty at Northeastern’s College of Business Administration. “In order to give them that diverse experience, it includes having faculty representation from the underrepresented populations.”

While the new collaborative is considered the first effort locally to increase minority representation on business school faculties, on the national level the Ph.D. Project, established by the [KPMG Foundation](#) in 1994, encourages African-Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans to pursue Ph.D.s in business and careers in academia. The program has helped triple the number of minority doctoral candidates in business who have gone into teaching, according to its website.

Still, an obvious challenge exists, said Quaglieri: Doing business, not teaching business, holds more allure for graduate-level students. “When the MBA became a popular degree in the 1980s and ’90s, it pulled more people into the practice of business rather than into faculty,” said Quaglieri.

Yet, the place where business is practiced — Boston’s corporate sector — is where the impact of having so few minority business professors teaching the craft hits home most deeply.

“If we’re going to help the firms attract the quality of individuals to grow the pool so Massachusetts’ economy continues to be a successful one, we’ve got to have faculty that are representative of the underserved populations,” said Crittenden. “When you’re talking about a faculty of 70 to 130 professors, it doesn’t take a large number of individuals to shift the balance of representation.”