

UB

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BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

Accomplished Women
Pursue UB's MBA Program
for Career Advancement





Her MBA studies “raise the stakes,” says Taylor Jenkins. The degree is “even more important now... to advance in your career.”

COVER STORY

UB'S MBA PROGRAM IS ATTRACTING MORE WOMEN THAN AVERAGE TO THE STILL MALE-DOMINATED DEGREE

BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

BY CHRISTIANNA McCAUSLAND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS MYERS

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree has long been considered the golden ticket to career advancement, the degree that can open the salary coffers and the boardroom's doors. Considering that women represent 47 percent of the workforce, one would expect their numbers to be commensurate in MBA programs. Yet studies show that female enrollment at the country's highest business schools gets less than top marks.>>



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This dearth of female executives coupled with ongoing pay disparity complicate the business school landscape. Research by the Forté Foundation states that women still account for only 17 percent of boardroom positions and 4.8 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs. While a woman obtaining an MBA can still expect immediate pay gains of 35-40 percent of her pre-MBA salary, because of the gender-based wage gap the return on investment in education for a female is less.

Stickney states that UB's history as a place of entrepreneurship and its standing as "a professional school for professional people" uniquely positions it to serve the needs of busy working women seeking the career advantages an MBA provides. Because many women not only work but are primary caregivers for their families, a return to school may seem impossible from both a financial and a time perspective. The flexibility UB offers is essential; program options include specialized entrepreneurial tracks as well as a general business track, and both asynchronous online courses and evening classes on campus.

"People need to understand what the degree will do for them, because no one is going to go back to school if they don't know how it will serve them," says Stickney. "They need to know we can help you understand the world of business better." Stickney adds that the program can be tailored through extensive elective courses; there's even the option to create a customized specialization.

Women in UB's MBA program are utilizing the degree in a wide variety of professions. In the following pages, current and former MBA students share their experiences.

TRACY IMM, MBA '92

Director of Public Affairs,
Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA)

When Imm was appointed by the governor to her current post at MIA in 2016, it was her first political appointment. She's spent most of her career in corporate communications in Fortune 500 companies. But now she's reached a stage when she wants to give back.

When an executive training program offered to fund her MBA, Imm chose UB because the convenient location and the richness of the program appealed to her. She says the degree has been instrumental in every job offer and promotion she's received since.

"If you're going to work in the business world you need to speak the language of the executive suite," she states. "Because I have a business degree on top of my

communications experience I was more than a communications manager. It's been a competitive differentiator. Once you have that degree and can speak that language, you get a seat at the table where strategic decisions are made."

Two years ago, Imm started a consulting practice, Tracy Imm Worldwide, to provide executive coaching and leadership training for women. She's also authored *The Brave Girls Guide to Work That You Love* and *Conquer Shame and Claim Success: Three Keys to Abundance, Love, and Leadership* to facilitate her work. Imm recently launched her own podcast, as well, *Brave Girls with Tracy Imm*. She anticipates that the gaps that can stall a woman's career will slowly close as a new generation moves up in the workforce and as women start their own enterprises.

"We're in a transition from a patriarchal, command-and-control way of running organizations to a more diverse, inclusive way," Imm says. "The traditional structure isn't appealing to women. That pendulum is swinging but there's a long way to go to address work life balance and how we want to work now." By having a "seat at the table" Imm can be an influential part of the change she expects to come.

RENEE CHRISTOFF, MBA '91

Vice President and Head of Global Associate
Engagement + Corporate Responsibility, T. Rowe Price

Renee Christoff was halfway through an MBA program in New York when her husband's job moved them to Baltimore. Christoff was working in finance, though her academic background was in political science and she had a Master's degree in European History.

"Because I had such a liberal arts background I pursued the MBA to leverage the other side of my brain," she states. "Getting the MBA made me more well-rounded and gave me a better appreciation for the business environment in which I was working."

She chose to complete her MBA at UB because she could go part-time on her own schedule. She liked that her fellow students were also working professionals, bringing maturity to the classroom as well as opportunities for her to build her local business network. She states that the professors were "rock solid" and brought a diversity of experience in work and academia to the program.

It is useful background for her current role. Christoff and her team analyze employee surveys to take the pulse

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of employee satisfaction and develop programs to support employee experience and engagement. She also creates corporate responsibility programs and community engagement opportunities for T. Rowe Price employees.

During her MBA program, Christoff says, "I took an international marketing class and one of the speakers was from McCormick. It really ignited my interest in international marketing, something I hadn't thought about at all. I now work for a global company and it all ties nicely to my international politics background and to my understanding of how things work across different cultures and backgrounds and how you make that work in a diverse corporate culture."

MICHELLE BOARDMAN, MBA '08

Senior Manager, Branding & Publications, Global
Engagement & Communications, Jhpiego

Boardman's journey to her MBA began at an unlikely spot: the Allentown Museum in Pennsylvania where she was working as a curator.

"I'd started looking at a career change because my specialty was in historic and contemporary textiles and there were not many museums with a textile collection big enough to warrant a curator," she recalls. She accepted a position as the manager of creative services at the Baltimore

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Museum of Art (BMA) with an eye to moving up in administration. A colleague from the Allentown Museum suggested she obtain her MBA.

“He strongly urged me to go back and get an MBA in nonprofit management because nonprofits were becoming increasingly savvy about operating by standard business practices,” she explains. “Part of that pressure was coming from their boards, which were comprised of executives. It was important to be able to speak to them on their level.”

She entered the UB program in 2001 and took courses for years at night and on weekends, eventually graduating with a 4.0. She describes UB as “a motivational place,” where everyone was balancing work and family with their schooling, and where she discovered that she could excel in the finance and math classes she never imagined she would enjoy. No sooner had she received her MBA than she was promoted at the BMA.

Eight years later, after the 2016 election, Boardman decided it was time to career shift again, this time to an organization working to better the world. She was hired at Jhpiego, a non-governmental organization

(NGO) affiliated with Johns Hopkins University. Its 4,000 employees work on health issues facing women and families around the globe.

“I wouldn’t be where I am today without the MBA,” she states definitively. “I went after one of the largest NGOs in Baltimore, one doing innovative work, and they could see the leap I could make from the art world to global health, in part because of the MBA.”

TAYLOR JENKINS

Marketing assistant, Humentum; current MBA student

Taylor Jenkins jumped directly into the MBA program in 2016, fresh from her college graduation. She currently works in marketing at the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit, Humentum, and explains that it was important to her to have the competitive edge needed for career advancement.

“This gives me more skills, because even with my concentration in marketing I get so many different types of courses. It raises the stakes of the knowledge I have and that can be applied in many ways,” she explains. “It’s even more important now because it seems having a bachelor’s degree isn’t enough to advance in your career.”

Although she lives in Montgomery County, Jenkins says UB’s combination of flexibility and quality made the program a good fit. She’s able to take a combination of online and on-campus courses so she can manage work and school. “I think there’s a misconception that you don’t get as much out of online course work,” she notes, “but it’s extremely challenging—you must be very focused.”

She adds that UB is working hard to break down the stereotype that business is male dominated. “There is support for everyone, in general,” she says. “You see a diversity of men and women even when you go to the website to apply. As I’ve been there taking classes I’ve always felt respected and valued. There may not be as many women in class but I’ve never felt intimidated.”

Jenkins is still figuring out her future. She likes her current work in digital marketing but she also aspires to start her own business. “That’s one of the things I really appreciate about this program,” she explains. “It gives me the flexibility to stick with marketing, which I love, but also gives me the potential to do my own thing.”

J. M. KITNER

Current MBA student

Kitner always knew she wanted to get her MBA. However, when she completed her undergraduate degree in 2008 in an economy in shambles, she chose to be strategic rather than accrue more debt from school loans. She also wanted to get real world experience before going after another degree, anticipating it would enrich her MBA program. When she moved to Baltimore from Florida four years ago, the time was right to return to school.

UB’s flexibility, particularly the option to do coursework online, appealed to her. She’s found the program insightful, with a good balance of discussion forums, case studies, readings and real life experiences. She’s already using skills from her theoretical leadership and marketing classes.

Kitner expects the MBA will give her greater flexibility and marketability as she navigates her career path. “There is still a glass ceiling,” she states. “I feel that additional education will reduce that for me.”

“I want to thrive in whatever role I choose to pursue in my career and the program will help me do that,” she continues. “The program has challenged my thought processes, it’s challenged how I interact with people, it’s challenged the way I approach and solve problems. There are so many benefits attached to the MBA in terms of professional and personal growth.” Kitner theorizes that many women opt out of the MBA program because they anticipate that the workload is intense and difficult to balance with the demands of work and life. “It is all true—it is intimidating and a lot of work,” she confirms. “This definitely stretched me out of my comfort zone.”

But, she continues, that does not mean it isn’t possible or worthwhile. Kitner hopes to lead by example and it appears to be working—a colleague told her recently that watching Kitner pursue her degree has inspired her to go back to get her own MBA.

“Even beyond the MBA, there’s still a lot of pressure on women to act a certain way—to not sound bossy, for example—and that holds women back,” she explains. “Historically speaking, the world I’m in has been a man’s world and, across leadership, it continues to be. Representation matters. There’s a desire among women to do this, but you need representation so you can say: Yes, I can do it too.”

Christianna McCausland is a writer based in Baltimore.

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