BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

Accomplished Women Pursue UB’s MBA Program for Career Advancement
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UB’s MBA program is attracting more women than average to the still male-dominated degree

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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 seats in the United States and abroad—was just 37.4 percent in 2017. That’s up 4 percent from 33.4 percent in the fall of 2013.

Not so at the University of Baltimore, where female enrollment in the MBA programs has not only plateaued, but that the number of females applying to the MBA program has increased in recent years. Nor at the University of Baltimore, where minority and female enrollment in the MBA program for fall 2017 was 21 percent. Why are women still under-represented in MBA programs? And what is UB doing differently?

Women in UB’s MBA program are utilizing the degree in a wide variety of professions. In the following pages, current and former MBAs 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 2011, 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 where she wants to go 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 she’s received since.

“The MBA helped me to understand 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 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.

“Once you have that degree and can speak that language, you get a seat at the table where strategic decisions are made.” —TRACY IMM

**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 Museum of Art, where she found a creative outlet and the opportunity to work closely with corporate benefactors.

“Because I had such a liberal arts background I pursued the MBA to leverage the other side of my brain.” —RENEE CHRISTOFF

**RENEE CHRISTOFF, MBA ’91**

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

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 International Relations.

“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.”

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Michelle Boardman describes UB as "a motivational place," where everyone was balancing work and family.

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.

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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-campuses 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.

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“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, “impossible 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.”

Christianne McGauld is a writer based in Baltimore.