

THE LIST

EDUCATION

Business schools help grads hone their skills

BY PETER KEY

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PHLBizTechED

Organizations expect area business school graduates to have the basic skills they need.

Increasingly, however, they're looking for more.

"We're consistently hearing, too, that these people need the soft skills," said MarySheila McDonald, the associate dean of La Salle University's School of Business.

That's why La Salle's business school holds dinners at which students are taught proper etiquette and mock networking nights where freshmen can practice their networking skills in low-pressure situations.

The school also tries to get its students professional experience through internships and co-ops, which McDonald said are in keeping with the philosophy of its namesake, John Baptist de la Salle, who started a network of schools for poor boys.

In addition to professional experience, the Villanova School of Business offers its students international experience. Its Global Citizens Program enables



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Widener professor Yvonne Lederer-Antonucci with students.

the freshmen who were the first to be offered – and accept – admittance to VSB the opportunity to spend a semester living and working in London or Singapore.

Students who complete that program, which is now in its 10th year, can follow it up by becoming Global Leadership Fel-

lows. They complete specialized sections of required courses, take a focused course in global leadership, study abroad a second time and get the opportunity to work with a senior global executive mentor.

Although both programs are meant for top students, the majority of VSB students

get some international exposure. About a fourth of its students have a major or minor in international business and more than half study abroad before graduating.

Another way students can impress potential employers is by acquiring cutting-edge skills, such as the ability to analyze the large amounts of data that organizations receive about themselves and their operations on a seemingly nonstop basis.

"With the fast pace of the economy coupled with the growth of the economy, it's increased the need for a skilled person to understand how it all works," said Yvonne Lederer Antonucci, who directs Widener University's Business Process Innovation Center.

Widener's School of Business Administration is trying to produce those people through its business informatics major, which it launched last fall.

Antonucci said interest in the major is high enough that both of the required courses she'll teach for it this fall are full.

"Several existing students in other majors transferred their majors and we're seeing increased transfers from community colleges coming into this major," she said.



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