

# MBA/Executive Education

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## Women Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow

**KELLY DOUGLAS** earned an online master certificate in applied project management from Villanova University in 2010, paving the way for her position as an assistant vice president at Rabobank in Roseville, Calif. So it was only logical, she says, that when she needed to learn more about her new assignment involving data warehousing, this is where she returned.

"I had such a good experience with the first online course and found it as useful in my career," Douglas says. Last October, she enrolled in Villanova's online Business Intelligence Master Certificate program and again the payoff was immediate. "There were pieces of what I was learning in the course that I was able to apply to my day-to-day work right from the start," she says. "I was able to ask better questions and learn from the other students in the course."

Women still comprise less than 40% of MBA students in the U.S., but a growing number of colleges and universities are offering executive education courses for women.

40% of MBA students in the U.S., but a growing number of colleges and universities are offering executive education courses for women to boost their careers once they're in the workforce.

Cheri DeClerio, assistant dean for MBA programs at Michigan State University's Eli Broad College of Business, says that as women's careers progress, many fall behind not only in pay but also in the opportunities they seek.

"It's not about talent or ability. It's a confidence issue," DeClerio says.

To help reverse that, MSU offers an Executive Leadership for Women program designed for female professionals who have been in the workforce for at least eight years. The intensive four-day course focuses on negotiating, leadership strategies, effective networking, and personal brand building. For professionals who need the flexibility of an online course, MSU offers certificates in strategic leadership and management as well.

Duquesne University in Pittsburgh ranks No. 2 among top universities in the country for the percentage of women enrolled in an MBA program (65.5%), behind No. 1-ranked University of North Carolina at Greensboro (65.9%). Still, according to Cheri R. McFarlin, dean and professor of management at the Palumbo Donahue School of Business at Duquesne, more needs to be done. "Business schools can play a critical role in preparing women for senior leadership positions when they focus on collaboration and provide students hands-on opportunities to tackle real problems, challenge convention, and overcome stereotypes," he says.

Duquesne develops ethical business leaders who possess an entrepreneurial mindset, understand sustainability principles, and know how to make change happen. Students enhance their practical wisdom through consulting projects, international network, executive classes, and an engaged network of successful alumni.

"An executive MBA distinguishes leaders and prepares them for success in the C-suite," says Leslie Petty, assistant dean of Wisconsin-evening and executive MBA programs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Wisconsin School of Business. Wisconsin's 20-month executive MBA offers team-based learning with global perspectives to provide the leadership and networking experiences working executives need to advance, Petty adds. "Women executives benefit from the invaluable mentoring, networks, and resources of fellow leaders at several higher."

Accordingly, the C-suite should become a sweet spot for women execs. ■

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