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Best Practices : School of Business emphasizes career success without sacrificing ethics

April 01, 2009 | Teresa Dunham

In a time of bank bailouts and questionable corporate decisions, Liberty University is producing trustworthy businessmen and women — professionals with a conscience who take personal responsibility and put their reputations before ego or money even when it's not easy.

“We teach not only business or organizational ethics, but we’ll integrate our biblical worldview into every course. So no longer is it simply a case of, ‘You should do right because that’s good business.’ We say you should do right because that is what a Christian believer does. Whether anybody is watching or not, your character is on the line,” said Bruce Bell, Dean of LU’s School of Business.

In his view, the original sin recorded in Genesis leads to various business problems such as a WorldCom or an Enron scandal — and his school is making students aware of that.

LU senior finance major Robert Sudden, 21, said he realizes temptation will be high when he enters his chosen field.

“When you’re dealing with financial statements for multi-billion dollar companies, it’s very easy to sweep things under the rug or disguise what things really are or to deceive your shareholders by making it seem like you’re in a better position than you really are,” he said.

He doesn't plan on giving in, though.

"I definitely am aware that it's a dog-eat-dog world out there, and I'm prepared to stand my ground. If ethical stands that I make will cost me, then so be it. That's the price that I pay for saying that I stand up for what I believe in. I know that it will definitely be worth it in the end," said Sudden, who hopes to run a Fortune 500 company someday.

Before he came to LU, Sudden already had strong ideals and morals — but LU's business education reinforced that worldview.

"We've not only focused on being successful and being profitable as a company but doing it the right and ethical way and taking great care for the community you're in and the social responsibility," he said.

Along with excellent job skills, Sudden's integrity and honesty are marketable qualities these days.

"That's what I think a lot of companies are really looking for," said Bell. Right on the Money

If you're going to live morally, sometimes you have to work twice as hard as everyone else to stay ahead — and LU's School of Business prepares its students to do that.

"We're trying to train people to go out and get good jobs. We want to know what the marketplace is looking for," said Dr. Paul Young, chairman of the marketing department.

The School of Business offers two undergraduate degrees — a B.S. in Accounting or Business — with Business specializations including finance, economics, marketing, management, international business or the newly approved human resources management program. Liberty University also offers an M.B.A. and an M.S. in Management or Accounting through LU Online.

"I wanted to pick a major that I could use in the real world, not only to make money to support myself, but something that employers are looking for," said Lauren Fontaine, 23, who took most of her courses in human resource management.

Junior accounting major Kylie Ahier believes the business field will allow her to reach out to others in a positive way.

"A lot of people think accountants are crunching numbers — not really people-persons. You're interacting with people all the time, which I don't think a lot of people realize," she said. "People really open up to you ... Your finances are something really personal, so they feel like they can talk to you about other stuff, too."

No matter which undergraduate track a student chooses, the core curriculum integrates accounting, economics, business law, marketing, management, strategic planning and business policy, organizational ethics and other disciplines that provide a strong overview of modern

business. Most of the specializations also include clubs or honor societies that are ideal for networking.

Whenever possible, students learn through hands-on methods and case studies — and they even solve real-world challenges from businesses such as Centra Health in Lynchburg, Va.

“It really does make them competitive,” said Bell.

Real-World Advice

Currently 1,200 students are majoring in accounting or business on campus, making it a popular area of study. It takes 20 full-time residential faculty members to handle the demand, not counting some of the courses offered through LU Online. Almost all of the professors hold doctorates and come to the university from highly respected employers such as the former Chase Manhattan Bank and AT&T.

Bob Mateer, chairman of the Department of Finance and Economics, has been teaching at LU for 25 years — but he also enjoyed three decades in the business world.

“I introduce my experience into the classroom constantly. The students like it, and they benefit from it compared to the typical text,” said 75-year-old Mateer, who has a reputation as a tough professor. “I’m not averse to flunking somebody who doesn’t try hard enough.”

He’s also a firm believer in dressing for success. That’s why finance students are offered five points toward their final grade if they dress in business attire — including coat and tie for the males — every single day. High Hopes

Expectations are high at the School of Business, but students are meeting the challenge.

“For the past several years we have had students who have been recognized in the Wall Street Journal among the Students of the Year, and those are high achievements for us as a school. It’s because of the hard work of the faculty and the students themselves,” said Bell.

Alumni are doing well, too. They’re starting their own businesses and taking high positions in companies such as Bank of America.

“We have students that are serving literally all over the country and probably around the world who are doing extraordinarily well,” Bell said.

For more information about Liberty University's school of Business visit [their webpage](#).