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THE MULTICULTURAL BUSINESS
SCHOLARS PROGRAM AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS: A
COMPREHENSIVE MENTORING/
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"THE DEVELOPMENT AND STATUS OF THE MULTICULTURAL BUSINESS SCHOLARS PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS: A COMPREHENSIVE MENTORING/SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM"

Renate R. Mai-Dalton

Director and Professor of Business
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It was the goal of the Multicultural Business Scholars Program to attract talented students from underrepresented groups who were interested in a business major and to mold them into leaders in business and in their communities.

Introduction

The Multicultural Business Scholars Program (MBSP) was founded in 1992 in the School of Business at the University of Kansas (KU) with seven students. It was the goal of the program to attract talented students from underrepresented groups who were interested in a business major and to mold them into leaders in business and in their communities.

As of spring, 2000, the Program consisted of 35 students from African-, Hispanic-, and Native-American backgrounds. This represents a 500% growth rate over the past seven years of the Program's existence. By the end of summer 2000, we will have graduated twenty-one students. Of these, two students were the top graduates of the school in their year of graduation. One student has studied in Mexico on a Fulbright scholarship, a second student was a Rhodes Scholar nominee at KU. Several students have returned to school to pursue graduate degrees, one of these has passed the Bar examination and practices law. Most students have participated in Study Abroad experiences, including in Japan, France, Italy, Spain, Costa Rica and Ghana. As this information indicates, the MBSP is challenging the students to develop into true scholars. During the past five years, the group GPA has been about 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. The retention rate for seven years is 85 percent. The range of ACT scores for students currently in the Program is 17-32. The mean is 24.

Program Components

The Program consists of four main components: Scholarships, faculty-mentor meetings, group business meetings and attendance at educational cultural events.

The MBSP allocates scholarships that are renewable every semester, provided the students fulfill the conditions of a contract which they sign upon entrance into the program. The contract requires that students maintain a 2.5 GPA, attend all of their classes, come to all mandatory group meetings, and are prepared to regularly meet with the program director, who is also a professor at the School, and additional faculty mentors. The scholarship level is based both on need and merit and dependent on the level of donations to the program.

Students are admitted to the program as incoming freshmen or transfer students. They immediately have access to the director and/or faculty mentors in the School of Business, even though they will not enter the school before their junior year. Student-Mentor meetings take place regularly and focus on an assessment of academic results since the last meeting. The students receive advice and help in the form of tutoring, when necessary. Discussions include time and crisis management, financial issues and career planning, such as jobs and internships while in school and starting positions after graduation.

Once a month, the director and the students meet as a group and discuss group issues, such as academic progress, financial aid, internship preparation, etc. Some of these mandatory group meetings bring in business representatives and donors who share relevant information about the job market. Other meetings include family and friends of the students to develop a strong network for the group. Usually, these meetings are followed by attendance at cultural events, on and off campus, such as the theater, ballet, concerts and museum visits.

Long-Term Plans and Outlook

The MBSP will continue to grow in proportion to the donor contributions it can secure. To accommodate this growth, the model for the program was changed during the past year. About half of the students are now also being mentored by fifteen School of Business faculty in addition to being seen, less frequently, by the director. This change will further familiarize faculty with students in the program, and the students will benefit from the guidance and mentoring of additional professionals.

We continue to expose students to the larger university community where some hold positions in student government, their racial/ethnic student groups and in their fraternities and sororities. In addition, students learn to make presentations at conferences, board of advisors meetings, graduation exercises, etc. In short, students have the opportunity to grow beyond their circle of friends within the group and are being groomed to become successful young people in their careers and communities.

The MBSP is successful because of the commitment of the School of Business administration, its donors and other faculty. Other schools and departments inside and outside of KU are interested in the program, and it is being duplicated in other areas.

Presenter:

Renate Mai-Dalton was born, raised and has worked in business in Berlin, Germany. Since coming to the USA, she has obtained her Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology at the University of Washington in the area of leadership. Currently, she teaches Organizational Behavior, Organization Change and Development, and Management of Workforce Diversity at the graduate and undergraduate levels. She has served as the Director of Doctoral Programs in the KU School of Business and is the founder and Director of the Multicultural Business Scholars Program. She has received numerous teaching and service awards, including the 1999 William T. Kemper Fellowship for Teaching Excellence, the Outstanding Ph.D. Mentor Award (1995, 1996),

the HOPE (Honoring Outstanding Progressive Educator) Award (1996), an award presented by the University senior class to the outstanding educator. She was inducted in the University of Kansas Women's Hall of Fame in 1995. Her research interests and publications are in the area of leadership, cultural diversity, and organization development. She has consulted with private and governmental agencies and applied her work in the above areas. Her papers have been published in such journals as "Leadership Quarterly", "Group & Organization Studies", "Journal of Business Ethics" and "Journal of Applied Psychology".