



Accomplished Professors

While business professors at New Jersey colleges and universities excel at teaching, they are simultaneously renowned for achievements that include research, books, presentations and scholarly articles.

By George N. Saliba, Managing Editor

*Dr. Steven Phelan - who recently was named the William G. Rohrer Professorial Chair in the Rohrer College of Business at Glassboro-based Rowan University - answers questions about his scholarly articles, his presentations at professional meetings and his views on academia, during his interview with *New Jersey Business* magazine. He best summarizes his achievements by noting he has been a professor for 11 MBA programs on four different continents, and that this perhaps gives him a "wider perspective." If he had wanted, Phelan could have added that since 1989, he has received seven significant awards and honors for his teaching, research, scholarship and/or advising as a faculty member.*

Overall, Phelan says, "The things that give me the most pleasure are mentoring students, or mentoring companies, and helping them succeed in what they are trying to do. I have supervised PhD students and seen them go on to careers in academia, and I have mentored companies and seen them go on to success."

On these pages, *New Jersey Business* celebrates accomplished business professors and explores how their activities outside the classroom enhance their ability to teach. While it has been alleged that some professors across the country are so research-entrenched that they have become disengaged from their students, that is not the case with the professors profiled here. These professors almost universally express the need for *balancing* research and teaching, and underscore the beneficial interplay between the two endeavors.

Professor Robert A. Saldarini, academic department chair of accounting, finance and business at Paramus-based Bergen Community College - who has authored numerous articles regarding the use of technology in teaching and who possesses both an MBA and a master's degree in liberal studies - says: "When I am commissioned to speak or asked to write, it almost becomes like a college assignment: I had better get up to speed. I am going to stand in front of all these people and they are going to ask me questions on contemporary issues. What I learn 'kicks it into fifth gear.' ... Since I stay involved, it is like going to a gym and working out. There is a regimen."

Dr. Jacqueline McGlade is dean of graduate programs and associate professor, business, at College of Saint Elizabeth, Morristown. She has presented at an array of conferences, authored numerous articles and even written for films, documentaries and non-fiction television series. She explains, "We certainly want teaching to absorb [professors'] attention and their commitment to the greatest extent, but we don't want them to lose connection with the emerging research in their fields, or the emerging ideas or thoughts in their fields. Students expect us to bring that knowledge to



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In McGlade's view, a key is for professors to understand what is being produced by their peers - and match it with their own scholarship. She adds, "I can tell students what I think regarding post-[World War II] development of the international political economy, and they might go back to their companies and say, 'I never knew that. I am working with a Chinese colleague and I

did not know this was the development of this certain business sector.' It may give them a greater understanding of how they can approach their new partner. That's why research and bringing the freshest expertise to students is important. You never know when they are going to need it."

Whether he is mentoring others, publishing, or presenting at conferences in locales that have included Vienna, Milan, Paris or Philadelphia, Rowan University's Dr. Phelan believes the motif underlying his work involves learning why one company performs better than another. Invoking the rich connection between teaching, research and working with others, Phelan feels his experiences in the business community and working with start-up companies informs both his research and teaching.

"I look for areas where there are problems, where there is a lack of understanding by businesspeople - or by people I come across - and then maybe that's an area where I'll do more research," he elaborates. "And I'll use those stories in my classroom to illuminate points for students and show how certain theories can help us understand a situation."

Cyril Benichou, a business consultant who focuses on corporate bankruptcy and reorganization and turnarounds, also teaches. His pupils include: West Point non-cadet military personnel; European School of Economics' students; St. John's University students; Post University students (in Connecticut); and students at Trenton-based Thomas Edison State College. While his titles at the various institutions range from lecturer and adjunct professor to academic consultant and mentor, one thing remains constant: Benichou's formal education in Paris, London and Huntington, New York - as well as his vast business expertise - penetrates the classroom.

Yet, Benichou says, “[Learning] is a two-way street. You teach; you learn. And it is always the same thing with every classroom and with every student.

“When it comes to teaching, you have to be yourself. You have to be the most natural person you can be. It is always appreciated by the students. I would say don’t be too formal, because you may have a problem building a bond with your students. I am always trying to bond. Not a relationship like a friend or something, but a bond – sharing in my own experience so it could be useful to the students. And they do the same with me. I learn a lot.”

Whether working with clients or his students, Benichou explains, “I can quote one of my professors in law school. He used to say, ‘Being a professional is 90 percent psychology and feeling people, and 10 percent technical skill. And he was right.’”

While pop culture films may portray college and university professors as haughty, those interviewed for this article were instead especially personable, even though they possess the kind of encyclopedic knowledge that might drive a person toward arrogance. Behind the articles, books, speeches and other accomplishments are professors who ultimately interact with their students.

Dr. Raza Mir is a professor in the marketing and management department at Wayne-based William Paterson University. He specializes in the area of knowledge transfer across national boundaries in multinational corporations, as well as issues relating to power and exploitation in organiza-



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tional settings (and their link to broader social and economic regimes). One of the books he co-authored is titled, “Organizations, Markets and Imperial Formations: Towards an Anthropology of Globalization.”

Mir, too, has an appreciation for both research and teaching, but underscores an additional benefit of professors’ non-classroom expertise: “People learn that somebody from William Paterson University publishes and presents, and is the editor of a journal and so forth. I think that is how the reputation of the university gets mildly enhanced. ... There are a lot of other ways in which [the university earns its reputation], but that’s how I do my bit.”

On the other hand, like so many of his peers, Mir bemoans the fact that the broader academic world sometimes

places too much emphasis on professors’ research – especially research that does not lead to “direct action.” But, he adds, “The other side is also true: Many times, at many of the smaller schools, not enough attention is paid to research, and as a result, students do not benefit from professors’ insights.”

Rowan University’s Phelan takes pride in being “across the real business world, so to speak, and being informed about issues – and moving among people who are trying to start companies and make a difference.

“One of the attractions of working in the field of entrepreneurship is that you do actually get to do some hands-on stuff assisting companies. That is very rare in a lot of academic departments now. I feel I am straddling the academic and business worlds, and those people are becoming harder and harder to find. Retired executives get pushed out of business schools and you can’t get a position unless you are successful in the top academic journals.”

Business professors at New Jersey colleges and universities ultimately promote mastery of their broad disciplines and prepare students to perform in an increasingly competitive and global economy.

Bergen Community College’s Saldarini concludes, “Few Americans sit down and read, for example, *The New York Times* and get the whole story. They are used to these quick little bits of information, without ever really understanding the whys and hows. As faculty, it is our obligation to get in there and ‘push it a little bit.’” **NJB**