



Donna Goss, co-director of Northampton Community College's Center for Business & Industry, on career development, higher ed and professional advice. **Page 13**

Restructured MBA at Moravian accentuates leadership

By **BRENDA LANGE**

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With its focus on leadership and educating students with the ability to turn theory into practice in a business setting, Moravian College's restructured Master of Business Administration program is attracting attention in the region.

Changes instituted two years ago are bearing fruit, according to Katie P. Desiderio, associate professor of management and chair of the Economics and Business Department at the college in Bethlehem.

Prior to the restructuring, the graduate program was part of the college, but



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— **Katie P. Desiderio,**
Economics
and Business
Department chair

separate. Today, it is part of the school's Economics & Business Department, creating greater synergy between undergraduate programming, faculty and the graduate program, said Desiderio, who oversaw the institution of the team approach.

“We've seen great strides in operating as one, drawing on the expertise of faculty members to serve both graduate and undergraduate programs, and we have had an increase in student inquiries and applications,” she said.

The program, which has 90 students enrolled, emphasizes three areas:

- Leadership is the focus.
- The capstone

course is a practical experience where students work closely with startup businesses in Bethlehem.

■ A staff position instituted last November, the student experience mentor, offers students personalized guidance as they progress.

“The focus on leadership is unusual in an MBA program,” says Lizabeth Kleintop, associate chair of graduate programming and accreditation. “And it is better at producing those who can take ideas and put them into practice in an organization.”

MANAGING ENTREPRENEURS

Hands-on experience with real businesses is not just for internships anymore, but a required course at Moravian.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Clint Doyle (left), student experience mentor for graduate and adult education at Moravian, helps MBA students juggle work, class and family life.

Through a management course on leading change in organizations, students have worked with 11 local startups to date, identified by the Community and Economic Development Department of Bethlehem.

“The students get a unique experience. They run their own team, go out into the community, meet with entrepreneurs and consult with them to help take their businesses forward,” Kleintop said.

“Many times, those entrepreneurs don't have the necessary business skills, although they have the ideas. It's been great having the partnership with the city and helping to improve economic development.”

One of those businesses, Soltech Solutions LLC, produces a light-emitting diode interior grow light, the Aspect. Moravian's MBA students worked with the founders to help get the business up and running this spring and were featured in the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development's Small Business Spotlight newsletter.

BALANCING STUDENT NEEDS

Students can finish their MBA in as little as one year and may choose from six concentrations – accounting, business analytics, health care management, general management, human resource management and supply chain management – which help students meet their individual, specific career goals.

Eight-week, hybrid classes held online and in the classroom, scheduling that helps the mostly adult students juggle work, class and family life and the commitment to ensuring the students are part of the Moravian community also set apart the program.

The student experience mentor, Clint Doyle, who earned his bachelor's degree in business from Moravian last year and is about to earn his MBA, helps meet that commitment.

CORPORATE EXPERIENCE

Connecting the MBA students with one another, building the team and ensuring they feel a part of the greater Moravian community are critical to the success of the program, Desiderio said.

“The pillar of the Moravian experience is community, and we are dedicated to ensuring the graduate students are part of that community,” she said. “The student experience mentor allows students to know they are supported and important and helps them through the process.”

Doyle said he believes he has an edge in his position. An older student, he recently has been right where his “clients” are.

“No matter if these students are in a class for only eight weeks and then done, they are people to the professors, not just a name or a number,” he said. “... You can brainstorm with the professors – most of whom are at the Ph.D. level and have years of experience in the corporate world. They bring the classroom to life, take feedback and offer open forms of communication.”

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