UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB PROGRAM TEACHES BUSINESS SKILLS TO SCIENTISTS

In the world of industry it is called the clash of the Coats and the Suits.

In one corner, creativity-driven scientists and engineers designing consumer-friendly, problem-solving products.

And in the other corner, profit-minded marketers and managers trying to keep the company on firm financial footing.

It's the Einsteins vs. the Trumps.

Dilbert vs. the Pointy-haired Boss. In this polarized land of conflict and misunderstanding, an innovative new program at the University of California, Santa Barbara is trying to establish some common ground.

Recognizing that traditional graduate programs do not adequately prepare scientists and engineers to understand and participate in the business side of industry, UCSB's year-old Graduate Program in Management Practice (GPMP) is striving to give Ph.D. students headed for non-academic careers a supplemental education in business management.

And with American colleges and universities experiencing a glut of professors, more new Ph.D.s than ever before are spurning academia to enter the business world.

"Increasingly, our advanced graduates are seeking employment in non-academic settings," said John Lammers, GPMP director and a UCSB professor of communication.

"But the skills necessary to succeed in management positions differ from those necessary in academe."

To acquire those skills, GPMP students take classes in business communication, management, finance and marketing and serve a 160-hour management internship -- all in addition to their other graduate studies and research.

At the conclusion -- the first group will complete the program in the fall of 2000 -- the students will be awarded a Certificate in Management Practice.

Far more important than the certificate, however, is the knowledge learned in the classroom and the experience gained on the job as an intern.

GPMP student Claudine Prowse saw first-hand the misunderstandings that can occur between Coats and Suits when she went to work at a biotech company after earning a bachelor's degree in bioengineering.

"If you have only a business background, it's hard to communicate to your scientific peers what is important, why they need to meet a certain deadline," Prowse said. "And if you are on the scientific end of it, there's a tendency to say, "We can't develop the product just any way you tell us to. You really don't understand what we're doing.'

"So there is a lot of miscommunication."

Now back in school working on a Ph.D. in biochemistry, Prowse sees the GPMP as a big step toward elimination of such misunderstanding.

Proof of it was driven home this summer when she reported for her GPMP internship in the marketing department at Dako, a Danish biotech company with a branch in Carpinteria.

"I'm doing something that is completely different than I have ever done before," said Prowse, who was immediately asked to define the market segment for a line of cancer markers the company makes.

"My supervisor started talking about market segments and market demand -- the classical things we had talked about in our marketing class.

And, because I had been given the vocabulary, I understood."

There were 22 people in the GPMP's first group. Prowse and Kirk Miller, who is working on a Ph.D. in physics are among the first seven to get internships.

Finding internships seems to be the program's biggest stumbling block so far, Lammers said.

With many students yet to place from last year's group and 30 more signed up to begin the program this fall, Lammers is eager to hear from companies interested in taking advantage of the program.

Each firm is asked to provide the student with management training and experience.

Some internships are paid, others are not.

The students, all on the verge of earning advanced degrees, bring their education and the motivation that has driven them to earn it.

"These are all exceptional students who are eager to learn and perform," Lammers said.

Ran Bullard, director of engineering for the Clear Channel Santa Barbara radio group where Miller has been serving his internship, said the program has paid dividends for his company.

"It's been a total success for us," Bullard said. "The guy is amazing. He just thrives on work. And I don't have to say, why don't you do this, or why don't you do that -- he just does it.

"I just hope he sticks around after his internship."

Miller said his experience at Clear Channel has been priceless.

"I was working with the department head, learning what his job is like and what skills are important," Miller said.

Miller got to try his hand using those skills in the supervision of two undergraduate interns.

GPMP student Ben Juricek, a chemical engineering doctoral candidate, said the program fills an important niche.

"I think the Ph.D. programs here prepare you more for academia than they do for an industry job," he said.

"I think this shores up a hole that might otherwise have been left in my education."

The program is a product of a joint faculty and administration effort of UCSB's Bren School of Environmental Science and Management, the College of Engineering, the College of Letters and Science and the Graduate Division and reflects the university's emphasis on interdisciplinary pursuits in education and research.

Though other universities attempt to provide science and engineering students with management training, the UCSB program -- the only one in the University of California system -- offers a broader curriculum and serves students from a wider field of academic endeavors, Lammers said.

"I think it's fair to say the program is cutting edge," he said.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.