

## **Mentors at work**

# **The PhD Project brings diversity to business school faculties**

*Many participants have years of real-world experience*

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**D**r Alisha Malloy's first teaching gig was during high school. She was an Inroads participant and was asked to lead an introductory computer programming course for twenty other high-school students. She got a crash course in different learning styles and effective teaching methods. "It showed me that everyone doesn't grasp things the same way," Malloy says.

Even then Malloy was a natural in front of a class. But it wasn't until years later that she decided to make teaching her career. She held exciting IT jobs in the U.S. Navy and with Sprint before stumbling on a magazine advertisement about the PhD Project ([www.phdproject.org](http://www.phdproject.org)). She found that the program could open doors into the world of academia, and she rediscovered her love for teaching. She's currently an assistant professor of computer information systems in the school of business at North Carolina Central University (Durham, NC).



Dr Alisha Malloy, PhD Project mentor.

The PhD Project helped her get her doctorate and then tapped her to be a mentor for other participants. "What we're trying to do is increase the number of minority professors in business schools. The PhD Project provides networking and mentoring opportunities," Malloy says.

The multi-million-dollar program is led by a coalition of 157 universities and some of America's top companies and organizations, including the KPMG Foundation, the Graduate Management Admission Council, Citigroup Foundation, AACSB International, AICPA, Goldman Sachs & Co, Hewlett-Packard Co, the Merck Co Foundation and more.

Since the program's founding in 1994 the number of minority professors at U.S. business schools has nearly tripled, from 294 to 812. Nearly 400 minorities are currently enrolled in doctoral programs and will start teaching within the next five years.

The project targets African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans who are U.S. citizens or permanent U.S. residents. Like Malloy, many of the PhDs who come through the project have done so after spending significant time in another career.

Malloy was introduced to the program through the PhD Project Conference, a two-day event held each November in Chicago. Those interested in attending must first complete an application, which is reviewed by leaders of various doctoral programs. If they are accepted, they receive a formal invitation. The PhD Project pays for participants' round-trip flight and hotel stay.

Malloy took the GMAT a month later and the following year entered the doctoral program at the College of Business Administration at Georgia State University (Atlanta, GA), where she received a doctorate in computer information systems in 2002.

Once a student enters a doctoral program, he or she becomes part of the PhD Project doctoral student association in the appropriate discipline. The association is a networking/support group that ensures the student has all the tools, techniques and resources to complete the degree. Malloy's doctoral student association had forty to sixty people who were at different stages in their doctoral pursuits and located throughout the country. She was encouraged to pick a "buddy" to steer her through her early days, and also call on mentors for guidance.

Her dissertation focused on infrastructure-based wireless communications networks and the issues surrounding quality of service.

"I found that there were ways to improve the wireless infrastructure, but it would require a cost-benefit analysis to determine if it was feasible," she says. "In mergers and acquisitions like Cingular and AT&T, the simulation can be used to decide what will give the best coverage and network."

Malloy grew up in Kansas City, MO. She's "the family expert on all things technical," she says with a chuckle. She learned Basic and Fortran on a RadioShack TRS 80, and the first computer she owned was a Commodore 64. She became captain of the computer team in high school and taught other high-school students about the Basic programming language.

During her senior year she attended a U.S. Armed Forces recruiting presentation and learned about the military academies. She became a member of the U.S. Naval Academy's Class of 1990 and soon got used to being in the minority. In her academy class there were 100 women and of those only twenty were African American. She was one of three that went into engineering.

After she graduated Malloy served six years of active duty as an officer. Her assignments included secure communications and war gaming simulations. "All of them involved information technology before the information superhighway became popular."

From 1993 to 1996 she was a database manager and administrative department head in Virginia Beach, VA. Malloy laughs as she recalls how people would come to

her office looking for Lieutenant Malloy, then try to hide their surprise that she was not a red-haired Irish male but an African American woman.

In 1995 she got her masters in engineering management from the College of Engineering at Old Dominion University (Norfolk, VA). "It got me to go the business route, to discover how as an engineer I could make a business better," Malloy says.

She resigned her naval commission in May 1996 and went to work for Sprint (Atlanta, GA) as a network analyst for a year and then as a business analyst for another year. She left in 1998 after discovering the PhD Project.

Today as a professor she focuses her courses on everything from introduction to information technology to data communications and networking to system analysis, design and implementation. She received the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) faculty mentor of the year award at the thirteenth annual institute on teaching and mentoring of the Compact for Faculty Diversity ([www.instituteonteachingandmentoring.org](http://www.instituteonteachingandmentoring.org)). The event brings together doctoral scholars and faculty mentors who participate in programs that support minority PhD students. Malloy currently mentors three students in the PhD Project.

"There's a point where you say, 'Am I in it for the money or to make a difference?'" she says. "I could be rich, but I'm happy to give back because so many people gave to me."

**D/C**