

ACHIEVING DIVERSITY

Program Trains Minorities in Social Entrepreneurship

Special Report: [Achieving Diversity](#)

By Caroline Preston

Harvard, Kellogg, and Wharton business schools have this in common when they vet applicants for much-coveted spots in their classes: They look favorably on graduates of programs run by the charity Management Leadership for Tomorrow.

Nearly 40 percent of the minority students at those top three business schools are alumni of the New York nonprofit group, which was started in 2002 to prepare members of minority groups to lead organizations.

Increasingly, Management Leadership for Tomorrow is giving those young people a sense of how they can contribute to nonprofit organizations after they finish business school, either by working for charitable causes or by serving as a trustee.

In June, participants in the charity's MBA Prep program were for the first time able to attend a daylong "boot camp" on social entrepreneurship along with similar sessions on marketing, consulting, and other business paths. (Social entrepreneurs often apply business principles to solve societal problems.)

Through the consideration of case studies at discussions led by employees of the Bridgespan Group, a nonprofit consulting firm, and the venture-philanthropy fund New Profit, the boot camp participants learned how to evaluate grant seekers and help charities become more effective.

Students also mingled with foundation and nonprofit leaders, discussing subjects such as how their skills could help charitable groups, when in their career would be the best time to move from the business to the nonprofit world, and options for balancing the low salaries of nonprofit organizations with student debt.

Supporters say Management Leadership for Tomorrow has the potential to become an important pipeline for recruiting talented minority leaders to nonprofit groups, just as it is now for companies such as Goldman Sachs and McKinsey.

Change of Plans

For Andrea Amory, who enrolled this fall at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, the boot camp provided confirmation that she wanted to spend her career helping charities expand and improve their operations.

"When I was learning about going back to business school, I thought perhaps I might become interested in other careers like marketing or consulting," says Ms. Amory, who conducted research for hedge funds and helped start a South African charity before attending business school.

"But it was clear to me from the boot camp that this was where I want to be," she says.

The event also gave her a chance to get contacts at Bridgespan and New Profit, two places she may seek a summer internship at after her first year of graduate school.

For other participants less familiar with the nonprofit world, the boot camp helped clarify the opportunities available and how management skills could be applied to charity jobs.

Among young people in Management Leadership for Tomorrow's MBA Prep program, the demand for information on doing social good was huge: Roughly 175 of the 200 people in the program applied to attend the boot camp, more than any other session.

While virtually all of the MBA Prep program's students are interested in solving social problems as part of their work, Ian Hardman, president of Management Leadership for Tomorrow, says most of the graduates probably will not end up spending the bulk of their careers in nonprofit organizations.

But efforts like the boot camp and other partnerships his charity is developing with foundations and nonprofit groups will match the young people's desire to help with concrete ways for doing so, he says.

Some alumni of the MBA Prep program may work at a corporation for a few years and then take a nonprofit job; others may serve on charity boards while they gain experience in business.

Elizabeth Riker, a partner at New Profit who manages the fund's support of Management Leadership for Tomorrow, is encouraging the nonprofit group to seek more partnerships with charities and to integrate nonprofit work into its curriculum.

"There's a real opportunity for the sector here," she says.

Ms. Riker adds, "It's exciting both for the short term, as a lot of these folks could be short-term hires and great new talent, but also in the long term, as we think about building up the capacity of the sector."