

# In Front of the Classroom

## Training Native PhDs as Business Professors

Text prepared by Barbara Sorensen  
with Barbra Wakshul and Lisa King

**I**n 1993, a group of academics and corporate representatives sharing a concern for the lack of diversity in corporate hiring pools sought a solution. Over the next several months, they initiated a systemic and fundamental program to correct a major problem: US business school faculties consisted of less than 2% minorities.

With no faculty of color in the front of the classroom, colleges and universities could not attract minorities to study business disciplines. There were no role models and an absence of natural and approachable mentors. Something needed to be done. In response to this overwhelming need, The PhD Project was created.

The program has been the principal reason for the increase in the number of African-American, Hispanic-American and Native American business school professors: in 1994 there were 294 minority business school professors, today there are almost 1,000. Furthermore, there are nearly 400 members of these underrepresented groups now in doctoral programs who will gain positions as college and university professors.

*Winds of Change* reached out to some of the current and past participants of The PhD Project to learn about their education, training and professional pursuits, in an effort to encourage more American Indians and Alaska Natives to consider working on college campuses as role models and mentors for future business leaders.



Joe Gladstone

### Joe Gladstone Blackfeet and Nez Perce

I am originally from the Pacific Northwest and I am currently a fourth-year management doctoral student at New Mexico State University in sunny Las Cruces. I have both bachelor and master's in public health degrees from the University of Montana and University of Arizona, respectively.

Indian Country has many medical doctors, juris doctorates (lawyers), and education doctors protecting our health, legal interests (although we need many more Native corporate lawyers), and discovering the best way to educate our children. Through business, our communities can improve our economies, which leads to higher health standards, legal strength, and higher educational achievement.

Management research extends beyond private and tribal businesses. My area [of study] includes tribal government and federal employees. We have many talented workers in these areas within our tribes, but many are promoted up the ranks with little formal management training. Business professors such as ourselves will contribute to developing those who manage our affairs, including medical directors, legal counsel, and our educators.

The PhD Project is important because it brings together our future Native business professors, those who will teach our undergrad and MBA students, so that they can return back to their communities to contribute to economic improvement. [Fellow PhD Project students] support each other

through our doctoral education, and that support continues through our research. We hope to attract more Native Americans who seek the life of university professors

### Amy Klemm Verbos Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians (Dowagiac, Michigan)

I just graduated and began a position as an assistant professor of management at the Beacom School of Business, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, South Dakota. For 17 years, I was a corporate, banking and real estate lawyer. I graduated with a bachelor's in business administration from University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh in 1981, a juris doctor degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School (Madison) in 1984, and a master's in public administration (emphasis in nonprofit organizations and management) from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2003.



Amy Klemm Verbos

I earned a PhD in management science, majoring in organizations and strategic management, from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in May 2009.

Sustainable business, green business, and renewable energy are newer, growing areas in business today. Entrepreneurial careers are open to anyone with good ideas, business planning and management skills.

How you manage is another important aspect of business education today that is a part of what I bring to my classrooms. Values-based management and servant leadership allow individuals to conduct business in a

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way that accords with their values and treats employees with respect and dignity. My research is connected to positive organizational scholarship, the study of organizations and processes that help individuals to thrive and develop to their full potential within organizations. Accountants, managers, human resource managers, and operations managers are always in demand, and with a values-based or positive organizational focus, we can change "business as usual."

The PhD Project is important both for the individuals who participate and for the many students we will see in our classrooms during our careers. I am very committed to the PhD Project mission, to diversify corporate America by encouraging growth in business faculty of color. I have found that my students of color appreciate the respect that I give them and my extra efforts to connect individuals to the support that they will need to finish their education and become successful in their chosen careers. Ultimately, it makes a positive difference to all my students.

The PhD Project provided the support I needed to get through my PhD program. It is one of the most difficult things to accomplish and the support was phenomenal! Moreover, I have been able to connect with others who are helping me to develop skills in teaching and research that address my Native American identity and values. This has given my path to a PhD a deeper meaning. Joe Gladstone, Deanna Kennedy, and I are working on two papers, one of which was presented at one of the Academy of Management conferences in Chicago. Stewart, Gladstone and I have also made connections with New Zealand scholars interested in bringing indigenous perspectives into management classrooms.

In addition, I was recently appointed to serve on a new non-gaming develop-

ment and investment board for my tribe. So, I am able to contribute through community service which ties into my experience and research very well.

### Dan Stewart Spokane Tribe

I am an associate professor of management at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington. I obtained my PhD in business administration (2002) from Stanford University. My field is organizational behavior.

Sustainable business is something that will likely be of interest to *Winds of Change* readers. For many years, when business executives used the word sustainable, they really meant sustainable profits. Now, there is a growing emphasis on creating business models that also protect the environment, so “sustainable” now means sustaining our natural resources, also. Since most American Indian tribes have long emphasized ecological responsibility as a cultural value, I think there is an emerging opportuni-



Dan Stewart

ty for mainstream businesses to learn something from the American Indian community.

The PhD project has been essential in putting together a critical mass of scholars who are interested in Native American business issues. Without the support of the PhD Project, I think that most of us would not have met. Since Native Americans are such a small proportion of the population, it's very easy for our issues to slip under the radar, which means that it would always be difficult to find others who are similarly interested in studying Native American business. By creating a social network

of American Indian scholars, The PhD Project has allowed some of us to finally find the others who will listen to our ideas and who will eventually work together to produce a stream of rigorous research that will contribute to our understanding of doing business successfully in Indian Country.

### Deanna Kennedy Cherokee

I just finished my doctorate at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. My family originates from Stillwell, Oklahoma, where many of my extended family still live. I received my PhD in management science from the Isenberg School of Business, University of Massachusetts Amherst (2009). I study team and group processes (cognition, communication, decision-making, etc.). I recently accepted a visiting assistant professor position at Texas A&M in College Station, Texas.

I see the importance of The PhD Project as presenting a social and support network. It helps minority PhD students succeed by giving us reasons to meet and exchange ideas or problems that others may not see. Furthermore, many of us continue to work together (across academic or disciplinary boundaries) on research projects.

I see many organizations forming teams to solve problems. I suspect that no matter what type of job students pursue these days or in what industry they pursue a job, they are probably going

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to find an opportunity or obligation to be on a team. Moreover, the trend is toward cross-functional or interdisciplinary teams. Indeed, national funding agencies and media sources are rewarding and publishing more interdisciplinary work these days, which is encouraging more of that type of work to be conducted. Therefore, future team members are probably going to be working with people who have dif-



Deanna Kennedy

ferent expertise and experiences from their own. This can present a complex situation that has the potential to solve the problem brilliantly or be an utter failure—it depends on the way the team members work together and how the team is managed. That is why I think students should take every opportunity to work on a team in school. Not only do students benefit from learning to be smarter and more efficient team members, but they will learn about team leadership approaches and techniques. This can help students understand their role as team members and ultimately, be more successful in their careers. ✦

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## The PhD Project

The PhD Project encourages African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and Native Americans to pursue PhDs in business in order to teach and mentor those coming up the pipeline. Founding members were KPMG Foundation, Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Citigroup and the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC). The KPMG Foundation administers the Project and is the principal source of annual funding.

To learn more or to apply for The PhD Project's annual conference, visit [www.phdproject.org](http://www.phdproject.org)