

# DBA Interactions

FALL 2019 UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI—ST. LOUIS

## DBA Program ranked among best in the world by CEO Magazine

For the second straight year, the Doctor of Business Administration program at the University of Missouri—St. Louis earned a top global ranking from CEO Magazine.

UMSL launched its DBA program in fall 2017, and it is already renowned for its quality faculty, diverse set of students and accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. It is one of 26 universities ranked across the globe and is in the top 16 among American institutions.

“This ranking affirms what we already know about UMSL’s DBA program: We have quality faculty, top-notch administrative support and a curriculum focused on engaged management scholarship that transforms high-level practitioners into practitioner-scholars,” said Ekin Pellegrini, director of executive education and the DBA program. “Our students will go on to become game-changing performers in their industries and advance the way business is done in their organizations and communities at large through informed practice and scholarly research.”

The UMSL College of Business Administration provides Missouri’s first and only AACSB-accredited DBA program offering research concentrations in all areas of business. The doctoral candidates, who have between 10 to 37 years of management experience, meet in person one weekend per month and collaborate in an online learning platform in between on-campus residencies.

UMSL DBA is now accepting applications for its next cohort to begin in the fall semester.



The full article from CEO Magazine begins on the following page.



**UMSL** | DBA  
Doctor of Business Administration



## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

As I write the opening note for the inaugural issue of the UMSL DBA newsletter, I can't help but reminisce about my own career goals when I first moved to the United States. Twenty years ago, my plan was to continue building my career at my then employer, a multinational pharmaceutical company, while earning my doctoral degree. I already had my research question on leadership in the Middle East, and I was passionate about studying it through a scholarly lens. The DBA program was already well-known and available in Europe. However, it quickly became apparent to me that a doctoral program for business professionals was not an option in the U.S. I had to make a tough choice between pursuing doctoral training or building a successful business career. I chose the former. Now, twenty years later, I have to pinch myself that I'm the Founding Director of an AACSB accredited, globally recognized DBA program in the U.S. I feel elated that our DBA students have the choice that I didn't have, to pursue doctoral studies while also continuing to excel in their careers.

As one of the first 25 AACSB accredited DBA programs in the United States, the UMSL DBA is a pioneer in providing a rigorous and innovative executive student experience. Accomplished industry practitioners collaborate with academically distinguished faculty to develop focused solutions to business problems, representing a paradigm shift in the current state of graduate business education.

Initiated only two years ago, the infant UMSL DBA is already an impactful leader in the industry - with much to be proud of and celebrate. We are delighted to be recognized by CEO Magazine as a top 16 program in the U.S. and a top 26 program in the world! Earlier this summer, I was honored to be nominated and selected to the Executive DBA Council (EDBAC) Board by more than 50 other DBA program directors. As an EDBAC Board Member, UMSL DBA now has a strong voice in shaping the future of DBA education. We work closely with eight leading DBA programs to foster excellence and innovation in executive doctoral degree programs. This distinguished national and global recognition is the result of the vision and support of the College of Business Administration and UMSL leadership, our distinguished faculty, and our exceptional DBA students. I am

particularly appreciative of the dedication, enthusiasm, and impeccable attention to detail provided by Francesca Ferrari, Becky Leathers, and Sebastian Montes, who have passionately devoted themselves to excellence in providing top level service to our executive scholars.

Our student learning community continues to be strong. DBA students commute to St. Louis three weekends a semester from 13 states all over the country. Since inception, we have successfully maintained 100% student retention - a testament to our students' engagement and satisfaction with the pedagogy, delivery, and overall quality of the program. We are quite proud of our inaugural DBA students (Class of 2020) who have started defending their dissertation proposals. Only one year into their program, our second cohort students (Class of 2021) are already impressively productive researchers. The Executive DBA Council (EDBAC) and its member schools host an Annual Conference on Engaged Management Scholarship. At this year's conference, our DBA students had five doctoral consortium participants, six poster presentations, and six paper presentations! Quite an impressive scholarly achievement!

As we enter the third year, we continue to prioritize ways that the DBA students feel connected to our campus no matter where they reside. We remain focused on training practitioner scholars who will be game changers in their industries and will have an equally transformative impact on their colleagues. We are excitedly leading forward into the 2019-2020 academic year. Class of 2022 will be on campus soon, bringing our total number of students close to 50, and we are ready!

*Ekin K. Pellegrini, PhD*  
*Founding Director, Doctor of Business Administration*

# THE UMSL DBA: LEARNING WITHOUT LIMITS

ALEXANDRA SKINNER  
TALKS TO EKIN PELLEGRINI

(abridged version of the interview in CEO Magazine)  
Full interview can be found on the DBA website



**Q. Whilst the programme is still relatively new, from an application standpoint, how much interest have you received from the local market and wider Midwest?**

We've been pleasantly surprised with the high level of demand since the programme began. We owe this primarily to UMSL's reputation in the region and the college's distinguished dual AACSB accreditation in both business and accounting.

We are centrally located in St. Louis, which is a hub of innovation featuring a rich and diverse business landscape, with established industry-leading enterprises and fast-growing midsize businesses. Our campus is located near the airport, making it conveniently close by for our out-of-state students. As much as we receive interest from the local market and the wider Midwest, half of our students commute from beyond the Midwest, and from all over the country.

**Q. What are the entry requirements for your DBA, and what advice would you give to potential applicants?**

We review each application as a whole. Admissions decisions are based on a composite of information including the candidate's previous academic performance, continuing education, managerial work experience, proposed research statements, and commitment to a rigorous doctoral programme. At the very minimum, we require 10 years of managerial work experience, a master's degree, proficiency in written and oral English, and continuing intellectual development.

I suggest that potential applicants research programmes well, and look at accreditation, the faculty's research records, as well as faculty and college connections with industry.

I strongly advise potential candidates to visit the programmes they're considering during a residency weekend, prior to enrollment. This will be your second home for the next three years and your cohort members will be like family. It's important that you feel supported, not only academically, but administratively, which is just as crucial. A first-rate administrative service is the backbone of a successful DBA learning experience, where students can completely focus on learning without having to worry about hotel arrangements, data analysis software licenses, or the myriad of proposal and dissertation forms that need to be filled out. A positive, supportive, student-focused, collaborative learning environment with close cohort connections can only be assessed by an in-person campus visit during a residency.

### **Q. Is the DBA the new MBA?**

The DBA, as a terminal business degree, will quickly become the new MBA, because research partnership between business schools and business practitioners is long overdue.

The goal of the DBA is to marry rigor with relevance, which is increasingly the goal of practitioners seeking to inform business practice with scholarly research. Academic researchers are also increasingly interested in partnering with practitioners as it serves their quest to create new knowledge with a heightened focus on relevant research and actionable, practical implications.

### **Q. What is the main goal of your DBA students coming into the programme?**

The primary motivation our students communicate to us is an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. They are already in successful senior management positions and hold graduate degrees, but are primarily interested in a terminal business degree because they are passionately curious, life-long learners. Some are interested in consulting or career advancement in their industries, whereas others are interested in cultivating closer connections with academia as adjunct professors and helping educate the next generation of business leaders.

### **Q. How do you meet these expectations?**

We personalise the learning experience of each student based upon their degree completion goal. For example, if the student is interested in an academic position, we work with them from the outset in starting their research portfolios. With students interested in practitioner conference presentations or practitioner publications, we work with them outside of class to fine-tune their course papers into posters, presentations, or publications.

The primary goal in our programme is to train practitioner scholars with a strong focus on quantitative and qualitative research methods.

### **Q. What does the future hold for DBA graduates?**

The DBA is a terminal degree and it is the highest academic credential in business. DBA scholars will add this academic credential to their already successful business careers. It's an incredible personal achievement to become a nationally, or even globally, sought-after content and domain expert in your industry.

A DBA earned from an AACSB accredited institution provides SA (Scholarly Academic) qualified faculty status as per AACSB standards. SA status qualifies DBA scholars for a variety of business faculty positions in AACSB accredited, distinguished business schools throughout the world.

The newly gained expertise in informing business problems with scholarly research, coupled with strong data analytics skills, will make them game-changing performers in their current fields. The DBA training will also elevate the careers of those who are interested in higher level leadership positions in their companies or industries.





# THE DBA STUDENT EXPERIENCE

at the University of Missouri-St. Louis

ALEXANDRA SKINNER  
TALKS TO DON MUETH

(abridged version of the interview in CEO Magazine)  
Full interview can be found on the DBA website

## Q. Why the UMSL DBA?

I received my BSBA - Finance from UMSL in 1984 - and in recent years became reacquainted with the university by serving on the Finance Advisory Board, the Dean's Leadership Council and other committees. Along the way, I heard about the creation of the DBA programme and became intrigued. After looking more closely, I determined it was right for me, at the right moment, and at the right school. The complete package is a perfect fit for me and I view it as a capstone to my career in business.

## Q. With regards to the admissions process, what advice would you give to potential applicants?

Spend plenty of time thinking about the programme in advance of the admission process. Consider the stage of your career, as well as your stage of life. I also suggest thinking about specific business issues you may be faced with that could benefit from your studies in the DBA programme. With those mature thoughts you will be ready to proceed through the application process and eloquently describe why you are interested in the UMSL DBA.

## Q. Can you expand upon the make-up and caliber of your fellow UMSL DBA participants and what they bring to the programme and your learning experience?

My cohort consists of 12 business professionals who are professional in every sense. We have people from the financial services industry, the legal community, academia, healthcare, law enforcement, information technology, hospitality, manufacturing and more. We come from eight different metropolitan areas, a variety of educational backgrounds, and varying stages of life. The diversity of our group adds to the richness of the programme in so many ways, but the one common trait is that each individual is committed to the programme and committed to their own success. That combination makes for an exciting and dynamic classroom experience, as well as a challenging and enriching environment.

**Q. What has been the most challenging thing about returning to education, and what mechanisms have you put in place in order to manage the increased workload?**

The most challenging aspect of my return to education is managing all of the information and data. During my undergrad days way back when, and even when I studied for the CFA exams in the late 1990s, students were given a finite amount of information to study and were then required to seek additional information if needed. Finding data and information was sometimes as difficult as learning the information itself. Now, information finds the student and we are required to organise it and make sense of it without being overloaded. It's a real change to the learning process. Fortunately, I've developed techniques for organising information throughout my career and have applied those techniques to my DBA studies. In addition, the UMSL DBA programme provides a lot of help and tools to make our job easier. They of course put all materials up on Canvas, but they also set up shared drives so that we can work together on certain documents. They also print hard copies of documents if that's what's needed. Basically, whatever we need to manage the process, they are there to help.

**Q. Are there unique elements of the programme that you feel will enhance your career objectives?**

The emphasis on rigor and relevance is the thing that will help me most in my career. Traditional academics may be focused more on pure rigor, while business practitioners emphasise relevance, but this programme insists on both. By doing so, it really bridges the gap between academia and the business world and that can only help me personally as I take newfound knowledge back to my business.

**Q. Has the programme met/exceeded your expectations?**

I expected great things out of this programme because I knew the people involved in creating it. I am happy to report that they have not let any of us down. The programme is great and getting better every day.

**Q. How would you summarise your DBA experience at UMSL to date?**

For me, the DBA experience is a journey. Just like when you plan a trip, you make a decision about your destination, get very excited about it and then go about planning all the details. When the big day of departure arrives, you may be a little nervous but definitely excited and happy. Then you go about discovering new things every day and become so immersed in your journey that you begin to look at life differently. If you're gone long enough, you even forget about some of the daily struggles that you left behind back home. There are bumps in the road and issues may arise, but you overcome those and continue on to your destination. You want to experience the whole trip, but knowing that each day brings you closer to your destination, you kind of dread the end of the journey. I'm one week into a three-week trip. I'm completely settled in and enjoying it immensely, but I'm already starting to think about the end, which makes me a little melancholy. For now, I'm enjoying the experience and appreciating each day and each opportunity to learn something new.



## Faculty Spotlight - Dr. Steve Moehrle

**Steve Moehrle** loves to learn and to help others achieve their goals. This is what made professor his dream job. This dream was delayed and almost derailed though by his initial professional career. In the CPA profession, relationships were forming and promotions were occurring. Nevertheless, the passion for academe remained. "This was a dilemma that I was struggling with a lot." Eventually, he did apply for and interview with doctoral programs. This process culminated in offers. "After receiving the offers, I went for a walk at lunch and decided that I cannot justify leaving my job. When I returned to the office, I fortunately decided to sleep on the decision." Upon arrival home that evening, an envelope was in the mail that would change his life. It was a fellowship offer from the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. "I read the letter at the mailbox and then looked at the sky and thought, I guess I am supposed to do this." The amount of the fellowship certainly was not going to offset the opportunity cost of this decision by any means, but it was a sign.

Indeed, this decision did change his life. "I love the profession. It is everything that I thought it would be and more. I also met my brilliant and beautiful wife Jennifer, who was a second-year doctoral student when I began the program." Steve's academic career has taken several interesting turns. On the teaching side, he has taught a lot of classes in UMSL's renowned Master of Accounting program. He has long enjoyed teaching the UMSL Accounting Masters students – annually among the strongest student groups in the state. He has added DBA teaching over the past few years. "Leading DBA classes is akin to leading discussions at a think tank. You have a group of accomplished professionals examining important questions in the field. That is about as good as it gets in academe."

On the research side, he has published several articles in top accounting and finance journals and has published three monographs. On the academic service side, he has served as a journal editor, the academic representative on the AICPA's Financial Reporting Executive Committee, and Vice President of the American Accounting Association. He also serves as Chairman of the Board of the SMART Corporation which manages a scholarship fund. Steve's career has also brought fulfilling research and teaching awards. Most recently, he received the AICPA's Distinguished Achievement in Accounting Education Award. This was especially fulfilling as the recognition came from the organization that is responsible for his career.

In the doctoral program, Steve currently teaches the Accounting Research Seminar and the Introductory Quantitative Methods class. He has enjoyed these assignments immensely as they provide an opportunity to share his passion for seeking knowledge and also his empathy for the struggles of academic research. Indeed, the research side can be very lonely and sometimes stressful. Steve likes to take out that stress on racquetballs and hockey pucks!

“Leading DBA classes is akin to leading discussions at a think tank. You have a group of accomplished professionals examining important questions in the field. That is about as good as it gets in academe.”

Steve Moehrle  
Professor and Accounting Department Chair  
DBA | Statistical Modeling  
DBA | The Role of Accounting Information in Firms and Markets



# Redefining “Balance”: My Journey to Equilibrium

WRITTEN BY KEVIN SANSBERRY (UMSL DBA, 2020)

What if I told you that my search for work-life balance was over? In America, we have a constant tension between balancing all of the demands that are placed on us at work, with family, with our social lives and for some, at school. This notion of balance through a positive sounding goal does not necessarily come to fruition, the OECD Better Life Index ranks the United States 28th in work-life balance.

## The Epiphany

My realization of how the path to the traditional sense of balance was not going to work for me began four years ago. I was recently promoted to a leadership role and was known for working all hours of the night, rarely took vacation time, and gave up on trying to balance work and life because it was not a priority for me. Even though my social life and family life were important to me, my career was my primary focus. My justification was that if I focused on my career and my sense of financial security was positive, everything else would fall into place. I was wrong.

Over the last four years, my life has become increasingly complex (see sidebar). The sense of balance that I read about never worked for me mentally. I hit a wall where my many demands forced me to reevaluate my approach.

As I began the UMSL Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) program, my desire for earning my doctorate was finally coming into fruition after years of debate. As I investigated the program, I was intrigued by how the DBA program was designed so that I could attain an AACSB accredited doctoral degree that would feel more complementary rather than supplementary to my life goals. As I planned to start the UMSL DBA program, I had to do an analysis of how I would be able to manage all of the expectations that existed in my life.



DBA scholar Kevin Sansberry with founding director Ekin Pellegrini

## Timeline: 2014 to 2019

- 2014- Promoted to leadership position
- 2015- Elected president to state HR chapter
- 2017- Promoted to executive position
- 2017- Started consulting company (PT)
- 2017- Began UMSL DBA program
- 2018- Accepted interim role, concurrently with executive position
- 2018- Career transition, began new role
- 2019- Sold house and moved the family to Ohio

## The Equilibrium

My analysis began with trying to understand why I was unable to find a sense of balance over the years. I realized that seeking balance through all of my many endeavors was nearly impossible. Mentally, holding everything as equal caused this balancing act to feel more like multitasking, and I hope we all recognize the costs of multitasking!

I realized that no matter how hard I tried, I was not the type of person who could sit still. While I have the energy, I am determined to take opportunities by the horns. With this in mind, I began doing research on multitasking, time management and started meditating.

My approach began to solidify as I found great success when I focused on one thing or set of complementary things at a time. This allowed me to respect the task or set of tasks fully and not allow other tasks to creep into my mind, impeding my performance.

## My Approach to Equilibrium

- Engage your support systems for patience and understanding
- Question your mental models, you can't focus on everything...and you shouldn't
- Categorize your responsibilities into groups
- Set differential goals for these responsibilities or groups
- Make time for all aspects of your health

As you can see above, my approach is not rocket science. This is actually the first time that I put into writing how I am able to achieve a sense of what people assume is "balance." I now have an answer instead of sitting there dumbfounded trying to codify an approach that seems so second nature for me!

## Beginning Your Journey

My recommendation as you begin your DBA journey actually doesn't start with you, it starts with those around you. As I began to evaluate my current state years ago, I realized that the many demands that I took on as a married father of two children were a little short-sighted. As I justified my lack of balance as a way to continue to provide for my family, I realized that my presence with my wife and children was actually more valuable in the long run than anything tangible or financial that I could provide. For equilibrium to sustain, the support and understanding of those around you is essential as you are engaging in activities such as work or attending school over the weekend!

As indicated above, focusing on all aspects of my health was something else that really helps me on my journey. I weightlift in the gym on average five days a week and realized that while this aspect is a solidified part of my life (10 years and counting), focusing on my mental health is a relatively new but equally-important priority. The classical form of "work-life balance" caused me to ignore my mental health as a way to keep everything going, but persisting and enduring as not a sustainable approach.

In finding equilibrium with work and life, while working towards a DBA, recognize that this task requires you to understand that this feat is arduous and not to be taken lightly. However, with proper preparation and recognition of the fact that you will need to make reasonable sacrifices during this journey, you are setting yourself up for success.

## Conclusion

This journey is not one where I am seeking to find a destination. I recognize that my journey to equilibrium is ongoing and that it requires monitoring, reevaluation, and shifts as my life evolves. As you think about beginning your journey or re-evaluating your current situation, keep in mind that no journey worth taking is ever easy.

## Helpful Tips:

### 1. Study in different locations

Break up the monotony and routine. This also allows for new ideas to manifest and if you prefer, you can spend some time in nature!

### 2. Breaks and periods of reflection are necessary

Recognize that if everything is a priority, nothing is. Give yourself permission to take breaks. Approaching any of your tasks with the best version of yourself is the optimal approach rather than tackling everything at 60 percent.

### 3. Find organizational support from your workplace (financial, time, access to data)

Having support from your workplace makes the journey a little easier. Support may look different than others, depending on your workplace, but the support whether financial, time-related or related to you gaining access to data or resources can all help you in different ways.

### 4. It is helpful if your academic studies/interest are aligned with your work or career

If you are working in the field or area that is closely related to your academic area of interest, you may find this synergy to be extremely beneficial. This is with the caveat that you actually enjoy your field!

### 5. Recognize that you are not alone in your DBA journey

You are not alone in your DBA journey. There are many sources of support as you continue on your journey, including your family, your DBA peers and of course your DBA faculty, staff and internal support resources. You are not alone and it is important for you to recognize that everyone around you wants to see you succeed.

**I was very intimidated working with these doctors and PhDs but what surprised me the most was the humbleness that they had. They shared their struggles with us and it basically takes people off of their pedestals which makes getting a doctorate very accessible.**

Kevin Sansberry  
Vice President of People, Values and Culture,  
StriveTogether  
DBA Scholar, Class of 2020



the genuine interest and concern the professors have for the success of each individual member of the cohort. It starts with the staff providing concierge services (registration, securing instructional materials etc.), and it continues with the faculty being available to answer questions, offer research guidance, and advice.

The administration has been highly visible and responsive to our suggestions for continuous improvement on everything from course design to marketing.

**SB** Being back in an academic environment with a terrific group of professors, university leaders and fellow students.

**Q. What is the hardest thing about the programme?**

**CH** For myself and many of my classmates, we've been out of an academic/classroom setting for a number of years, so becoming a student again has been a challenge. With that said, the format of the programme has been ideal: one residency a month, on-site at the university, and much of the coursework done through an online learning management system. We use tools such as Zoom to work on assignments or to get further instruction from faculty.

**SB** Time management. As a busy executive, deadlines can still jump up and need to be met. Fortunately, the flexibility of the faculty and fellow students between residencies helps significantly.

**Q. What has been the most challenging thing about returning to education, and what mechanisms (support from family, time management etc.) have you put in place in order to manage the increased workload?**

**CH** In the best of circumstances, without pursuing a degree, time management can be a challenge, but even more so when you're maintaining a demanding full-time job while furthering your education. Although the programme is academically sound and rigorous, our faculty members are understanding when unanticipated work disruptions occur from time-to-time.

**SB** My wife and I are fresh empty-nesters with both of our sons in college. (This is part of what inspired me to return to school after 27 years to obtain a terminal degree in my chosen field.) My wife has been unbelievably supportive. She tells our friends the learning experience has reenergised me.

I have always been driven as an executive, so I make sure that the additional work does not impact my work life. With our children away from home, I am putting the time I once spent on certain recreational activities into the programme.

**Q. Are there unique elements of the programme that you feel will enhance your career objectives?**

**CH** I appreciate having the latitude to conduct research on topics that address everyday workplace problems that I grapple with as a practitioner. As I mentioned earlier, the depth and breadth of the faculty's research interests seem boundless and provide a tremendous resource in helping me refine and tailor my research.

**Q. Has the programme met/exceeded your expectations?**

**CH** The programme has stretched my professional, personal and academic growth in ways that I did not even anticipate before starting the programme. It has expanded my understanding of defining and dissecting a research problem, looking at the research literature to see what has been done and finding gaps for further study.

**SB** Significantly exceeded!

**Q. How would you summarise your DBA experience at UMSL to date?**

**CH** It has been, and will continue to be, a transformative experience. In sum, as a result of being a part of this inaugural DBA cohort, I have become, and will continue to become, a better visionary and leader – leading change, leading people, more results driven, and better at building coalitions for the sustainability of higher education into the distant future.

**SB** It has been invigorating. I love the academic challenge, honing my intellectual skills and learning from very bright people (faculty, staff and students)!



# Innovation through Collaboration

## Acclaimed DBA program transforming business leaders into practitioner-scholars

WRITTEN BY SARA BELL

Cindy Goodwin-Sak had several problems to solve.

From calculating the cost of software defects to optimizing team processes, her unanswered work questions had piled up with no clear way to answer them – or so she thought.

Goodwin-Sak, a director of strategy and operations for Cisco Systems, was working through these complicated projects when she came across promotional material from the University of Missouri–St. Louis. Reading through the mailer, she quickly understood she could address these tough questions through a scholarly lens.

The DBA class of 2021 brought together 16 business practitioners from across the country, including UMSL PMBA alumna Cindy Goodwin-Sak.

“The material made me realize that I could go to school to answer some of the problems that I’d encountered,” she said. “I’m really interested in learning about how to find answers to some of the questions that I have and be able to apply them to business. I received my master’s degree from UMSL, and it was a fantastic experience. Actually, it’s one of the reasons I was so excited to come back.”

Goodwin-Sak, who earned her PMBA in 2012, is now at UMSL as a member of the Doctor of Business Administration program’s newest cohort, which is slated to graduate in 2021.

The DBA program entered its second year in November by welcoming 16 new students with wide-ranging industry and managerial experiences.

Together, the two classes include students commuting from 10 different states.

“It’s incredible to see that we have students coming from across the country,” said Ekin Pellegrini, director of executive education and co-director of the DBA program. “They are choosing UMSL DBA over programs in their neighborhoods. We have students commuting from different states monthly when they have options much closer to them. It’s UMSL that’s bringing these business professionals to St. Louis.”

The terminal degree option offered through the College of Business Administration is part of a small market in the United States – with the country’s oldest program only dating back two decades. While DBA programs have been offered longer and are more common in European and Asian universities, UMSL still earned a top 22 international ranking from CEO Magazine in March.

Pellegrini believes UMSL was positioned to pull such an accolade in its first year because of the program’s collaboration with other successful colleges. Prior to UMSL’s inaugural year in 2017, program faculty and administrators met with, received training from and observed a number of recognized leaders in DBA education.

“This type of collaboration isn’t typical in academia. We usually compete, not collaborate,” Pellegrini said. “Because of that relationship with other universities, we’ve had a very strong start. So when people ask, ‘How on earth did CEO Magazine rank you in the first year of your existence,’ we can point to the three years of incredible research, collaboration and due diligence before we even started.”

UMSL’s DBA program focuses on the application of theory paired with a deep exploration of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Courses are structured over a three-year period through online learning and a two-day residency each month.

Like a standard doctoral program, students are expected to produce independent research that contributes to theory as well as practice. However, the methods by which students prepare for their dissertations differ from most PhD programs.

Members of the inaugural Doctor of Business Administration cohort began their second year of the program in November and are expected to graduate in 2020. (Photos courtesy of Harlan Hodge)



Students take content courses in every area of study offered through the College of Business Administration, allowing them to gain a deep understanding of multiple business practices. Through the structured timeline, students can also expect to graduate alongside the same students they started the program with.

“PhD programs are very discipline focused,” Pellegrini said. “It’s an inch-wide, mile-deep study. Through a DBA, students are exposed to all areas of business research. Our structure also allows students to continue building a career while receiving a doctoral education to inform their practice in a scholarly manner. It’s the best of both worlds.”

Within each cohort are students with 10 to 37 years of management experience, including six C-level officers. Students’ research interests and work experiences spread across a variety of industries, providing for rich discussion centered on the coursework.

“We’ve become a family,” said James Jordan Jr., a 2001 accounting graduate who returned to UMSL for the inaugural DBA cohort. “Not only do we have discussion during our on-campus residencies, but the discussions continue outside the classroom. When we have downtime, we often discuss work-related issues. There is always someone else with a similar experience or has a source to help you figure out that situation.

“We all come from various backgrounds. We often look to each other for help on assignments as well as work-related issues. The faculty did a great job of putting the cohorts together. It’s been a lot of work but one of the best learning experiences.”

Now in his second year of the program, Jordan has noticed a shift in the way he approaches new challenges in his role as a division director for the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development office. As challenges arise, he now finds himself reviewing journal articles and other literature while looking for ways to apply those studies to his organization.

Goodwin-Sak, who is less than a month into the Statistical Modeling course and a Doctoral Foundations Seminar, also observed a change in the way she approaches the original challenges she enrolled in the program to address.

“I’ve taken a lot of stat classes before, and this one is more applied to business than any other,” she said. “It’s immediately applicable, and I’m scrutinizing data at work in an entirely different way. I’m also really learning about how to do quantitative and qualitative research to start answering some of those questions that I have at work. It’s just going to provide me with a whole new skill set.”

These forms of application are precisely what Pellegrini and other UMSL DBA faculty envisioned as they developed the program. Administrators are now eager to see how students go on to apply their research as the first commencement ceremony approaches in 2020.

“The connection between scholars and practitioners is long overdue,” Pellegrini said. “That’s how business schools should be. We need to be connected to industry, and practitioners need to work with us. It’s a perfect match. The students coming into the program don’t know how to inform practice with scholarly research. But upon graduation, they are going to be practitioner-scholars. Once they learn how to inform their decisions with scholarly research, it’s going to change the way business is done in St. Louis and beyond.”



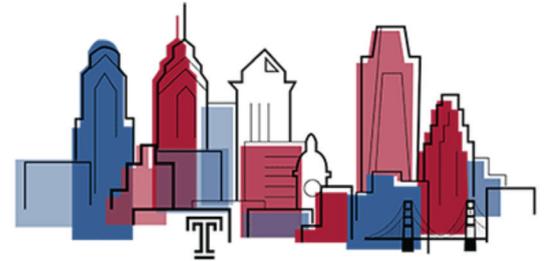
Members of the 2021 DBA cohort

**“When I was investigating various programs across the country, the first and foremost important to me was academic rigor. If I was going to have that doctorate, I wanted to make sure it was meaningful.”**

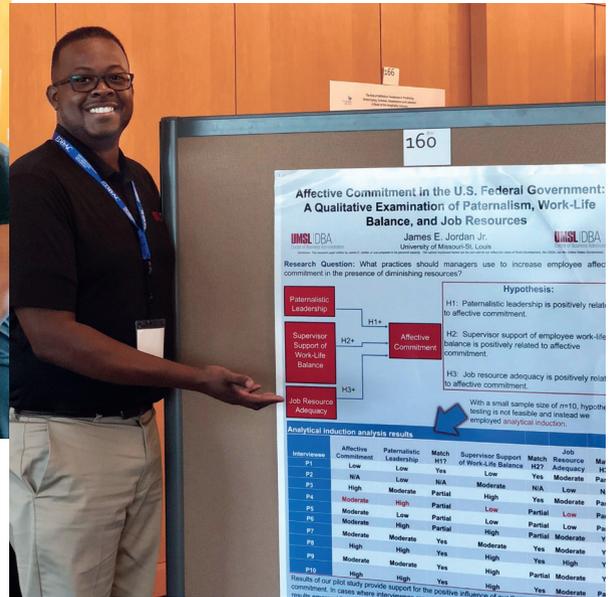
Scott Boswell  
President and CEO, The Commerce Trust Company, West Region  
DBA Scholar, Class of 2020

# EMS Conference 2018

UMSL DBA elevated the executive doctoral learning experience as they traveled to Temple University for the Engaged Management Scholarship Conference in September 2018. At this conference, James Jordan Jr., Class of 2020, presented his poster on Affective Commitment in the U.S. Federal Government: A Qualitative Examination of Paternalism, Work-Life Balance, and Job Resources.

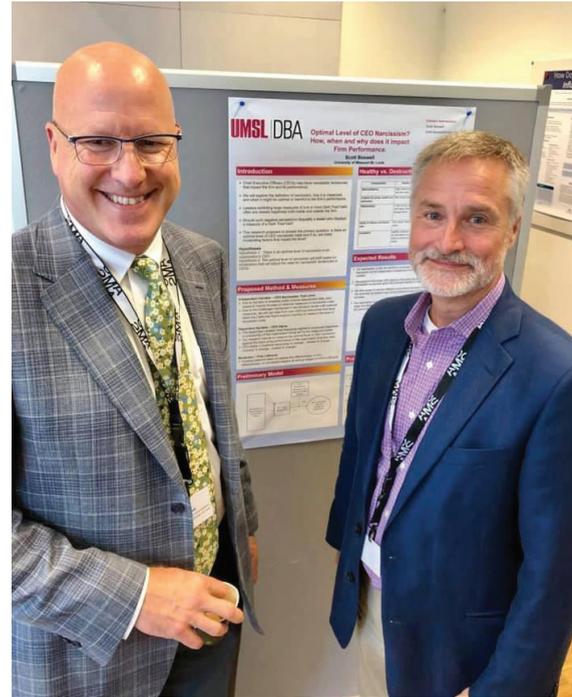


**2018 ENGAGED MANAGEMENT SCHOLARSHIP CONFERENCE**  
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY | PHILADELPHIA, PA



# 2019

The UMSL DBA continued to impress the DBA community with their scholarly productivity. The Executive DBA Council and its member schools host an Annual Conference on Engaged Management Scholarship. This year's conference was hosted by Antwerp Management School. UMSL DBA was quite active at the conference with five doctoral consortium participants and 21 students with poster and paper presentations.





## Enjoying Quality Time Together

After a full day of discussions on organizational culture and exploratory factor analysis, some of our Class of 2021 students enjoyed quality time together at a get together hosted by one of our DBA students!

## Appreciation of the Arts

UMSL DBA appreciated the talent that the Mizzou New Music Ensemble possesses as we watched them perform at the World Chess Hall of Fame in May 2019!



## Supporting Local Organizations

UMSL DBA is a proud supporter of the Asian American Chamber of Commerce. We had a great time connecting with local companies at the 2019 AACC Connections Dinner!



# Faculty Spotlight - Dr. Stephanie Merritt

**Stephanie Merritt** stays busy at UMSL, not only teaching Qualitative Methods I in the DBA program, but also courses in quantitative methods, test development, and industrial-organizational psychology. Her research, which focuses on diversity management and human-automation interaction, has appeared in top-tier journals such as the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Personnel Psychology*, and *Human Factors*. “I’ve been at UMSL ever since earning my PhD – this is my 13th year – and I love it. I love the opportunity to work with diverse, brilliant, and hard-working students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. It is incredibly fulfilling,” Merritt said.

But that is only one side to the story. “I grew up in a musical family,” Merritt said, “My mom was a choir teacher in the Parkway School District and my dad is a great vocalist. He’s a member of the international championship barbershop chorus, The Ambassadors of Harmony.” Merritt inherited her parents’ love of

music, playing French horn with the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra and Missouri All-State Band in high school, and continuing to play in college. However, when she reached graduate school, she found she was ready for a switch. “The local community theater was holding auditions for a production of *Evita*, and I was cast in the chorus. From then on, I was hooked.”

Since then, Merritt has performed in over 20 plays and musicals, two operas, and won an award for “Best performance by an actress in a leading role” for her turn as Kate Monster in *Avenue Q*. She even appeared as an extra in a major motion picture – *The Informant* – scenes from which were shot in St. Louis. “If you look closely, you might spy me in the background of a restaurant scene behind Matt Damon,” she laughed. Merritt says that involvement

**I love the opportunity to work with diverse, brilliant, and hard-working students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. It is incredibly fulfilling.**

Stephanie Merritt, PhD  
Associate Professor Industrial-Organizational Psychology  
Director, Industrial-Organizational Program  
DBA | Qualitative Research Methods I



in community theater has allowed her to express her artistic side while maintaining her work performance. “Community theaters understand that most of us have full time day jobs, so they schedule rehearsals and performances to accommodate that,” she explained. “It’s a great way to stay involved with the arts and to meet people. Through community theatre, I’ve made so many wonderful friends – and that’s how I met my fiancé!”

**44**

Students



**13** States



**98%**

Holding Graduate Degrees



**30%**

Female



**63%**

Traveling from outside of the St. Louis Region



Average Age

**46**

**6**  
Military Veterans



**ON AVERAGE**  
**21 YEARS**

of Managerial Work Experience



**9**

CPAs



**3**

CFAs



**1**

MD



**5**

JDs



# DBA vs PhD

The Doctor of Business Administration program provides participants with the skills needed to conduct rigorous research with the objective of applying the findings to real-world decision-making in industry and government. DBA graduates will be equipped for high-level positions in higher education, consulting, or career advancement in their industry.

	<b>DBA</b> <b>Doctor of Business Administration</b>	<b>PhD</b> <b>Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration</b>
<b>Candidate Profile</b>	Senior executives who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold an MBA or post-baccalaureate degree</li> <li>• Work full-time</li> <li>• Will use the knowledge acquired to address problems and issues in contemporary business</li> <li>• Seek to advance professional career; consulting; or attain a clinical faculty position</li> </ul> Primarily domestic/regional origin. 10-20 years of management experience.	Students with limited work experience who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May or may not hold a post-baccalaureate degree</li> <li>• Typically enroll as full-time students</li> <li>• Seek to position themselves for careers in academia for tenure-track positions</li> </ul> Average age 25-30 years old. Primarily international origin. 5-10 years of work experience.
<b>Motivation</b>	Contribution to practice. Research topics come from issues faced in practice and lead to new practice/policy.	Contribution to theory. Research topics come from unanswered questions in the discipline and lead to advancements in the body of knowledge.
<b>Objective</b>	To develop practitioner researchers.	To develop academic researchers.
<b>Program Structure</b>	Multiple residencies per semester.	Full-time student.
<b>Curriculum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interdisciplinary with a focus on general management and business issues</li> <li>• Apply quantitative or qualitative research methods to contemporary business problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialized studies, generally within a single, specific business discipline</li> <li>• Heavy emphasis on research methodology and its application to develop new theories</li> </ul>
<b>Time horizon</b>	Set at outset. Time to completion is crucial and predetermined.	4 – 6 years; not fixed. Time to completion is unknown at the outset.
<b>Staffing</b>	Faculty are mentors/research partners/SMEs; students draw on work experiences and firm data.	Faculty have dominant role re program curriculum and research agenda.
<b>Funding</b>	Company- and student-funded.	Tuition remission; graduate assistantship.
<b>Accreditation</b>	SA (Scholarly Academic) and PA (Practice Academic) qualified faculty status per AACSB standards.	Focus on SA (Scholarly Academic) faculty status qualification.



**The UMSL DBA program really is designed to open doors. And I think there's a lot of different doors that it can open for students. The DBA program will give them the research skills, the deep knowledge, as well as the connections both to their colleagues in the cohort and the faculty that will allow them to be successful in their own organizations.**

James Campbell, PhD  
Professor and Department Chair, Supply Chain & Analytics  
DBA | Business Analytics



# UMSL | DBA

Doctor of Business Administration

105 Anheuser-Busch Hall  
One University Boulevard  
St. Louis, MO 63121



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ACCREDITED

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# 1st

UMSL DBA BABY



Casey Jensen (DBA Scholar, Class of 2021) and his wife, Savannah, welcomed their daughter, Elora Ann, in April 2019.