



[DIVERSITY WATCH]

JUMP-STARTING CAREERS

Pre-M.B.A. program prepares students for life after school

If you walk into an investment bank or onto a trading floor, you can count on one hand the number of minorities," says Elton Ndoma-Ogar, a 32-year-old institutional equity sales trader with Morgan Stanley Equities in New York. He and John T. Burt Jr., a 30-year-old consultant based in Indianapolis, hope to address this concern through MBA JumpStart, a pre-M.B.A. program for graduate school candidates accepted to top-tier business schools.

Launched in 2004, the annual intensive two-and-a-half day forum, held at a leading business school each year, brings together minority talent and representatives from consulting and financial firms to engage in interactive workshops, industry seminars, and networking/mentorship opportunities.

"There has never been a question of aptitude," says Ndoma-Ogar of the students selected. "It has always been a question of how we can expose them to different areas within these industries where they can match their skill set with the job functions.

Ndoma-Ogar and Burt are 2003 graduates of Duke's Fuqua School of Busi-

ness. Their inaugural program, held at their alma mater, hosted 75 students and nine corporate sponsors. This year, the program—held at the University of Chicago—welcomed 105 eager candidates and an additional sponsor.

"Did everyone bite?" asks Burt, rhetorically. "No, but we are happy with the set of sponsors that we currently have."

After participating in JumpStart, Jared McKinney, 30, landed a position at Banc of America Securities in sales and trading.

"Getting into a top M.B.A. program isn't enough for getting a job in these industries," says McKinney, who is completing his second year at the University of Chicago graduate School of Business. "Networking and building relationships are also key components.

Financial services provider Merrill Lynch hired five of its summer employees directly from last year's group of JumpStart attendees.

Says Ndoma-Ogar: "The true test will be where our participants end up full time."

For more information, contact them via e-mail at info@mbajumpstart.com

—Tennille M. Robinson

Here are other independent programs that support minority M.B.A. candidates:

- The SEO Career Program (www.seo-ny.org)
- MBA Diversity Alliance (www.mbada.org)
- Management Leadership for Tomorrow (www.ml4t.org)



[SINCE YOU ASKED]

A PARTY PLAN

QA My daughter has been working in a commercial bank for the last three years planning events for banking clients and training workshops for personnel. She enjoys it. How should she pursue this as full-time employment?

—Dennis Brennan
Via the Internet

Event planning can be an exciting entrepreneurial prospect for those who organize parties, weddings, and business functions. It is also a burgeoning corporate career opportunity that spans a number of industries, with multiple levels of responsibilities. For example, corporate planners handle events and meetings related to company sales, promotions, product introductions, and retreats. But there are also association planners, trade show organizers, and consultants or independent meeting planners.

The pay isn't bad either. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average planner earned \$60,714 in 2002, more than a 10% increase from two years prior.

As for college courses, event planning titles can be found under curricula that include hospitality, retail management, and tourism, but your daughter should research her options through industry organizations. Tell her to start with Convention Industry Council (www.conventionindustry.org), Meeting Professionals International (www.mpiweb.org), and the National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners (www.ncbmp.com).

—Sonia Alleyne

Mail your career development questions to Since You Asked, BLACK ENTERPRISE, 130 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10011 or send an e-mail to alleynes@blackenterprise.com.