

USF's Executive MBA Program Builds Confidence, Careers

Evie Chitty's management career at Walmart was on an upward trajectory in 2010, but the mother of four and West Point graduate wanted to do everything possible to succeed.

As a logistics manager for Walmart in Tampa, she knew it would be hard to keep rising in the company based on her work credentials alone. Like many workers in an increasingly competitive job market, she looked into MBA programs to raise her profile.

"The field for promotions in my company has become so competitive that the preferred qualifications for some positions have been written with an MBA in them," Chitty said.

With her busy work and family life, Chitty said the structure of the University of South Florida's Executive MBA was the only way she could

complete the degree: as a 21-month program with classes only on weekends. Shortly after starting the program, Chitty was promoted to a general transportation manager position and moved to Richmond, Va., commuting to classes for three out of her four semesters.

Chitty graduated from USF's Executive MBA in May 2011, and said the Executive MBA gave her a wider perspective outside the four walls of her company. USF's requirement that Executive MBA students have at least five years of managerial experience also meant Chitty was among good company with students who helped expand her business viewpoint. In December, she was promoted again to market manager for store operations in Coral Springs, managing multiple stores in South Florida. She said the MBA has helped her in more ways than a line on her résumé.

"I don't feel I would have had a foot in the door for an interview had I not had an MBA," she said. "I also think I was a better leader in my company and able to get better results because I was able to do that outside-of-the-box thinking I learned in the program."

Current USF Executive MBA student Andre Kirwan also said his graduate education has given him a broader perspective. The commercial banking officer for The Bank of Tampa is in his last semester of the program, and said the knowledge he's gained helps him apply his life experiences to business, including his time as a pro football player and as a biology major at Stanford University.



Andre Kirwan

"The Executive MBA has become the backbone to tie all my life experiences -- football, biology, and banking -- together," Kirwan said.

Kirwan said USF set him up to succeed in the program, from the practically applicable classes to smaller details. The service the Executive MBA provides -- from meals being served between classes, to books being ordered and delivered for students, to automatic registration for classes -- made the program fit into his professional lifestyle.

"As business professionals, we don't necessarily have the time to do the legwork ourselves, and I think that deters a lot of people," he said. "Down to the parking pass coming straight to our door, it's a one-stop shop, and it allows us to focus on education while we're here."

Although Kirwan said he expects many advantages of the MBA to come to fruition after he graduates in May, he's already seeing the benefits, from gaining a new professional network among his classmates to experiencing mental stimulation from his classes taught by world-class faculty and guest lecturers from within the business community.

"It's been a complete win-win for me all the way around, as well as for the bank, I think," he said. "USF has enabled me to recruit a whole new demographic of clientele for the bank, as well as become a better professional and a more 'armed and dangerous' employee."

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