



Poonam Kumar



Charles Sebuharara, Shabnam Mousavi, and Dharmendra Dhakal



Shabnam Mousavi and family at graduation



Joe Scarpaci

## Transforming Ph.D.s into marketing, finance professors

Pamplin's students this past summer included a veteran geography professor, a philosopher who wrote his dissertation on the pre-critical origins of Kant's arguments in the Antinomies, an educational technology specialist directing a \$500,000 government-funded project on special-ed teacher training, and an economist and guest researcher at the Max Planck Institute who also speaks Farsi, French, and Arabic.

They were among nine students in the inaugural class of an innovative program that Pamplin had developed to help alleviate the critical national shortage of business-school faculty. The college was among four U.S. business schools that launched last summer the first post-doctoral "bridge-to-business" programs approved by AACSB International (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), the accrediting organization for business schools worldwide.

The programs are designed to prepare individuals with doctorates in non-business, but related, disciplines for new careers as business faculty.

Pamplin's eight-week, on-campus program offered two tracks: finance, which enrolled six of the nine students, and marketing. Ph.D.s all (indeed, one had two doctorates), the seven men and two women in the group included natives of the Congo, Nepal, China, India, and Iran, as well as the United States. Most were faculty members at other universities in their chosen disciplines of economics, philosophy, geography, and education.

At the graduation ceremony, the graduates were lauded as leaders and pioneers by AACSB President and CEO John Fernandes, who assured them that AACSB was committed to helping them in their job search, and Virginia Tech Provost Mark McNamee, who expressed pride that the college had been selected to participate in the program and had made it a success.

Certificates of completion were presented to Robert Beach (Ph.D./ECAS '89), of Blacksburg, Va., who currently works at a

software development firm; Dharmendra Dhakal, of Franklin, Tenn., an associate professor of economics at Tennessee State University; Mohamad Fadiga, of Lubbock, Texas, a post-doctoral research associate at the Cotton Economics Research Institute at Texas Tech University; Matt Hettche (M.A./PHIL '95), of Auburn, Ala., a former faculty member of the philosophy department at Auburn; Poonam Kumar, of Midland, Mich., a professor at Saginaw Valley State University; Zhen Liu, of Buffalo, N.Y., currently a visiting assistant professor of economics at the University of Buffalo; Shabnam Mousavi (Ph.D./ECAS '02, Ph.D./STAT '06) of Jonesboro, Ga., a former researcher at the Max Planck Institute in Berlin and assistant professor at Penn State; Joe Scarpaci, of Blacksburg, Va., a geography professor at Virginia Tech; and Charles Sebuharara, of Vestal, N.Y., formerly a visiting assistant professor of finance and economics at Binghamton University-SUNY.

Mousavi is a visiting assistant professor in Georgia State University's finance department, while Sebuharara and Hettche

**"The shortage of academically qualified faculty is projected to increase to 2,400 openings by 2012."**



have found similar positions in Pamplin's finance and marketing departments. In addition to AACSB, which offers an online career resource center for both job seekers and employers, the college has also pledged its assistance with placement. "We offer post-sales service!" said finance professor Dilip Shome. Shome and marketing associate professor Eloise Coupey, led the development of the finance and marketing tracks.

Graduates of the bridge program are "academically quali-



Matt Hettche



Charles Sebuharara



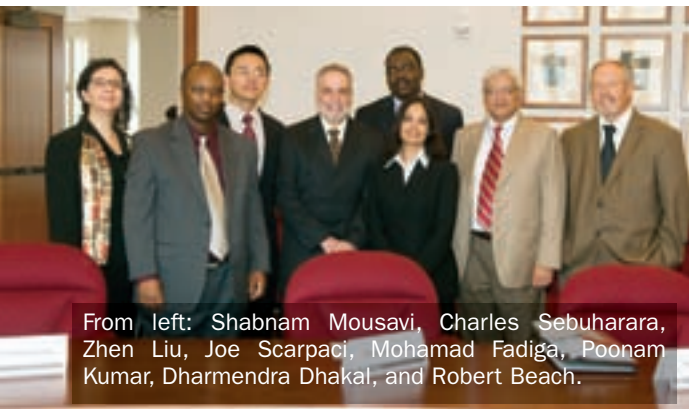
Eloise Coupey, associate professor of marketing



Dilip Shome, finance professor



AACSB President/CEO John Fernandes and Dean Sorensen



From left: Shabnam Mousavi, Charles Sebuharara, Zhen Liu, Joe Scarpaci, Mohamad Fadiga, Poonam Kumar, Dharmendra Dhakal, and Robert Beach.

fied” in their respective disciplines for a period of five years from the date of graduation, said Pamplin Dean Richard E. Sorensen. This means that they have gained sufficient additional knowledge and skills, through course work and research, to meet the initial qualifications for finance or marketing faculty, he said, but they will need to undertake appropriate scholarly activities to maintain their qualifications beyond the initial five-year period.

The inaugural program attracted 150 inquiries, said Frank M. Smith, Pamplin’s director of management and professional development, who has received more than 50 inquiries about next year.

Sorensen, who chaired AACSB’s working group on the doctoral faculty shortage, said there are currently about 1,000 job openings for Ph.D.-holding faculty at more than 400 AACSB-member schools in the United States. “The shortage of academically qualified faculty is projected to increase to 2,400 openings by 2012.”

The reasons for the faculty shortage, he said, include the 5 percent decrease in business doctorates earned worldwide. According to AACSB, 5,872 doctorates were earned in the 1995-99 period, compared with 5,611 in the 2000-05 period. Other supply-related reasons are competing employment offers from government agencies and industry; the fact that about half the doctoral graduates from U.S. institutions are foreign students, many of whom subsequently return home; and the retirements of existing faculty members. Meanwhile, on the demand side, demand for faculty has risen, driven by significant increases in business-student enrollments.

In September 2007, AACSB approved post-doctoral bridge programs at only five business schools — at Tulane University, the University of Florida, University of Toledo, Grenoble Ecole de Management in France, and Virginia Tech’s Pamplin College of Business.

To apply to Pamplin’s 2009 post-doctoral bridge program, e-mail Frank Smith ([fmsmith@vt.edu](mailto:fmsmith@vt.edu)), or call (540) 231-4972.

# A NEW VOCABULARY

“It exceeded my expectations,” Charles Sebuharara and Robert Beach both said of Pamplin’s bridge program.

The program, said Dharmendra Dhakal, has prepared him to become a more effective finance faculty member. With his economics background, Dhakal found the program “a relatively easy transition, but it still required a lot of work.”

Shabnam Mousavi, who has two master’s degrees in addition to two doctorates, all from Virginia Tech, learned about the bridge program from the university’s home page. “I am a Hokie,” she said, “I check our Web site regularly!”

Interested in decision making and increasingly drawn to behavioral finance, Mousavi sought “a quick and intensive introduction” to finance. “I’m very, very comfortable with the finance vocabulary now,” she said. “I feel that I can comfortably and effectively interact with finance faculty members. The compact education I received has been and will continue to be a priceless resource.”

Asked whether her economics and statistics background made it easier for her to learn the finance material, Mousavi said, “There was a considerable amount of new material. I wouldn’t say it was easy, but neither was it hard. The program certainly satisfied my main goal of making finance literature accessible. But it did not stop there, I surely received more than I



expected. It was well designed — obviously, lots of work and thought went into the planning.”

Calling it “an exciting and rewarding experience,” Poonam Kumar was initially apprehensive about a career transition when she began the program’s marketing track. “I felt a sense of loss of professional identity, after 10 years of work in the educational technology field.” But Pamplin’s marketing faculty, she said, “really helped me see that I would be applying my education knowledge and skills in a different context, they helped me cross that bridge.” Now, Kumar plans to investigate research possibilities in Web technology, consumer behaviour, and marketing education.

“It was very exciting learning about marketing models, theory, and research. It transformed me on many levels.”

Said Mousavi: “It has been a great experience. We’re all confidently ready to go out and meet the challenge of finding the best placements for ourselves and transitioning efficiently and effectively.”