

Spotlight

I Building on a Rich History

College of Business and
Information Science
Tuskegee University
Tuskegee, Alabama

When Booker T. Washington founded Tuskegee University in 1881 as the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, its purpose was to train newly freed slaves as teachers. Washington wanted its students to become intellectually stimulated and return to their communities to educate others. As one of the historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Tuskegee created its first department of business in 1962; that department became a college in 1984 and received AACSB accreditation in 1998.

Today, the school's College of Business and Information Science (CBIS) serves approximately 450 undergraduate students, including 360 business majors and 90 computer science majors. The CBIS offers eight majors in accounting, business administration, economics, finance, management science, sales and marketing, hospitality management, and computer science. Bringing together principles of business and technology is at the forefront of the school's mission, says Alicia Jackson, dean of the college. "So many businesses are growing around the area of technology and biotechnology," she says. "We wanted to combine the two programs."

Among the college's core programs, its sales and marketing program is unique, says Jackson, because it does not isolate the marketing major as its own discipline. "Our



Above left: a TU campus landmark. Above: undergraduate business students at Tuskegee's CBIS. Left: Dean Alicia Jackson.

marketing department is specifically designed to produce professional salespersons, so the major focuses on the sales function and customer relationship management," she explains. The school is also steadily growing its hospitality management program. Students in the program train at Tuskegee's Kellogg Conference Center, which school representatives say is the only such luxury hotel facility located at an HBCU.

In its effort to integrate disciplines, the school hosts its annual Tuskegee University Business and Engineering Conference, which is staged entirely by business and engineering students. The objective, says Jackson, is "to show how the two processes work together, so that business students learn principles of engineering and engineering students learn principles of business." This year, for example, aerospace company Raytheon gave students a special challenge: Put a robot together from its components, according to customer specifications. As a result, the students learned there was more than one way to approach such a project. "The engineers wanted to put it together, but not necessarily



according to the customer specifications," says Jackson. "The business students stepped in to say, 'No, *this* is what the customer wants.'"

CBIS also hosts the annual Booker T. Washington Economic Development Summit, which brings together representatives from the business school, government, community, and professional groups. Speakers offer information to small business owners to foster entrepreneurship in the local community.

Going forward, steady growth is at the top of the school's agenda. The school wants to add majors in management of information science and supply chain management. In addition, the business school is currently raising funds for a new facility, a goal aided by a \$2 million gift from Procter & Gamble. Estimated to cost \$12 million, the new building will boast 45,000 square feet and bear the P&G name.

Most important, Jackson wants to see her business school gain greater recognition beyond its local region. "It's difficult for a small school to gain national recognition, but this is a goal I've shared with the faculty," she says. "I know how great this school is—now it's a matter of letting the world know." **Z**

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