

Reading Is Fundamental For Business

Book clubs have long promoted dialogue and learning on a wide range of topics. They're no less powerful a learning tool for business students, says Jim Bradford, dean of Vanderbilt University's Owen Graduate School of Management in Nashville, Tennessee.

For the second year, Bradford is leading "The Dean's Book Club," which meets several times each semester to read and discuss a variety of books. So far, the club has read books such as *Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* by Nassim Taleb; *Factory Girls: From Village to City in Changing China* by Leslie T. Chang; *The Post-American World* by Fareed Zakaria; and *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need A Green Revolution—and How It Can Renew America* by Thomas Friedman. This spring, they read *River Town* by Peter Hessler, which describes the struggles of a mining town in China's Sichuan province as it tries to adapt to the country's changing economic climate.

For many years, Bradford has assigned each entering MBA class a book to read the summer before the program begins to provide students with a common experience and viewpoint before they meet on campus for the first time. Bradford realized that a regular book club could extend and deepen that common conversation.

Students do not receive credit for attending book club meetings—they participate for their own enjoyment.



Dean Jim Bradford leads discussion at a meeting of the Dean's Book Club.

Literature helps students see through someone else's experience and explore issues that will influence the way they work and live.

—Dean Jim Bradford

Even so, each meeting attracts 20 to 40 students, as well as members of the faculty and library staff.

Bradford tries to schedule the 90-minute gatherings at the beginning of each academic quarter. That's after breaks when students have time for extracurricular reading, but before exams and job interviews monopolize their time.

The book, time, and location of each club gathering are posted on the school's intranet. Leading up to meetings, Bradford also sometimes challenges students with questions related to the book via Twitter tweets. He also gives them assignments to complete beforehand—to

choose a quotation or passage that resonated with them or identify an idea with which they agreed or disagreed, for example.

The club ties directly into Bradford's own love of reading. "Like travelling and working abroad, reading literature helps students see through someone else's experience and explore issues that will influence the way they work and live," he says. The books' themes also can carry over into the classroom, providing students added insights on subjects they're studying in their courses.

In the future, Bradford might add fictional titles to the book club's lineup—perhaps by favorite authors of his own, such as William Shakespeare or Wallace Stegner. But no matter what books are up for discussion, most participants—including Bradford himself—leave meetings with an expanded view of business.

"If I read a book, it's a nice experience. But if I *teach* it, it's a much deeper experience," he says. "It's also a way for me to get to know the students, who are all very smart, articulate people with different experiences than I've had. I gain a lot from them." ■



THE FOX SCHOOL

TEMPLE

The Fox Difference—Top Faculty. Pioneering Research. Commitment to Excellence.



The Fox School of Business at Temple University is a premier center for teaching and research excellence. Our world-class faculty and their research are continually recognized with top national rankings.

WORLD-CLASS FACULTY:

The Fox School has hired 38 faculty in the last three years, including 15 new faculty for the 2009-2010 academic year. These leaders in research and teaching have studied at the world's most recognized universities, including Cornell, Harvard, Peking University in China and the University of Haifa in Israel.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH:

Five of nine Fox School departments are ranked in the Top 10 in the U.S. based on research.

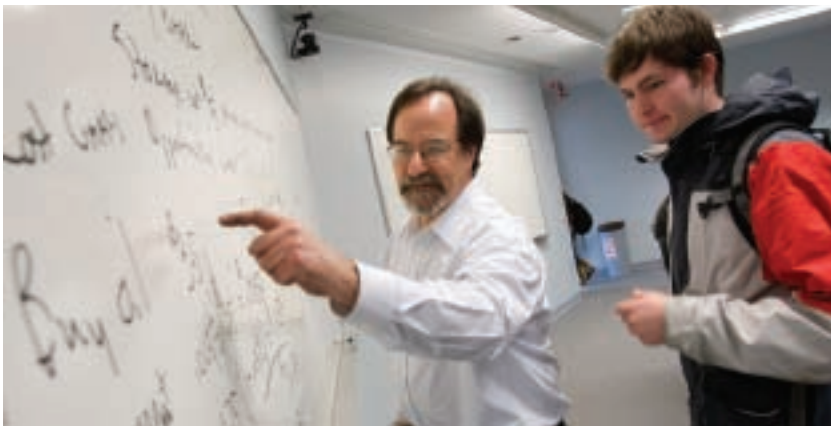
PRESTIGIOUS PUBLICATIONS:

The Fox School is home to nine leading academic and professional journals.

TOP RANKINGS:

Fox School programs are among the best in the country as ranked by *Financial Times*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *The Princeton Review* and *The Economist*.

Experience the Fox Difference!
Visit us at Booth 131 at ICAM.





BLAIR SHEPPARD, DEAN, FUQUA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, DUKE UNIVERSITY

Dean Blair Sheppard on identifying a diverse pool of quality students:

“The most urgent problems of today require a perspective broader than any single discipline can provide. Delivering healthcare to every citizen of our planet requires an understanding of medicine, economics, and ethics; addressing climate change requires knowledge of science, engineering, business, policy, and law. We must identify students from a range of backgrounds who can engage across ethnicity, religion, and culture. The GMAT exam helps us select students whose talents and interests are best suited to Duke—leaders who think globally and wish to apply knowledge in service to society.”

To learn more about the GMAT exam and about the GMAC products and services it makes possible, visit [gmac.com/bized](https://www.gmac.com/bized).

