A more diverse classroom contributes toward the goal of a more diverse work force—by attracting talent from underrepresented groups to business careers, through mentoring by diverse business school faculty, administrators and academic leaders. President of the KPMG U.S. Foundation, Inc. and The PhD Project, Blane Ruschak shares his insights on how The PhD Project, co-founded by the KPMG Foundation, Graduate Management Admission Council and The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, assists toward that goal.

Transformative change: Each year, more underrepresented professors are entering the academic profession where their influence reaches from teaching to research to mentoring students and helping them enter the business workforce. Unlike one-off programs at individual institutions, this model is increasing the size of the pool. As role models and mentors, the new professors are impacting countless students. As former dean of the University of Cincinnati Dr. Ralph Katerberg said, “The real impact is that more undergraduates are attracted to the business disciplines, finishing those degrees, and entering the world of work.”

Role models, mentors and influencers for students of all backgrounds: On campuses across the country, they are role models and more for students of color, and also changing the attitudes and beliefs of those majority students who have never before had a professor or teacher from an underrepresented group. As mentors, they are helping students get internships and jobs, and preparing them for careers in business.

Broadening the reach of business education: Diverse professors are reaching nontraditional populations and groups as well as providing their communities with personal finance and technology education. They are reaching high school students, including those from underserved communities, both individually and through organized programs like the NAF Academies of Finance, a national network for preparing high schoolers for college and careers.

Inspiring other organizations to replicate the systemic model: The University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School followed this same model in creating its own business student diversity initiative. “The PhD Project has inspired many business schools to see what they can do about inclusion,” a Wharton executive said.

Serving communities: Many Project professors entered the profession with strong intent to influence lives and enhance their communities beyond the campus. They are doing so in great numbers even as they advance their academic careers. Many are also influencing and educating the business, policy making, advocacy, K-12 education, healthcare, and nonprofit communities.

Thought leadership: By quintupling the number of minority business professors, a new generation of scholars has been established influencing academic and business through their research. Publishing prodigiously, many PhD Project professors have become recognized thought leaders. The Project, in conjunction with Baruch College, conducts an annual seminar for its doctoral students to hone their research skills so they can become tomorrow’s thought leaders.

Strong classroom teaching skills: Many diverse professors value teaching greatly, having been drawn to the profession specifically because they want to influence the next generation of students who will become business leaders. The Project, in conjunction with Bentley University, holds an annual seminar for its students and alumni to enhance their teaching skills.

Strong leadership skills: With over 50 project alumni serving in a dean or provost role, and over a dozen serving as university or college presidents, they are influencing the future direction of their institutions and the ability to continue the effort to change the look of their campuses through greater diversity.

In addition, many PhD Project professors are influencing their students on issues of corporate social responsibility and ethics, some are working to help foster effective leadership in the military, and many are actively coaching, supporting and helping undergraduates and graduate students obtain internships and jobs in business. The PhD Project is a program designed to create more diverse business leaders by supporting diverse professionals to get their PhD in business and become role models in the classroom, academic administration and academic leadership positions.