

# The PhD Project: Co-opting Business Practices to Diversify Architecture Faculty

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## INTRODUCTION

The architecture profession has a diversity problem and it begins in the academic setting. The statistics are grim. There are 2300 black licensed architects in the US. According to the Directory of African American Architects and the latest data from NCARB, this number accounts for only 2% of all licensees. On the academic side, the 2015 ACSA Atlas data shows that full-time faculty of color are less than 20% with less than 5% African American. In response to these statistics, a group of faculty have gathered to develop the Future Faculty Workshop, a program aimed at increasing the number of minority professionals through increasing faculty of color in professional programs in the US.

For an example of how bad the situation is, in the state of Wisconsin, there are 8 black licensed architects. Eight, a number you can count on 2 hands. Roughly 100 years ago the number of women architects paralleled the number of black licensed architects in the US today. This question arose: can we wait 100 years for the number of black architects in the US to increase significantly? And the answer is simply no.

## THE PHD PROJECT MODEL

Given the hard work that many organizations are putting forward to change these dismal numbers with limited success, we have found a new model, outside of architecture, that has changed minority representation in the business field. Detailed in the book 'Paying it Forward' The PhD Project: Creating Tomorrow's Leaders in Business Through Academe, The PhD Project is a business model that unites the academy, firms, corporations, and regulating agencies to increase the number of minority professionals by increasing the number of minority faculty. Responding to evidence that minority students were disadvantaged by stereotyping and the absence of role models and mentors that looked like them, in just 25 years, the program has quadrupled the number of minority business school faculty.

When the program began minority business school professors numbered only 294 (less than 2%); today there are over 1500. The goals of the program are to attract more minority applicants to business school programs, to inform and educate them about a PhD education, to nurture students if they chose to get a PhD, to increase the number of students in PhD programs, to improve the experience of all students

by presenting a diversity of voices in the classroom, and ultimately to diversify the workforce. The PhD Project has made significant progress using three strategies: marketing, conferences, and targeted mentoring.

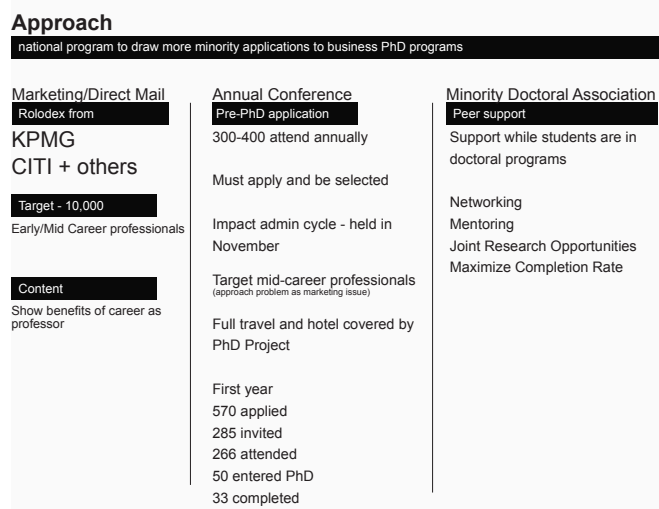


Figure 1: PhD Project Summary Approach

The national marketing strategy, targeting early and midcareer minority professionals, identifies an existing pool of applicants to encourage them to consider teaching as a new profession. To prepare professionals to shift their career to academia the group organized a pre-PhD application conference to share the details about teaching, academia, and research. To remove cost as a barrier to attending the conference, funding for travel and hotel was provided for attendees. In the first year, 570 people applied to the program; 285 were invited to attend the pre-application conference; 266 attended, and 50 entered the PhD program at a school in the US. Out of those 50, 33 completed their PhDs. The third part of the strategy included the organization of a peer support conference. These conferences, held annually, bring together minority doctoral students to network, receive mentorship, consider joint research opportunities, and to combat the isolation minorities feel at various campuses across the country where they represent only a small proportion of the student body. In many instances, they represent the only minority in the field on their campus.

## PhD Project 1993

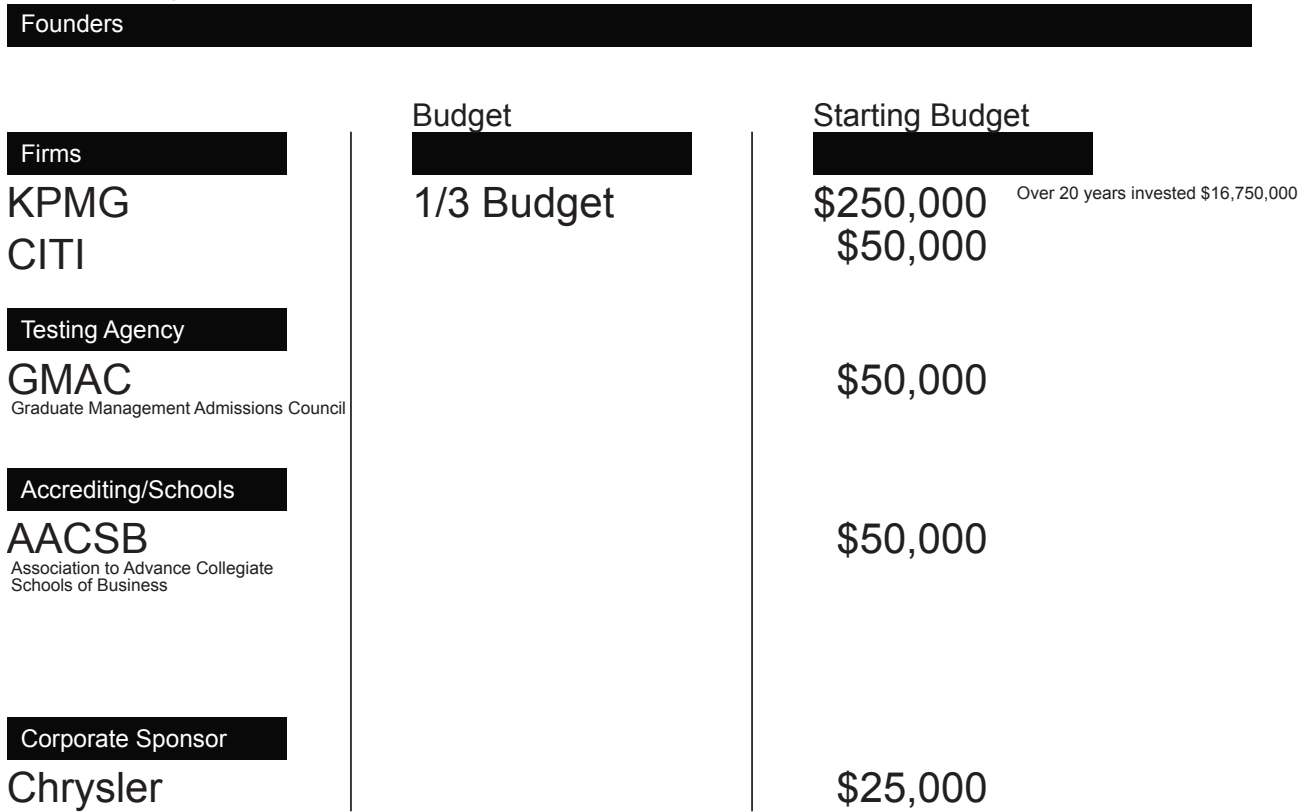


Figure 2. PhD Project founding budget.

To carry out the 3-pronged strategy of marketing, preparation workshop, and mentoring conferences, the PhD Project needed funding. In 1993, when the project started, PhD project partners included two major banking and accounting firms KPMG and CITI, GMAC - the testing agency, AACSA - the accrediting agency, and a corporate sponsor. Each of these entities provided critical startup funding. In 2018, expenses totaled \$2,500,000. The financial snapshot suggests that the 5 mentoring conferences cost over one million dollars annually while the introductory pre-application conference averages \$750,000. Another \$200,000 is earmarked towards marketing, media, and networking while \$500,000 is spent on administrative costs. In the current budget model, 55% of funding is contributed by universities and academic organizations, 24% from corporations, and the remaining 21% from the KPMG Foundation.

### FUTURE FACULTY WORKSHOP

What would it take for the architecture discipline and profession to co-opt this model to increase the diversity of architecture school faculty? Could deans, faculty, and architecture firms join together to support architecture’s version of the PhD Project - the Future Faculty Workshop (FFW) - as a way to diversify architecture school faculty and thus as a

way to diversify the architecture profession. Current statistics from NAAB reveal around 700 minority architecture faculty out of 5800 (about 12%) and 1100 minority architecture students from a pool of 25,800. Can we double and triple these numbers in 10 years? We are asking ACSA to partner in creating the FFW by supporting a pilot program at the Annual Meeting in 2020.

In the fall of 2019, we presented the template of the PhD Project at Stanford University for the ACSA Fall Conference. In preparation, my colleagues and I reached out to the administrators of the PhD Project including founder Bernie Milano who shared much advice with us about the process they went through. During the conversation they offered to connect us with a participant in the Project who was able to join us and present at the Stanford session. Wendy De La Rosa, a current PhD student, detailed her own positive experiences as part of the PhD program and her goals that are supported through the mentoring conferences and networking events. The session ended with a discussion about the specifics of the architecture version of the PhD Project including nomenclature, audience, funding, and executional logistics. Following the session, we approached the ACSA about running a trail program in 2020.

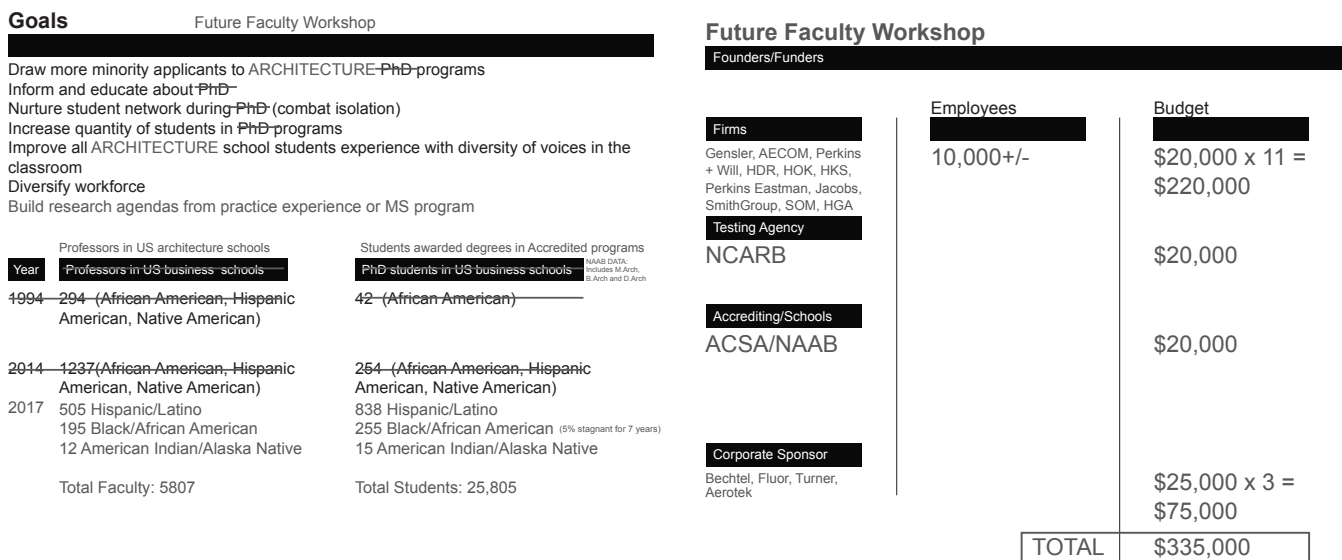


Figure 3: Future Faculty Workshop Proposal: Goals and Budget

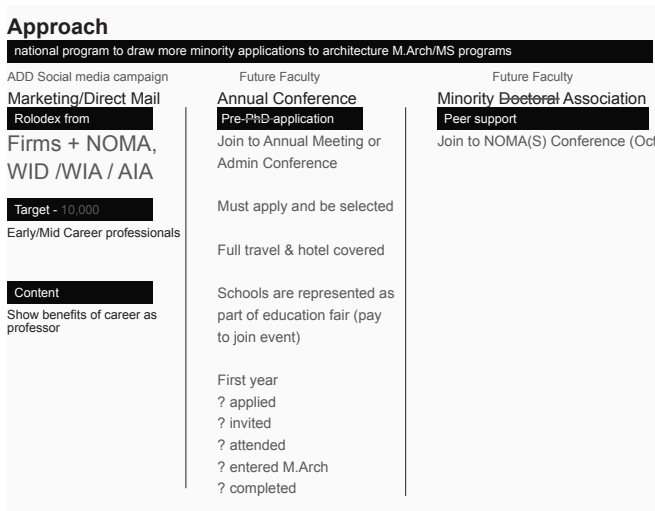


Figure 4: PhD Project Summary Approach

If accepted at the ACSA Annual Meeting, the FFW would run a pilot program during the conference. Although the FFW would be open to all conference attendees targeted invitations will be sent to minority mid-career professionals along with recent master’s and PhD students in advance of the conference. Attendees will also be sought from NOMA, AIA, WIA, WID, AIA San Diego, ASINEA (Asociación de Instituciones de Enseñanza de la Arquitectura) and local universities. The PhD Project marketed their program to at least 10,000 people. Our target market of 10,000 people can be drawn from the largest 11 firms based on their quantity of employees. Our goal would be to sponsor 5 candidates for the conference. Sponsorships requests will be sent to the same 11 firms sought for recruiting in addition to others from the Large Firm Roundtable and ACSA Distinguished

Professors. Would NCARB and NAAB contribute as well? Are there corporate sponsors in the construction industry and employment agencies who would be interested in similar goals?

To maintain the program year after year, the PhD project has built a network of donors that contribute small amounts individually but collectively aggregate into a significant amount of money. Who would you add to our list of potential donors? Are there other resources like grants or foundations where funding could be sought? Would the ‘hundred and change grant program’, which earmarks \$100 million to make systemic change in the world, be an option?

The Future Faculty Workshop takes a systemic approach to the lack of minority representation in the field by increasing the number of minority professors. Using the model from the PhD Project of marketing, pre-conference workshop, and mentoring we hope to drastically shift the quantity of minority faculty at architecture schools across the US. Eight licensed architects in Wisconsin is not enough. We can do better.