

# **A Comparative Analysis of the Employment of Business Faculty With Ph.D.s and Those With D.B.A.s at Colleges and Universities in the University System of Georgia**

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*Although the Doctor of Business Administration (D.B.A.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees are classified as professional degrees and research degrees respectively, several institutions market the D.B.A. as a degree that prepares graduates for careers in higher education. The present study is a secondary analysis of publicly available data pertaining to faculty education in certain business disciplines within the 26 colleges and universities in the University System of Georgia. The analysis indicated that of the 368 full-time faculty in the selected business disciplines, 32 held D.B.A.s while 336 held Ph.D.s. Results indicated that while the D.B.A. is a viable degree for those wishing to have a career as higher education faculty, the Ph.D. is still considered the preferred credential.*

*Keywords: Doctor of Business Administration, Doctor of Philosophy, faculty credentials, teaching*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Doctoral education has changed dramatically in the United States over the years (Cardoso, Santos, Diogo, Soares & Carvalho, 2022). With the rise of professional doctorates, students have more options should they desire to further their education at the doctoral level (Cardoso et al., 2022). Specifically, business students are faced with the option of enrolling in a traditional Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) program or a Doctor of Business Administration (D.B.A.) program. This becomes even more confusing for potential doctoral students when some universities will claim that the D.B.A. is a “professional” or “applied” degree that is specifically designed for practitioners, while the Ph.D. is designed to prepare college and university faculty as a “research” degree (Pina et al., 2016). Other universities might insist that the rigor is the same, as some D.B.A and Ph.D. programs require similarities in curriculum and standards for program research requirements. Therefore, the degree decision for potential students is highly contingent on career aspirations and trajectory plans. This paper explores the similarities and differences of the degree offerings in the business education discipline to offer insights for those who may be planning careers in higher education as business faculty.

Potential doctoral students may have many questions in mind when analyzing what type of doctoral business degree may be best for them. If both degrees are suitable for those pursuing a faculty career in

higher education, does it matter which degree one completes? Do colleges and universities prefer one over the other if the rigor of programs and research output of the graduates meet the requirements for initial hire, promotion, and tenure? There is a current gap in the literature regarding the employment of business faculty with Ph.D.s and those with D.B.A.s in the United States. The majority of studies completed comparing the Ph.D. and the D.B.A. generally originate in the United Kingdom (Bareham et al., 2000; Bourner et al., 2000) or Australia (Erwee, 2004; Fink, 2006; Neumann 2007; Sarros et al., 2005). This paper specifically looks at the business faculty in the 26 colleges and universities within the University System of Georgia (USG). For this paper, business faculty refers only to faculty teaching in the fields of management, marketing, organizational behavior, logistics and supply chain management, and healthcare management. This paper also introduces propositions for degree conflict theories and outlines directions for future research.

## **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?**

The D.B.A. was developed by Harvard Business School in 1953 as a more scholarly option than the Doctor of Commercial Science degree (MacLennan et al., 2016). The Ph.D. in business has been available in the United States since the early 1920s and as such is a more well-known and traditional doctoral approach (MacLennan et al., 2016). A significant difference between the two programs in the United States is that traditional Ph.D. programs often require full-time study while D.B.A. programs may be completed on a part-time basis, allowing students to complete the program with minimal career disruption (Stoten, 2022). Despite temporal flexibility, part-time education carries unique challenges, which can impact students to varying degrees who may be remote and without the same level of campus support and embeddedness of traditional programs (Stoten, 2022). Some schools, such as Kennesaw State University (2022) and the University of South Alabama (2022) have begun to offer a part-time Ph.D. in Business Administration, as opposed to a D.B.A. for those students who specifically desire a career in higher education.

According to MacLennan et al. (2018), in theory, one who holds a Ph.D. would be more prepared for a career in higher education by receiving a degree with more of a research-based focus. In contrast, a person with a D.B.A. would have received more applied professional preparation, thus preparing him for a career as a business practitioner. However, Pina et al. (2016) found that curriculums for D.B.A. and Ph.D. programs had few differences in the total number of required credit hours and the total number of required research courses. They also found that D.B.A. and Ph.D. programs were treated identically by regional and national accrediting bodies, such as AACSB, ACBSP, and IACBE.

While conventional wisdom would suggest that D.B.A. graduates would be practitioners who would apply their skills in the field of business and Ph.D. graduates would be prepared to research and fill faculty positions at colleges and universities, MacLennan et al. (2016) found that the vast majority of institutions that offer D.B.A.s market themselves as programs preparing graduates for academic careers and requiring rigorous research requirements. In a comparison of Ph.D. and D.B.A. dissertations, MacLennan et al. (2018) found no significant differences in research methodology, sample size, or basic versus applied research types.

Given that the existing literature has demonstrated few curricular differences in requirements in the preparation of Ph.D. and D.B.A. graduates who wish to be higher education faculty in the United States, this study sets out to determine the prevalence of business faculty with D.B.A.s in the USG, as opposed to their colleagues with Ph.D.s.

## **METHODS**

The present study is a secondary analysis of publicly available data including 368 business faculty from the 26 colleges and universities affiliated with the USG (2022). Business faculty refers only to faculty teaching in the fields of management, marketing, organizational behavior, logistics and supply chain

management, and healthcare management. The USG classifies institutions into four different categories, which are research universities, comprehensive universities, state universities, and state colleges.

Data were manually gathered from sources made publicly available by the 26 institutions, including university websites, academic program websites, and university catalogs, with no human contact or participation required. Data gathered specifically pertained to full-time business faculty in the fields previously listed with either a Ph.D. or a D.B.A. at the time the data were collected. No personal information that may be identifiable was captured, analyzed or kept. Adjunct faculty and faculty teaching in fields outside of those listed were excluded. Faculty with D.B.A.s who taught in healthcare management (HCM) programs were included, as some HCM programs are housed in the School of Business and others are housed in the School of Health Sciences or School of Public Health, depending on the specific college or university.

The data presented is based on a single snapshot in time, and assumes that faculty directories on university websites, academic program websites, and university catalogs were up-to-date at the time of data collection.

## FINDINGS

Within the USG (2022) four universities are classified as research universities, with one university classified as R2 and the remaining institutions classified as R1 under Carnegie (2022) designations. As noted in Table 1, the total number of business faculty with Ph. D.s outweighs the total number with D.B.A.s by a difference of 119. It is also important to note that all business faculty with D.B.A.s at the research universities are all serving in non-tenure track faculty positions. While some faculty with Ph. D.s hold non-tenure track faculty positions, the vast majority are serving in tenured or tenure track positions.

**TABLE 1**  
**RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA**

<b><u>Research Universities</u></b>	<b><u>Faculty with Ph.D.</u></b>	<b><u>Faculty with D.B.A.</u></b>
<b>University A</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	1	1
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	9	0
<b>University B</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	2	1
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	27	0
<b>University C</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	14	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	25	0
<b>University D</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	8	2
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	37	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	123	4

As noted in Table 2, the ratio of Ph.D. faculty to D.B.A. faculty at the Comprehensive Universities is similar to that of the Research Universities, with Ph.D. faculty outnumbering D.B.A. faculty. Additionally, within the Comprehensive Universities category, two universities are classified as R2 universities under Carnegie's (2022) designations. While some faculty with Ph.D.s hold non-tenure-track appointments, as well, the vast majority hold tenured or tenure track positions.

**TABLE 2**  
**COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA**

<u>Comprehensive Universities</u>	Faculty with Ph.D.	Faculty with D.B.A.
<b>University E</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	2	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	28	0
<b>University F</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	3
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	43	1
<b>University G</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	17	0
<b>University H</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	14	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	104	5

In Table 3, the numbers look a bit different. While the number of faculty members with Ph.D.s still outweighs the number with D.B.A.s at 78 to 16, there are some differences between the Research and Comprehensive Universities here. Of the 78 faculty members with Ph.D.s, only one (1) of those holds a non-tenure track position. Of the 16 faculty members with D.B.A.s, only two (2) of those hold non-tenure track positions, while the other 14 are either tenured or on the tenure track.

**TABLE 3**  
**STATE UNIVERSITIES IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA**

<u>State Universities</u>	Faculty with Ph.D.	Faculty with D.B.A.
<b>University I</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	8	1
<b>University J</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	1
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	10	4
<b>University K</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	16	0
<b>University L</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	1	0
<b>University M</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	1
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	16	1

<b>University N</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	8	3
<b>University O</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	1	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	1	1
<b>University P</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	5	1
<b>University Q</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	12	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>16</b>

Table 4 shows the ratio of faculty with Ph.D.s to those with D.B.A.s in the state colleges within the USG. While faculty with Ph. D.s still outnumber those with D.B.A.s at 31 to seven (7), it is important to make some distinctions with the colleges in this category. Several of the colleges within this category offer a limited number of bachelor's degrees and a larger number of associate's degrees. It is not uncommon for students to start with one of the State Colleges and then transfer to one of the schools in the previous categories. As such, faculty can be hired, promoted, and tenured without possessing a doctoral degree of any kind at several of these schools. Additionally, three colleges within the State Colleges sector have all achieved AACSB accreditation, so their requirements for hiring, promotion, and tenure of business faculty are more stringent than the others in this category.

Unlike the other categories, faculty members with D.B.A.s who hold positions at the State Colleges within the USG are all either tenured or on the tenure track. This is the only category of the four where that has happened.

**TABLE 4**  
**STATE COLLEGES IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA**

<u>State Colleges</u>	Faculty with Ph.D.	Faculty with D.B.A.
<b>College A</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	1	1
<b>College B</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
<b>College C</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	2	0
<b>College D</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	1	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	4	2

<b>College E</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
<b>College F</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	19	0
<b>College G</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	1	2
<b>College H</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	2	1
<b>College I</b>		
Non-Tenure Track Faculty	0	0
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty	1	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>7</b>

## DISCUSSION

The present study both affirms and expands on the work of others done in assessing the viability of the D.B.A. credential for those wishing to teach at the university level. From the data collected, it is clear that while the D.B.A. is a sufficient academic credential for teaching at the post-secondary level, the Ph.D. still is the gold standard for business faculty within the USG, by a huge margin of 336 (Ph. D.s) to 32 (D.B.A.s). This could be for any number of reasons, such as Carnegie designations and publishing requirements.

Faculty with D.B.A.s tended to be non-tenure track faculty at the universities categorized as Research Universities and Comprehensive Universities by the USG. It was noted in the data-gathering process that several of these universities had non-tenure track positions classified in some way as teaching faculty. These positions may have had titles like a lecturer, senior lecturer, clinical assistant professor, or assistant teaching professor. In looking into job descriptions and requirements of these positions, they generally carry a heavier course load than tenure track faculty, but they do not face the same research requirements as tenure track faculty. These may potentially be positions that are better suited for faculty with D.B.A.s who had successful industry careers and transitioned to higher education with a desire to teach and share knowledge, as opposed to publishing in top-tier journals.

## LIMITATIONS

This study was limited to business faculty in the disciplines listed earlier who are employed full-time at institutions within the University System of Georgia. It was also a snapshot in time and was dependent on the accuracy of the secondary data. This study looked exclusively at faculty members with Ph.D.s and D.B.A.s and did not look at faculty with other professional doctorates (such as Ed.D., J.D., D.M., D.Mgt., D.P.A., or D.Sc.). The authors of this paper recognize that there are many factors beyond degree titles that impact an individual's academic career. This paper is not intended to devalue the merits of the D.B.A and the authors recognize that many D.B.A faculty members successfully perform quality research and hold tenure track positions. This paper is a simple analysis and snapshot within the USG and should not be used to generalize beyond the intended scope.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on this study the theory of degree conflict emerges. Specifically, career aspirations may be in direct conflict with personal limitations (financial, full time/part-time study preferences, etc.) What emerges is that there may be dissonance between the student's desired career outcome, degree type, and personal needs.

In the future, in assessing the popularity of the D.B.A. as a credential for academic faculty, researchers may compare the ratios of Ph.D. and D.B.A. faculty in other business disciplines. MacLennan et al. (2016) found that other areas within the business, such as accounting, though not included in their study, had higher numbers of faculty with D.B.A.s than did the management faculty they studied. Future researchers could also compare the ratio of Ph.D. to D.B.A. faculty at state colleges and universities outside of Georgia. Additionally, future research might compare the research output of faculty with Ph.D.s to those with D.B.A.s. Future research should consider comparing the reasons Ph.D. and D.B.A. graduates chose the specific programs they chose to complete.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to determine the prevalence of business faculty members at USG institutions who held a D.B.A. as opposed to a Ph.D. The results of the study affirm that a respectable number of tenured, tenure track and non-tenure track faculty within the USG have completed a D.B.A. as their terminal degree. It is not surprising that there is a much greater prevalence of Ph.D.s among business faculty, as this has been the standard for so long. However, there is a clear indication that the D.B.A. is an accepted credential for business faculty. As more D.B.A. programs continue to offer flexible delivery models in direct opposition to the traditional full-time Ph.D. programs, we could potentially begin to see this dynamic shift. In support of this, D.B.A. programs should ensure research preparedness is well represented in the curriculum. Former industry practitioners who have completed rigorous D.B.A. programs and can match their Ph.D. colleagues in research, as well as teach students with first-hand industry experience, could be a powerful marketing tool for colleges and universities going forward.

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