Pace’s Career Changers

The Pace e.MBA program is directed by a career changer—James Parker. A 1960 graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute with a degree in industrial engineering, Parker (pictured) spent six months on active duty in the reserves. During that time, he decided that he did not want to be an engineer and obtained an MBA from Wharton in technical management. He fell in love with marketing and spent more than 25 years in the advertising business but, wanting to do something that would make a difference, he quit before his 50th birthday. He began teaching business courses as an adjunct professor at several colleges and universities in New York City. Later Arthur Centozoe, then-dean of the Lubin School of Business, asked Parker to come to Pace to set up an executive MBA program. Parker agreed, with the provision that he also be allowed to teach. Parker has been director of the Lubin School’s e.MBA program and an adjunct professor at Pace for eight years.

The e.MBA program is not a typical career changer program. “Older students come in and they are looking to change careers or begin a new business of their own. They more often pay out-of-pocket for their education, unlike younger students who are usually sponsored by their companies. Older students are usually between 40 and 50 years of age and are here to recharge themselves to get going again,” says Parker.

Kate Wendleton, founder of the Five O’Clock Club, agrees that recharging at 50 has potential advantages. “In the 1970s early retirement held people back. They took early retirement and became bored. Now people are working into their 70s. These could be the happiest years of your life if you look for a new job at 50 and plan to work until 70. Why not? Julia Child became a chef after age 50 and look at her very successful life. After 50 you may be willing to take more risks.”

Pace’s e.MBA classes are 30 percent women, which is a higher percentage than at Baruch College, Columbia University, New York University, and Fordham University. The median age is 38. Older executives feel more comfortable at Pace because of its reputation in business academics and practical preparation for real-world experiences in business.