‘War Stories’ from the Real World

By Janet Ware

In the classroom, professors make good use of their real-world experiences.

Instructors of graduate-level courses in accounting, finance, management, marketing, economics, global strategies and other relevant topics in MBA programs in Florida are likely these days to bring as much, if not more, on-the-job experience as academic credentials into their classrooms.

Does that matter? Yes, according to the following six professors and one dean, all of whom have plenty to say about the value of sharing “war stories” from the real world with students pursuing business degrees.
For academics aspiring to join the faculty at Hodges’ Johnson School of Business, evidence of a track record in the real world is no option; it’s a requirement.

“Our Faculty Credentials Guide mandates that we hire faculty with both academic credentials and real-world experience,” says Aysegul Timur. “If I see the resume of a person with only academic experience, no outside work, I do not hire. We must have real-world experience.”

It’s one reason Timur herself came to be at Hodges. An MBA graduate of the University of Istanbul, she knew firsthand the value of practical experience. During her tenure there, many faculty members served as consultants to private business and they always hired grad students to help. Timur was one of them.

“That experience opened up a completely new perspective for me and, as a result, I never studied purely from textbooks or journal articles. I always looked at what was happening in the real world.”

Timur expects the same for MBA students at Hodges, and so she encourages faculty to take on consulting work and get students involved. “If we don’t find ways to establish the relevance of what our students are learning in the classroom to the real world, this education means nothing. You’re not improving skills, critical thinking or understanding of the big picture.”

You might even be hurting the students’ chances for employment. “The more we’re involved in the real world,” says Timur, “the more valuable we are in preparing our students to enter the workforce. So we go out and talk to employers. We find out what they need, and we make changes to align our curriculum with business expectations.”

It’s an approach that seems to be paying off. Says Timur, “One of my MBA students graduated in December and got a job at Hertz right away. This is working.”