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## Nonprofits Get Down to Business

Schools Teach How to Manage Operations

*By Dianne Davenport*  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
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After Kathie Westpheling was promoted to the job of executive director at a nonprofit group providing and advocating for medical care to the uninsured, she began to realize that her expertise in public health did not translate into proficiency in tax law and the intricacies of the 501(c)(3) form.

"I . . . realized that I had never really taken the time to educate myself on some of the aspects of the nonprofit sector that would really help me in the work that I do," she said.

Although she had worked for seven years with her organization, Association of Clinicians for the Underserved, based in Tysons Corner, she had little knowledge of the legal, budgetary and fundraising parts of running it.

Management of nonprofits is increasingly regarded as a specialization unto itself. Yet executives in these organizations often come to their positions with relatively specialized work experience, either in one aspect of operations, such as fundraising, or in the profession the nonprofit represents – in Westpheling's case, public health. As a result, many new managers are only partially prepared to shift from dealing with one facet of an organization to overseeing the whole operation.

Many universities in the past few years have started programs to train people to deal with issues unique to the sector. According to the Chronicle of Philanthropy, more than 90 colleges and universities now offer programs in the subject, including certificate programs, concentrations and master's degrees.

Class topics include federal and state laws; budget and accounting issues for organizations in which the bottom line is more a means to an end than an end in itself; the role of foundations and the motives of donors; and using marketing and media relations to promote causes.

Kathy P. Kretman, director of the Center for Public and Nonprofit Leadership at Georgetown University, started a certificate program in nonprofit management in 2001 that has graduated 101 people. She said that some of those taking the course are looking for a job in the sector after years in another field and see the 13-weekend program as a way to acquire skills and contacts. (Ten of the 34 current students are lawyers, she said.) But most are executives who want to hone their skills or learn new ones.

"There's a great need for professional development training among nonprofit executives," Kretman said. "Many of these people have not been in business school," she said, and there were a few sources of information on how to deal with foundations that provide essential funding, for example, or boards that oversee a group's operations.

Westpheling was one of the first to take the course, graduating in 2002. She said it has helped her in budgeting, fundraising and interacting with board members, among other areas.

Robert K. Gehman, executive director of Helping Up Mission in Baltimore, earned a graduate certificate in May 2002 in nonprofit management from Johns Hopkins University. "It's become increasingly complex," he said of the nonprofit sector, "with a variety of disciplines you need to master, and I decided I needed to get on the cutting edge."

Gehman took over as director of his group, a residential spiritual drug-recovery program for homeless men, nine years ago. Though he had worked in the nonprofit sector since 1975, during that time he dealt mostly with fundraising. He signed up for the Hopkins program to strengthen his skills in managing finances and finding ways to measure the group's performance and demonstrate its effectiveness to donors.

Gehman's organization paid for part of the program, which took two years, and he received a partial scholarship from the university. Westpheling said she paid for part of her program, which runs about \$4,000, as an investment in her own professional development.

Some of the new programs were helped into existence by grants from the Kellogg and Packard Foundations, but the demand had been there for a long time, according to Kretman of Georgetown. Her program was started after focus groups had confirmed there was interest in the subject, she said.

Gehman, Westpheling and others said that one of the biggest benefits was the opportunity to meet faculty members and other students. For Westpheling, who had just been named executive director in 2001, that was a deciding factor. "One of the biggest assets to me would be to meet the people in the Washington area that could be of help to me. . . . The networking and the contacts and the faculty I still use."