TWICE AS NICE

Combined degrees can provide a fast track to success

By ERIKA PRAFDER

WHEN Corey Blay of Harlem, N.Y., applied for the dual-degree MBA/MPA program at New York University, he knew it was the right choice for him. Previously a seventh-grade teacher at a private school in the Bronx, Blay is now in his second year of the condensed, three-year program, a partnership between NYU's Stern Graduate School of Business and the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

"I taught history, but also worked on a number of political initiatives and was the administrator for a community organization in Harlem. I knew that the intersectionality of education and the private sector was what I wanted to do long-term," says Blay. Through Stern's dual-degree program, "I've been able to refine the deep rigorous analysis of policy and program impact. It's helped me to identify and decide what works well and also how to speak that language effectively," says Blay.

Specifically, Blay has his sights set on opening a private middle school for boys of color in Harlem, he says. The dual-degree program at NYU is helping him to fulfill his two passions.

"I have a new level of awareness of what we need to do to lift up disadvantaged people," says Blay. "Business does have a larger role to play — to create wealth and opportunities to lift up people culturally and otherwise." Some of the classes he's getting the most out of include the Launch Projects Course — an independent study focused on the role of business in solving social problems and the Start-Up Business Practicum, which is an experiential learning class on starting a business.

"It's taught by a venture capitalist who has worked on numerous start-ups. He's brought his experience to the classroom. We're learning through case studies about the amount of work it takes to start a business properly," says Blay. Currently Blay is at work putting his dreams for a new private school in Harlem together with the help of a leadership team of fellow classmates.

"With the support of Stern and Wagner, we're shooting for a fall 2015 or following year launch date. We're building our business plan, incorporating the school, and trying to raise the money. It will take millions of dollars to make this thing work," says Blay.

Stern's MBA/MBA program has been offered for over a decade but is seeing a surge in interest, according to Isser Gallogly, assistant dean of MBA Admissions for NYU Stern.

"What's happened in the last few years is that people realize that business as a force for social change is extremely powerful. The interest amongst students in terms of trying to do something that has a public benefit has increased dramatically as well. The popularity of our program indicates that students can get the best of both worlds with this degree," says Gallogly.

For the past three years, the Stern program has, on average, experienced more than double the enrollment than the three-year period before that. As for job growth and opportunities for those with the degree, "Graduates have gone on to work at nonprofits, in the public sector, for the government or into the business world with plans to give back over time," says Gallogly.

For more info: stern.nyu.edu