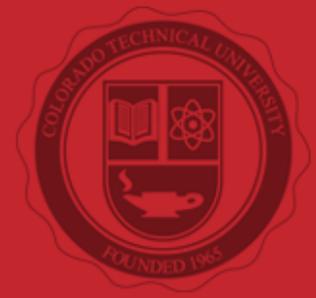


# D.M. or Ph.D. in Management? What You Need to Know to Make the Right Choice



By **Emad Rahim, D.M.**, University Dean of **Business & Management** and **Tiffany Yates, Ph.D.**,  
Doctoral Department Chair  
*Colorado Technical University*

Ready to earn your doctoral degree? If so, then you have a lot of choices to make – from where you'll attend school to the area of specialization you'll study. But equally important is the type of doctoral degree you decide to pursue – a research doctorate or an applied doctorate.

The research doctorate, also known as a Doctor of Philosophy or Ph.D., is familiar to most people. Fewer understand the distinction between that and an applied doctorate like the Doctorate of Management, or D.M. Both doctoral degrees require the completion of a rigorous program, so you want to be sure you choose the degree that best fits your future career goals.

## **A Quick Comparison**

The Doctorate of Management (D.M.) is an applied degree within the study of management. The focus is on the application of management theories; learning how practical research can be used to identify or solve industry problems. A D.M. program prepares you to think and act strategically, while enhancing your ability to make positive management contributions in your chosen career path. As you advance into senior level executive roles, the knowledge you gain from a D.M. degree equips you with advanced research skills and tools needed to confront complex problems within your industry. Of course, the degree also prepares those who prefer to pursue a career in higher education, fulfilling roles of faculty or an administrator.

Conversely, the Ph.D. in Management degree is usually recognized as a traditional philosophy doctorate degree where you will often pursue research that extends existing research in an attempt to build upon what is already known. The Ph.D. is also considered to be training for a career in higher education, which may include teaching, but also includes ongoing research and publishing efforts.

At the end of the day, a D.M. degree is academically equivalent to a Ph.D. Both offer challenging curriculum with a strong emphasis on research -- applied or theoretical. To succeed, you must demonstrate advanced writing and comprehension skills. In both programs, you will write and defend a dissertation in front of a faculty committee. Some applied doctoral programs may also require you to complete a comprehensive exam before starting their dissertation proposal.



### **The Doctorate of Management Degree Highlights**

The D.M. degree was first developed by Case Western University (Executive D.M.), and was quickly adapted by other universities, including Webster University, University of Hertfordshire, Lawrence Technological University, University of Maryland University College, Southeastern Institute of Technology and Walsh College. The purpose and objectives of the D.M degree is similar to other applied doctoral degree programs (i.e., DBA, EdD, DPA, DA), but the emphasis is placed on practicing and applying management theory and action research. The program uses a progressive academic approach that encompasses the career strategy, talents, skills and abilities of managers, executives and academic leaders to develop future practitioner scholars. A unique aspect of the D.M. degree program is the dissertation, which focuses on solving real organizational problems. In addition, students move through the program in small cohorts to encourage collaboration, networking and degree completion.

*“The D.M. degree represents a major departure from traditional doctoral study by enabling administrators to combine pure leadership theory and applied research methods to define, implement and better evaluate the decision-making strategies necessary for organizational growth.”* – Dr. Darrell Norman Burrell, faculty at George Mason University and Presidential Management Fellows

### **The Doctorate of Philosophy in Management Degree Highlights**

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) degree has its roots in the early-19<sup>th</sup> century Germany and later migrated to the United States in the 1860's. Historians recognize Yale for organizing the first Ph.D. programs in the United States. The vast majority of students pursuing a Ph.D. hope to pursue a career in academia. In preparation for research, Ph.D. students are often paired with tenured faculty to add research process to existing purpose and methods. The aim for Ph.D. students is to further the research agenda of their university's concentration, faculty or academic institute. Ph.D. candidates must show a mastery of theory by completing competency examinations and a dissertation that is approved by a committee of current Ph.D.'s in the same area of study.

Traditionally, Ph.D. programs focus on a narrow area of research and are motivated by the production of theoretical publication. Often a Ph.D. candidate is an expert that is seeking to explore a narrow gap in scholarship for several years. The Ph.D. field of interest and research methodology influences the desired academic efforts, action plans, and the type of measurable outcomes their scholarship will produce.

*“Early in your doctoral journey think about, dream about, the post-doctoral career path that would be congruent with your evolving strategic goals. Doing this allows you to tailor your doctoral experiences to*



*best support the attainment of your goals,”* Dr. DePorres E.D., Organizational Leadership and Lead Faculty Member in CTU DM.

### **Dr. Emad Rahim’s Recommendations for Academic and Career Success**

Many students believe that earning a doctoral degree will magically create a dream career. Certainly, having the most advanced, prestigious degree possible will be useful in your career, but it takes more to truly achieve success.

- **Earn the “right” degree.** We’ve described what distinguished a Ph.D. from a D.M., now it’s up to you to make the choice that best fits your career goals. You define “right” in your career, so be sure to carefully assess your goals against the potential doctoral programs you’re considering.
- **Expose yourself to opportunities.** A key driver of my success has been my pursuit of opportunities that ranged from operating a consulting practice and founding a non-profit trade association to publishing thought leadership in peer-review journals and speaking at industry conferences. Seek opportunities to use your doctoral knowledge and build your platform as an expert.
- **Build your network.** Hillary Clinton penned the idea, “It takes a village,” and that philosophy applies to your career as well. Your professional network is your village and has the ability to open doors that may be closed to others. Commit time to grow and cultivate your network. There are many ways to approach networking. I personally volunteered my services to people and companies to form relationships and show others the value of my work. Choose the networking approach that works best for your personality and your goals.

The bottom line is this: You cannot expect life to automatically change for you when you earn your doctoral degree. You must make some drastic life changes on your own by selling yourself as an expert and doing things that position you for success.

### **Dr. Tiffany Yates’ Recommendations for Academic and Career Success**

It is important to select a doctoral program that is the “right fit” for the future trajectory for your career. This is an expensive decision that you will commit abundant time, talent and money towards completing. I advise potential doctoral students to work backwards by asking themselves relevant questions.

- Where do you want to be five years from now?
- What does your ideal career consist of?
- Will a doctorate degree help you get there?



If you can still connect a doctorate to your personal career strategy, then begin the doctoral program selection process.

Also realize there is no “one size fits all” doctoral program. The selection of a doctoral program is a personal journey with numerous decision criteria for evaluations. At first glance, consider your personal return on investment for the program, skill development opportunities and curriculum impact to your career strategy. Next, seek out information on the programs accreditations and reputation in the market. Then, narrow your list of options down to your top two programs. Call the university and set up a time to talk with their admissions representation. In this session, ask meaningful questions about the student experience.

- What is the normal graduation rate?
- What qualifications are required to graduate?
- Can you describe the course programs and delivery mechanisms (online or traditional)?

You may also want to speak with a current student or recent alumni to get feedback on their doctoral experience. Program selection is a complicated process that normally takes six to 12 months to complete.

And finally, always be an educated consumer. Ask questions. Know who you are personally and professionally. Drive your career by making aspiration reality. Then leverage the “right” doctoral program as a catalyst to change your life, open job doors, and build a vast network of lifelong learning peers.

---



**Emad Rahim**, D.M., PMP, university dean of Business and Management, is a **PMI Certified Project Management Professional**®. Dr. Rahim has more than 10 years of experience in business development, nonprofit administration, management consulting and project management. Connect with him on Twitter **@CTUBusiness**.



**Tiffany Yates**, Ph.D., doctoral department chair, is a dynamic leader who thrives in organizations seeking continuous innovation. She brings an enthusiasm of entrepreneurship into the field of academics.



## About Colorado Technical University

Founded in 1965, Colorado Technical University (CTU) provides higher education to connect students to what matters most in reaching their professional goals. CTU offers more than 100 undergraduate and graduate programs taught by real-world faculty members who enrich the curriculum with their industry experience and prepare students for today's challenges and the hard-hitting problems of tomorrow. CTU's personalized, online learning system allows students to control what, where, when and how they learn. Students can also learn and connect on campuses in multiple cities. With the help of faculty, industry professionals and more than 70,000 alumni, CTU students can also grow a powerful professional network to use their entire career. For more information, please visit [www.coloradotech.edu](http://www.coloradotech.edu).

*Colorado Technical University cannot guarantee employment or salary. Not all programs available to residents of all states. Find disclosures on graduation rates, student financial obligations and more at [www.coloradotech.edu/disclosures](http://www.coloradotech.edu/disclosures).*

