In a highly competitive, tight job market, where employers are seeking both academic credentials and experience, Assumption College has developed an innovative MBA designed for recent graduates to acquire both, in a single year.

Recent Assumption College graduates Stephanie Shamy ’12 and Michael Looney ’12 decided Assumption’s new Early Career Track (ECT) MBA is the ideal bridge to a successful career in business. Shamy and Looney are among the first cohort in the program.

The program amounts to a high-intensity business “bootcamp” in which MBA candidates take a full load of classes by night and intern 20 to 40 hours per week during the day. They gain practical work experience through the formal internship under the tutelage of one or more business mentors.

Elaine Walker, director of the Early Career Track (ECT) MBA program, has been a senior vice president of human resources for international companies Shell Oil and BHP Billiton. She says the program’s internship structure raises the ante in the MBA world.

“Other MBAs may offer internships that provide some level of oversight, and some may offer internship credit,” she says. “Our ECT program offers a formalized, targeted 10-credit MBA internship over two semesters in which the student and mentor follow standards outlined in a signed contract.” Extensive meetings are conducted with mentor companies, and the MBA program carefully monitors the interns’ progress to ensure that students and companies are both benefiting.

Shamy and Looney’s mentoring teams demonstrate the level of expertise within the program. Shamy’s team at Rand Whitney in Worcester, is comprised of operations analyst Andrew Veroneau as the daily contact and company president (and Harvard MBA holder) Nick Smith as mentor.

Looney works directly with Assurant Health’s Sales Manager Tim Reidy in Marlborough, MA, and is mentored, in a unique arrangement, by George Smalanskas, worldwide director of sales, marketing, and learning for Analog Devices.

During the fall semester, Shamy contributed to Rand Whitney’s new company-wide pricing strategy initiative as well as an overhaul of warehouse floor plans. Smith says Shamy will be involved in numerous facets of the business over the next five months. Meanwhile, at Assurant Health, Looney has been supporting a five-person sales team, learning about complicated health insurance products, analyzing quotations, and participating on calls with customers and health insurance brokers.

The executive mentors are as enthusiastic as the students. Smalanskas, who was skeptical about an MBA program for graduates fresh out of college, now believes that “Assumption’s ECT MBA is an excellent vehicle for students to pack accelerated real-world experience into a short period of time, far exceeding the experience a young professional might gain from working in a narrow entry-level position for a number of years.”

Smith echoes that view, and also notes that it gives his company the opportunity to groom and assess potential talent who can be hired as experienced employees from day one.

The College expects that graduates’ ability to hit the ground running with the practical knowledge and interpersonal intelligence gained from the internships will set them apart from other job candidates. ECT Program Director Walker says, “Employers often say that MBA graduates possess quantitative and analytical skills, but have not developed the competency to apply those skills in a real environment with a sensibility for collaboration and teamwork. Our students are being groomed to fit all of these qualifications.”

Looney touches upon an attribute that he finds essential: “This experience is helping me find the area of business that I can be passionate about.”