

Columbia's B-School rolls out new PE program targeting senior-level pros

The intensive short-term tutorial will cover firm management, scaling, value creation and succession.

Iris Dorbian

Columbia University's Business School is getting a healthy dose of private equity these days with the launch of a program catering to senior private equity professionals who are either in leadership roles or preparing to assume them. Dubbed 'The Business of Private Equity,' the program is scheduled to debut at the Ivy League institution's Manhattanville campus from January 29 to 30, 2026.

The intensive short-term tutorial will cover firm management, scaling, value creation and succession. Enrollment will be limited to 30 to 40 participants.

The program is led by faculty co-directors Michael Ewens, a David L and Elsie M Dodd professor of finance at Columbia Business School, and Michael Gerstenzang, a managing partner at law firm Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton.

Asked what prompted the launch of the workshop, Ewens cited the challenging market for private equity, which affects not only portfolio companies but also the GPs themselves.



Michael Ewens, Columbia Business

School

“PE firms look quite different from the companies in their portfolios,” he explained. “This program aims to help fill any gaps in skills and knowledge for PE managers shifting to leadership roles or starting their own firms. Many seasoned PE investment professionals’ experiences are narrowly focused on deal work and portfolio management. These skills do not always perfectly translate to leadership roles within their own firm once they are called upon to take on leadership responsibilities.”

According to Ewens, the program is the brainchild of Gerstenzang, with whom he co-teaches a class on private equity fund formation at Columbia.

“This experience, along with Michael’s client work [as a private markets attorney], revealed that while fundraising is a prerequisite for any PE firm, post-fundraising firm operations can be another, often bigger, challenge. Michael suggested a class that focused entirely on running the PE firm, and we spent the next year workshopping the idea with PE professionals.”

Currently, the school’s executive education program offers a [six-week online course on leveraged buyouts](#). Ewens told *PE Hub* that the class differs from the new private equity workshop because it targets people who aspire to work in the industry or those already in adjacent fields, teaching them about modelling, deal sourcing and value

creation. Conversely, the new workshop “targets senior professionals who already work in the industry, have mastered all things about PE dealmaking, and are facing challenges leading their firm beyond its investments.”

Developing the program was not without hurdles. For Ewens, a key challenge was identifying the most critical issues facing new PE leaders and emerging managers. This was resolved by asking each prospective guest speaker what they viewed as major challenges or knowledge gaps for PE leaders.

“Although our speakers come with very different areas of expertise, the themes that emerged in our speakers’ answers had a ton of overlap,” added Ewens. “They form the centerpiece of the curriculum.”

Among the featured guest speakers are David Breach, president and chief operating officer, [Vista Equity Partners](#); Ian Charles, founder and managing partner, [Arctos Partners](#); Matt Coleman, co-managing partner, [TPG](#) Real Estate; Heather Kennedy Miner, managing director and chief operating officer, [Advent International](#); and Omar Rehman, senior managing director and deputy global head of compliance, [Blackstone](#).

Ewens feels one of the biggest problems in today’s private equity landscape is a very challenging exit and fundraising environment, the widespread talk about dry powder notwithstanding.

“In this market, the firms that thrive will be those that continually professionalize themselves, just as they do with their own portfolio companies,” he said. “And that is the focus of our program. We provide leaders with the frameworks to do exactly that: scale their operations, manage their teams, and navigate succession, giving them the edge to emerge from this cycle stronger.”

The deadline for applications is December 20, 2025.

For more information or to apply for 'The Business of Private Equity,' visit <https://execed.business.columbia.edu/programs/business-private-equity> or contact Michael Ewens at michael.ewens@columbia.edu