GRADUATE EDUCATION

TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

By ERIKA PRAFIER

WHILE most MBA students acquire core business
capabilities in a four-walled lecture hall, some colleges
are using New York City itself as their classroom.

Last spring, New York University’s Leonard N. Stern
School of Business piloted its Operations in New York City
course, with students gaining real-world experience through
site visits to area businesses. Each trip explores a different aspect
of operations management.

“New York City is one of the
most amazing cities in the world.
It makes sense to learn about
the dynamics of operations
management in the context of
real businesses,” says Kristen
Souski, clinical assistant
professor of information,
operations and management
sciences, and director of the center
for innovation in teaching and
learning at NYU Stern.

Prior to each site visit, graduate

students are introduced to an
operations concept. They study
its theory and one site visit is
assigned, which helps students
formulate questions for the
executives they will meet.

Last spring, students studying

supply chain management paid a
visit to JetBlue Airways.

“They had a look at the docks
of the largest container terminal
in North America,” says Souski.
The way flights are scheduled is
another aspect of operations. The
field is so observable. It makes
sense to leverage our location.”

At the NYU Tisch and Lurie
Commission, “Students inquired
about how TLE defines quality,”
says Professor Harry Chernoff,
clinical professor of information,
operations and management
sciences at NYU Stern.

A stopover at the Metropolitan
Opera will offer a behind-the-
scenes look at a live performance
— what it takes from a project
management perspective.

“We'll inquire about how they
price their tickets and plan for
new types of productions. The
high-definition live televising
of opera, and how it's changing
their business,” says Chernoff.

For Aditya Basu, a second-year
MBA student at NYU, the class
proved to be eye-opening.

“We had an unparalleled level
of access to the facilities visited
and the executives,” says Basu.

Students complete a final
project, for which they identify
a company on their own, along
with two major challenges that the
business is facing.

“They present a solution and
alternative,” says Souski.
The class has proved to have
distinct advantages for the
businesses that are visited, too.

For Basu’s final project, he and
a group of fellow students visited
Sylvania Manor Educational Farm
on Shelter Island that had been
pursuing a new facility for a year.

“We met with workers and asked
their opinions. We discovered
there was no full-time oversight on
the farm across the company. We
advised one of the folks working
on the operational level to become
time on the financial side,
he understood the business
better. If we hadn’t gone there, we
wouldn’t have been able to give the
recommendations,” says Basu.

Premium networking is a built-in
part of the new class.

“We’re leveraging our alumni,”
says Souski.

“When you take this course,
you're joining a community of
industry experts, which helps you
to build a network,” adds Chernoff.