

Bentley University names first Black president



E. LaBrent Chrite, current president at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Florida, will serve as Bentley University's next president starting June 1.

By [Hilary Burns](#) – Associate Editor, Boston Business Journal
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Bentley University has named its next leader 10 months after former president Alison Davis-Blake exited for personal reasons last June. Davis-Blake was in the role for less than two years.

The Waltham business school on Wednesday appointed E. LaBrent Chrite, current president at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Florida, as its next president. Chrite, who will be Bentley's first Black president, starts June 1.

In an interview, Chrite said that he looks forward to joining a resource-rich university where he sees an opportunity to improve diversity and inclusion and also boost enrollment.

“I believe the beauty of business lies in its ability to create solutions to human problems,” said Chrite. “A Bentley University education weaves together business skills with the arts and sciences and empowers students to transform business, society and their communities. I’m excited to join Bentley and build upon this mission.”

In Chrite’s tenure at Bethune-Cookman, he led the historically Black university out of accreditation probation by strengthening its leadership and building a governance strategy. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), which accredits colleges and universities, had found the institution was not in compliance, though its accreditation remained in effect during probation. Chrite joined the school aware of its challenges, which he characterized as a “downward sloping death spiral.”

“There was not much reason to expect the university to survive,” Chrite said. “There was no choice but to cut costs, enhance the overall academic enterprise and bring hope to a community that had been traumatized. It was an amazing leadership experience. I learned a great deal and take every bit of skill I developed and strengthened and will bring that to Bentley to help elevate the university.”

Chrite acknowledged the declining demographic trends impacting Bentley and other schools in the northeast U.S.

“It’s not all smooth sailing but few institutions have the capacity and strength that Bentley does,” Chrite said.

Before Bethune-Cookman, Chrite served as dean of the Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver, where he helped increase enrollment and revenue, and added new programs.

“Brent Chrite shares our vision and passion for educating ethical leaders who make business a force for positive change,” said Paul Condrin, interim president and chair of the Bentley University board of trustees. “He has dedicated his career to improving business education and expanding economic opportunities across the country and around the world, and I know he will lead Bentley University to greater heights in the years to come.”

Chrite also served as dean of the Feliciano School of Business at New Jersey’s Montclair State University, where he increased graduate enrollment by 24%, started a center for entrepreneurship, and partnered with the cities of Newark and Patterson to invite inner-city high school students to campus and introduce them to careers in business.

He’s also worked internationally to improve business education opportunities for people in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Namibia,

Ukraine, Uzbekistan and for the Tohono O'odhom Nation on the Sells Reservation in Arizona.

Chrite, who grew up in Detroit, has a Ph.D. in education and management from the University of Michigan, Master's degree in healthcare administration with an emphasis on finance from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and a bachelor's degree in community health services from Michigan State University.