

**“Project management today is far more than a technical discipline; It is a leadership capability that influences how organizations execute strategy, manage change and deliver value”<sup>1</sup>**

## **Interview with Anna Ladipo**

Associate Professor of Practice  
Academic Director, Project Management Program  
University of Texas at Dallas  
Richardson, Texas, USA



### **Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi**

International Correspondent, PM World Journal  
Paris, France

### **Introduction to the interviewee**

Anna Ladipo is an Associate Professor of Practice and Academic Director of the Project Management program in executive education at The University of Texas at Dallas Naveen Jindal School of Management. In her dual role, she provides academic and strategic leadership across graduate and executive-level project management programs while also teaching and mentoring professionals and students at various stages of their careers.

As Academic Director, Anna oversees program design and delivery, curriculum innovation, and alignment with industry and professional standards. She works closely

---

<sup>1</sup> How to cite this work: Khelifi, Y. (2026). Project management today is far more than a technical discipline; Interview with Anna Ladipo, *PM World Journal*. Vol. XV, Issue III, March.

with faculty, industry advisors, and executive education stakeholders to ensure that the programs equip working professionals with practical, relevant, and future-focused project leadership capabilities.

Anna brings extensive corporate consulting experience to her academic work, having led complex projects and organizational initiatives across multiple industries. Her practitioner background informs her teaching and leadership philosophy, emphasizing applied learning, professional judgment, and the ability to navigate uncertainty and change in real organizational contexts.

Her scholarly and professional interests include project and program management practice, leadership development, career transitions, and professional practice education. She is also actively engaged in writing and thought leadership focused on supporting professionals as they enter new roles and on helping graduate students bridge theory and practice.

Beyond her professional roles, Anna's perspective is shaped by her global and immigrant journey, being born in Canada, growing up in Nigeria, and later returning to North America as an adult, which informs her commitment to inclusive, experience-centered learning environments.

More information about her academic work and leadership roles can be found on her University of Texas at Dallas faculty profile at <https://jindal.utdallas.edu/faculty/anna-ladipo>, her personal website at <https://annaladipo.com>, and on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/annaladipo/>.

Recent publication: <https://pmworldjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/pmwj143-Jul2024-Ladipo-pivoting-with-purpose-how-I-used-project-management.pdf>

---

## Interview

**Q1:** You are the academic director in the Executive Education department at the University of Texas at Dallas. What project management degrees or certificates are offered by UT Dallas? What courses are required and do you plan to develop new project management courses? What is your role there? Do you also teach PM courses??

**Anna Ladipo (Ladipo):** At UT Dallas Executive Education, we currently offer three pathways in project management, designed to meet the needs of working professionals at different stages in their careers. These include a stand-alone Project Management Certificate, an MBA with an emphasis in Project Management, and a Master's in Leadership and Organizational Development with an emphasis in Project Management.

---

Details about these programs can be found at <https://execed.utdallas.edu/project-management/>.

As Academic Director, my role spans academic leadership, curriculum strategy, and program oversight. I am responsible for setting the academic direction of the project management offerings, ensuring alignment with industry standards, and continuously evolving the curriculum to remain relevant, rigorous, and practice-driven. This includes working closely with faculty, industry partners, and executive education leadership.

One of my recent priorities has been a comprehensive curriculum refresh. We have revamped the structure of the program so that students now cover the fundamentals of project management in a single semester, building a strong foundation across core areas. In the following semester, the focus shifts heavily toward real-world application, where industry context, case-based learning, and practical project work are deliberately integrated into the classroom experience. This redesign allows students not only to learn project management concepts, but to truly see how they are applied in organizational settings.

We are currently in flight with this new direction for the program, and early momentum has been very positive. As part of our ongoing growth, we are also continuing to develop and enhance project management offerings. A particularly exciting milestone is that we are now a PMI Authorized Training Partner, which allows us to offer PMP exam preparation for professionals who want to pursue Project Management Professional certification alongside their academic studies. This has been a strong value add for our students and the broader professional community.

In addition to my leadership responsibilities, I also teach in the program, which is very important to me. Staying in the classroom allows me to remain closely connected to students, industry trends, and the practical realities they face in their roles. That direct engagement continuously informs both how I teach and how I lead the program academically.

Overall, it is an exciting period of growth and innovation for project management at UT Dallas, and I am enthusiastic about where the programs are headed..

**Q2:** Executive education suggests your PM programs and courses are aimed at working professionals and leaders. Are your students normally familiar with or experienced in project management, or they are more often new to the PM field? How many graduate students are enrolled in your programs, and are they all located in the United States or other countries?

**Ladipo:** Our students come from a diverse mix of backgrounds and experience levels, which is very intentional. We serve aspiring project managers who are new to the discipline, experienced project managers who are seeking a refresher or formal

credential, and professionals in adjacent roles who want to strengthen their project leadership capabilities.

One of the recent enhancements to the program is the addition of greater elective flexibility within the certificate pathway. This allows students to tailor their learning based on their professional goals. For example, some students choose electives that emphasize leadership and emerging trends in project management, while others focus more deeply on agile project management. This flexibility enables us to support learners with varying levels of experience while still maintaining academic rigor and practical relevance.

Currently, we have 27 students enrolled in the project management graduate programs, and they are based in the United States. The learning environment benefits from their diverse professional experiences, which contributes to rich peer-to-peer learning even within a domestic cohort.

At the same time, UT Dallas Executive Education also offers programs with a global student population, such as the Customized Online MBA, which is designed for working professionals around the world. That program reflects the broader international reach of our executive education offerings. More information on the Customized Online MBA can be found at <https://execed.utdallas.edu/custom-mba/>.

Overall, our approach is to meet professionals where they are in their careers, whether they are entering the field of project management or deepening and expanding their leadership expertise.

**Q3:** As an educational institution accredited by PMI's Global Accreditation Center (GAC), are your course aligned with various editions of the PMBOK Guide? Now that the 8th edition of the PMBOK Guide has been released, with its heavy emphasis on value delivery, will this require you and UT Dallas to revise your courses? If so, how and what impact do you think this will have – not only for UT Dallas but other GAC accredited programs around the world?

**Ladipo:** Yes, our project management offerings are aligned with the PMBOK® Guide. Both the Project Management Certificate and our PMP exam preparation courses, offered as part of our status as a PMI Authorized Training Partner, align with PMI standards, including the PMBOK Guide and PMI's Talent Triangle. While our programs place strong emphasis on real-world, practitioner-focused skills that support industry success, maintaining alignment with PMI frameworks remains foundational.

With the release of the 8th edition of the PMBOK Guide and its increased emphasis on value delivery, this represents less of a disruption and more of a validation of the direction we were already taking. In fact, as part of our recent curriculum redesign, UT Dallas received university approval last year for a second-semester course specifically

focused on delivering business value through projects. This course intentionally moves students beyond project mechanics to understanding how projects create value for organizations, stakeholders, and strategy. In many ways, the new PMBOK edition confirms that we were already ahead in emphasizing this shift in mindset.

That said, we are still being very intentional in incorporating the latest edition. I have proactively ordered the new PMBOK Guide for myself and for lecturers in the program so we can begin integrating its language, principles, and examples into our lectures, course materials, and discussions. The updates are less about replacing content and more about sharpening the lens through which students view project success, placing stronger focus on outcomes, benefits realization, and strategic alignment.

For UT Dallas, the impact is largely positive. The new PMBOK edition reinforces our curriculum direction and strengthens our ability to prepare professionals who can operate effectively in both PMI-aligned environments and business-driven organizational contexts. It also supports our goal of developing project leaders who understand that delivery is not just about scope, schedule, and cost, but about creating sustainable value.

More broadly, for GAC-accredited programs globally, the shift toward value delivery encourages institutions to move beyond a purely process-centric approach and rethink how project management is taught, assessed, and experienced. It creates an opportunity for programs to emphasize leadership, judgment, and strategic impact, while still maintaining the consistency, quality, and comparability that GAC accreditation requires.

Overall, I view the 8th edition of the PMBOK Guide as a timely affirmation of where project management education is headed, and one that aligns closely with the thoughtful changes already underway at UT Dallas.

**Q4:** UT Dallas is recognized for its background and excellence in science, engineering and technology fields. I see that you are based in the UT Dallas Naveen Jindal School of Management; are project management courses or degrees offered at undergraduate levels and across various disciplines or in the School of Management? If so, do you have any interactions with those programs or professors?

**Ladipo:** Project management is a growing and increasingly visible practice across the university, with its strongest footprint currently at the graduate level. At UT Dallas, the most formalized project management offerings are housed within the Naveen Jindal School of Management, particularly through graduate and executive education programs. That said, as project-based work continues to expand across disciplines, I am confident that we will see greater integration of project management concepts at the undergraduate level over time, especially as faculty recognize its relevance to professional and research careers.

---

While my primary academic home is the School of Management, my teaching and engagement extend beyond it. I also teach project management within the PSEM program, which allows me to work with students from different academic and professional backgrounds and apply project management principles in broader educational contexts.

In addition, I have mentored PhD students in programs such as Speech-Language and Hearing Sciences, particularly around applying project management principles to academic and research environments. This includes discussions during career preparation activities on topics such as “The dissertation Lifecycle – A project Management Perspective”, managing research timelines and deliverables, and using project management techniques for effective lab and research management. These conversations are especially valuable for doctoral students who may not formally study project management but are deeply engaged in complex, multi-year projects.

I regularly interact with faculty across programs and disciplines, both formally and informally, around how project management concepts can support teaching, research, and student success. These cross-disciplinary interactions reinforce the idea that project management is not limited to business or technology alone, but is a foundational skill set applicable across scientific, academic, and professional contexts.

As UT Dallas continues to grow and evolve, I see strong opportunities for even greater collaboration across schools and levels, helping students and faculty alike leverage project management principles to navigate increasingly complex work.

**Q5:** In the age of artificial intelligence (AI), how can universities still propose added-value courses for project management? How is AI impacting your PM courses and student?

**Ladipo:** Universities continue to add value in project management education by helping students build sound judgment, critical thinking skills, and professional awareness. While AI tools can generate information quickly, they do not replace the human ability to understand context, make decisions, or lead people through complex situations. That is where higher education still plays an essential role.

In my project management courses, AI has had a positive impact because it is addressed directly and intentionally. One of my courses requires students to complete PMI’s AI in Project Management training as part of their deliverables. This helps students understand how AI is currently being used in the profession and where its strengths and limitations lie.

More broadly, I integrate AI into coursework as a learning tool rather than something students are discouraged from using. Many universities are still working through how much AI use is acceptable before it becomes a concern, and I believe clarity and

structure are important. By designing assignments where AI use is expected and guided, students learn how to use these tools responsibly instead of relying on them blindly.

For example, one exercise requires students to use multiple AI tools to perform predictive analytics related to project performance. Students then bring their results to class and compare outcomes. This exercise allows them to see that different tools can produce different answers from the same inputs. It naturally leads to conversations about validation, professional judgment, and the importance of subject matter expertise.

Through these experiences, students learn that AI does not replace accountability or decision making. Instead, it needs informed oversight. When used well, it can support stronger analysis and better outcomes, but only when combined with human insight and due diligence.

Overall, AI is enhancing my courses by creating meaningful discussions around decision making, value delivery, and professional responsibility. Rather than reducing the relevance of universities, AI reinforces the need for structured learning environments where students can safely explore both the benefits and the limitations of these tools before applying them in real organizational settings.

**Q6:** You worked in the corporate world. How did you transition from the corporate world to the academic field?

**Ladipo:** I did not see myself here ten years ago. However, the desire to teach came calling in 2018. Someone once said that teaching is a calling, and I believe that. In many ways, it felt predestined.

In 2019, I began teaching with a private training institute. There, I found a deep appreciation for my ability to mentor students, connect with their professional experiences, and break down complex ideas into concepts they could understand and apply. The classroom felt natural to me, and I knew there was something meaningful to pursue.

My next step was to pursue an adjunct role, which happened during the pandemic. I moved first into a community college and then into universities, steadily expanding my teaching and academic responsibilities.

Throughout this journey, I found that the same principles that made me successful in the corporate world were highly effective in academia. Clear goals, thoughtful planning, strong relationships, and a focus on delivering value translated seamlessly from consulting and project leadership to teaching and program development. Rather than seeing academia as a departure, I came to see it as an extension of my professional identity.

---

I later reflected on this experience in my article, *Pivoting with Purpose How I Used Project Management to Navigate a Career Transition*. I share my story because I want others to know that meaningful career pivots are possible at any stage. With self-awareness, planning, and a willingness to leverage transferable skills, professionals can create new paths that align with their values, strengths, and evolving sense of purpose.

**Q7:** What do your extensive experiences bring to the academic world? Have you any suggestions for others who are or might make the same transition?

**Ladipo:** My professional experience brings a practical, applied perspective into the academic environment, particularly in how theory is connected to real organizational challenges. Having worked in the corporate world, I understand the pace, complexity, and ambiguity that professionals face. This allows me to design courses, assignments, and discussions that reflect how work actually happens, rather than how it is ideally described.

In the classroom, this translates into teaching that is grounded in experience. I emphasize decision making, trade-offs, stakeholder management, and accountability, all of which are critical in professional practice. Students benefit from seeing how concepts apply across industries and roles, and my background allows me to help them make those connections in meaningful ways. From a program leadership perspective, it also informs how I think about curriculum design, ensuring offerings remain relevant, adaptable, and aligned with evolving industry needs.

Beyond formal teaching, I strongly believe that any opportunity to teach is valuable, whether it happens in the workplace, through community involvement, or by volunteering. I often joke that my first real teaching experience was teaching children between the ages of four and six at my local church. That experience taught me lessons that still apply today: how to meet learners where they are, how to be patient, and how to explain complex ideas in simple and relatable ways. Those skills are just as important in graduate classrooms and executive education settings.

For those considering a similar transition, my advice is to recognize that the skills that make you effective in industry, such as planning, communication, leadership, and adaptability, are just as valuable in academia. Be willing to start where opportunities exist, whether that is in corporate training, adjunct teaching, or applied programs, and allow the path to evolve over time. Each experience builds confidence, credibility, and clarity.

Most importantly, view the transition as an extension of who you already are, not a reinvention. Academia benefits greatly from professionals who bring lived experience, practical insight, and a mentoring mindset into teaching and leadership roles. These

---

perspectives enrich learning, broaden conversations, and better prepare students for the realities they will face beyond the classroom.

**Q8:** What are 2 top skills every student needs to hone to excel in project management?

**Ladipo:** The first skill is the ability to think strategically and maintain alignment with the organization's direction. Project managers can easily get lost in the day-to-day demands of schedules, risks, and deliverables. When that happens, it is easy to focus on the how and lose sight of the why. Strong project managers consistently connect their work back to the strategic objectives of the organization and understand the benefits the project is meant to deliver. This strategic lens helps them make better decisions, prioritize effectively, and ensure the project remains relevant and valuable.

The second skill is stakeholder communication and expectation management. Projects ultimately involve people, and success depends heavily on how well expectations are understood, managed, and aligned. This requires the ability to listen, communicate clearly, and adapt messages for different audiences. Project managers who excel in this area build trust, navigate competing interests, and keep stakeholders engaged and informed throughout the project lifecycle.

Together, these skills help project managers move beyond executing tasks to leading initiatives that deliver meaningful outcomes for the organization. They shift the focus from simply completing a project to creating value, maintaining alignment, and achieving results that matter.

**Q9:** Now what about conferences? Your PM program at UT Dallas recently held a successful 2nd Annual Virtual PM Conference, and in May 2026 you will host the 18th UT Dallas PM Symposium. The symposium will be a live event; how important have these conferences become to UT Dallas? Why should someone in the Dallas metropolitan area attend a UT Dallas PM symposium or conference?

**Ladipo:** These conferences have become a key part of UT Dallas's engagement with the project management profession and the broader community. They serve as a bridge between industry practice, professional learning, and research-informed perspectives. While UT Dallas provides the platform and structure, the true value of the conferences comes from the practitioners, leaders, and contributors who come together to share experiences, insights, emerging practices, and thought leadership.

The success of the 2nd Annual Virtual PM Conference demonstrated strong interest within the project management community for accessible and practice-focused conversations. Likewise, the UT Dallas Project Management Symposium has continued to evolve as a forum where professionals come together to exchange knowledge, explore emerging trends, showcase innovative approaches, and reflect on how the discipline of project management continues to grow and mature. These events are

---

grounded in industry and professional practice, with academic contributions such as practitioner papers, panels, and keynotes adding depth, rigor, and diverse perspectives.

For professionals in the Dallas metropolitan area, attending a UT Dallas PM symposium or conference offers clear professional value. Participants gain exposure to current and emerging trends, hear directly from experienced project leaders, and engage in discussions that focus on leadership, value delivery, and strategic alignment rather than tools alone. An added benefit is the opportunity to earn Professional Development Units (PDUs), which is important for many practitioners maintaining PMI certifications. While the conferences are open to everyone, they are intentionally designed to support the ongoing development needs of working project management professionals.

Equally important is the sense of community these events foster. They provide a space for professionals to step away from day-to-day delivery, exchange perspectives with peers, learn from one another, and build meaningful professional connections within the local project management community.

At their core, the UT Dallas PM symposiums and conferences reflect a commitment to advancing the profession by bringing together industry, community, and academic voices in a way that supports learning, innovation, and shared progress.

More information can be found at  
<https://jindal.utdallas.edu/project-management-symposium/>

**Q10:** It seems that the PM World Journal (PMWJ) has been a partner for UT Dallas in these conferences; what help does the PMWJ provide and what impact has that had?

**Ladipo:** The partnership with the PM World Journal has been very valuable to UT Dallas and to the broader project management community we serve. PMWJ has supported our conferences by helping amplify reach, visibility, and professional credibility, particularly by engaging its global readership and practitioner network. This has allowed our symposiums and conferences to extend beyond a local or regional audience and connect with project management professionals, educators, and thought leaders worldwide.

PMWJ's involvement has also strengthened the intellectual and professional depth of these events. Through the promotion of practitioner papers, research-informed perspectives, and professional commentary, the partnership encourages meaningful dialogue that bridges theory and practice. It reinforces the idea that project management is a discipline that continues to evolve through shared knowledge, reflection, and lived experience.

From an impact perspective, the collaboration has helped position UT Dallas conferences as credible forums for professional exchange, not just events for

information delivery. It has attracted a broader range of contributors and attendees, enriched the quality of discussions, and created pathways for speakers and participants to extend their conference contributions into published work and ongoing professional conversations.

More broadly, the partnership reflects a shared commitment between UT Dallas and PMWJ to advancing the project management profession. By working together, we are helping create spaces where practitioners, academics, and emerging leaders can learn from one another, share insights, and contribute to the continuous development of the field in a way that is accessible, relevant, and impactful.

**Q11:** Have you any last words for our readers, perhaps about the value of a project management degree or your programs?

**Ladipo:** Project management today is far more than a technical discipline. It is a leadership capability that influences how organizations execute strategy, manage change, and deliver value. Regardless of role or industry, the ability to think structurally, align work to organizational goals, and lead people through complexity has become increasingly important.

One of the strengths of the UT Dallas Executive Education project management offerings is the flexibility of pathways available to professionals. We intentionally provide multiple entry points depending on where someone is in their career. Individuals can pursue a stand-alone Project Management Certificate to build or formalize core project management skills. Those looking for a broader leadership or business foundation can integrate project management through an MBA with an emphasis in Project Management or through the Master's in Leadership and Organizational Development with an emphasis in Project Management. Each pathway allows learners to align their education with their professional goals while gaining skills that are immediately applicable.

Across all pathways, our focus is on fundamentals, real-world application, strategic alignment, and leadership development. We help professionals move beyond simply managing tasks to understanding why projects exist, how they create value, and what it takes to lead successfully in environments where change is constant.

I would encourage readers to view project management education as an investment in long-term career adaptability. The skills developed through project management are transferable across roles, functions, and industries. Whether someone is seeking advancement, considering a pivot, or looking to become more effective in their current role, project management education provides a strong and versatile foundation.

More information about UT Dallas Executive Education project management pathways can be found at <https://execed.utdallas.edu/project-management/>

## About the Interviewer



### **Yasmina Khelifi**

Paris, France



**Yasmina Khelifi**, PMP, PMI- ACP, PMI-PBA is an experienced project manager in the telecom industry. Along with her 20-year career at [Orange SA](#) (the large French multinational telecommunications corporation), she sharpened her global leadership skills, delivering projects with significant manufacturers and SIM makers. Yasmina strives for building collaborative bridges between people to make international projects successful. She relies on three pillars: project management skills, the languages she speaks, and a passion for sharing knowledge.

She is a PMP certification holder since 2013, a PMI- ACP and PMI-PBA certification holder since 2020. She is an active volunteer member at PMI France and PMI UAE, and a member of PMI Germany Chapter. French-native, she can speak German, English, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and she is learning Arabic. Yasmina loves sharing her knowledge and experiences at work, in her volunteers' activities at PMI, and in [projectmanagement.com](#) as a regular blogger. She is also the host and co-founder of the podcast [Global Leaders Talk with Yasmina Khelifi](#) to help people in becoming better international leaders.

Yasmina can be contacted at <https://yasminakhelifi.com/> or LinkedIn:  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/yasminakhelifi-pmp-telecom/>

Visit her correspondent profile at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/yasmina-khelifi/>