To Infinity and Beyond: Innovations for an Evolving PMBA Student Experience

Gonzalo Freixes, Associate Dean, UCLA Anderson
Megan Byrne Krueger, Assistant Dean, Northwestern Kellogg
Phil Miller, Assistant Dean, Minnesota Carlson
Joe Stephens, Assistant Dean & Director, Texas McCombs

Overall, application data suggests demand for US part-time MBA programs is waning

Percentage of US part-time MBA programs reporting year-on-year application volume growth

It’s been nearly a decade since the majority of US part-time MBA programs reported year-on-year application volume increases.

Millennials are now the largest generation in the workforce, and nearly all of the part-time pipeline

- Millennials are now the largest generation in the US labor force, accounting for more than 1 in 3 workers.
- Millennials are more likely than past generations to have earned a bachelor’s degree.

Generational distribution among mba.com registrants considering part-time MBA programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gen X</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of employed 25-to-29-year olds with a bachelor’s degree or more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-35</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-51</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generational shift may be impacting candidate needs, goals, and expectations

US residents considering part-time MBA programs, Millennials vs. Gen X

Post-graduation career plans

Millennial candidates are more likely than Gen X candidates to...

- Plan to leave their current employer after completing their degree (61% vs. 54%)
- Seek out information about a program’s quality of student services (including career services) in deciding where to apply (55% vs. 50%)

GMAC (2012-2016) mba.com Prospective Students Survey.
Generational shift may be impacting candidate needs, goals, and expectations

US residents considering part-time MBA programs, Millennials vs. Gen X

Business school community

Millennial candidates are more likely than Gen X candidates to:

• Prefer a ‘close-knit’ rather than ‘loosely connected’ program community (81% vs. 75%)
• Say their ideal learning environment has a ‘team’ rather than ‘individual’ emphasis (62% vs. 58%)
• Plan to participate in student clubs (37% vs. 21%)

GMAC (2012-2016) mba.com Prospective Students Survey.

Generational shift may be impacting candidate needs, goals, and expectations

US residents considering part-time MBA programs, Millennials vs. Gen X

Program delivery and ability to specialize

Millennial candidates are more likely than Gen X candidates to:

• Prefer a greater proportion of their coursework delivered in-person rather than online (71% vs. 61%)
• Prefer a ‘concentration-focused’ to an ‘interdisciplinary’ curriculum (49% vs. 45%)
• Seek out information about the ability to specialize the curriculum in deciding where to apply (55% vs. 50%)

GMAC (2012-2016) mba.com Prospective Students Survey.
The Carlson School’s PMBA Journey

How do you know it’s time to change? and how do you decide “what” needs to change?

- New Asst & Assoc Deans enter roles in 2012 w/o deep experience of PT MBA community
  - Both had experience in change management and believed in being data driven
- Among several feedback mechanism, a simple and frequent “Willingness to Recommend” survey was implemented
  - Early results were “blah” at best: 75% WTR / 18% not WTR
- Context:
  - Carlson PMBA consistently large
  - “Pick your own adventure” structure (ie: NOT cohorted)
  - Avg time to graduate 3.5 yrs, but range is 2-7
  - Student leadership spotty over time with working professionals
  - Focus had been on FT MBA culturally
  - There was recognition of “staleness” but no consensus on improvements
- So how might you better understand a diverse and transient group?
By actively listening, learning from others and integrating approaches

• It turned out that student feedback had always suggested some potentially promising ideas...
• ...but we needed to make sure we were solving the “right” problems and driving sustainable improvement.
• Openness meets an approach...
  • Phil’s background in management consultant, strategy and leading a consumer businesses
  • 1st GMAC conference attended as he was looking at this PT MBA problem
  • Prof Jeanne Liedtka of Darden happened to be presenting on their success and transformation after deep diving into their FT MBA student experience
  • But how to adapt to Carlson’s community and needs?

A focused team of MBA students was engaged to conduct an “experience mapping” study

• 5 students from FT MBA “Ventures Enterprise”
• 4 month study
• Methodology
  • Defined detailed phases of student experience
  • Historical review (surveys etc.)
  • Interviews (student & expert)
  • Focus groups
  • Observations (active & passive)
  • “Ride alongs”
  • Insight synthesis (ideation, mapping)
  • Recommendation development
Two clear themes emerged: Flexibility and Depth

• “Flexibility”: both of enrollment & experience
  • Big effort: Ramped up “flexible” course offerings (online, compressed)
    • Clarity of need helped garner Dean’s support for significant ramp up of online and compressed course offerings
    • 2011: 2% of seats enrolled in online or compressed > 2017: 50% of seats enrolled
    • This change also allowed us to build online capability internally as there was a ramp
  • Small, but meaningful effort: fixed parking ramp issues

• Depth and/or quality of experience
  • Significant expansion of PT orientation
    • Extended from 1 evening to 1.5 days to include significant others (community) and add programming (particularly career)
  • Continued to expand support for career
    • Re-prioritized staff time to better publicize already existing opportunities and add new ones to fully engage career center (including OCR)
    • Virtualized many services (webinars, coaching)
    • Added signature events like “Careers & Beers”
    • PT engagement with career center more than doubled from 2013-15
  • Student leaders (LAB) stepped up to innovate
  • Added clubs and events tailored to PT
  • Improved course scheduling tools

So What?

or, what could I take away from this experience?

• Change requires buy in on the need to change: “Never waste a good crisis”
  • If need to change isn’t perceived, then work to create it...figure out what’s persuasive in your culture
• Be data driven: “Facts are friendly”
  • Good and clear data helps a lot, so work to get some
  • Align research and change to perceived needs
  • Strong and clear stakeholder voices are compelling
• Clarity of focus and an articulated plan (with rationale) makes it easier to stay on track and evolve
  • “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there...”
• Some change is easier than others
  • Phil felt need to launch an online program in 2012. Faculty wasn’t there.
  • Votes in 2015 for a niche online program and 2017 for a scaled one ended up “non-controversial” as so many had been teaching online already
• 2015 WTR survey: 92% WTR / 4% not WTR
• 2017 WTR survey: 89% WTR / 7.41% Not WTR (have held most gains, but need to continue to evolve...)
Building Community in PMBA Programs: The Kellogg School of Management

Kellogg Evening and Weekend Program
- Chicago campus
- 900 Students
- Classes offered both in Evenings and Weekends
- Pace mirrors the Kellogg Full-Time options
- Quarter system
- One graduation ceremony in June with FT program
Building Community in PMBA Programs: The Kellogg School of Management

---

**Student Time**

- Work
- Kellogg
- Family
- Other

Despite time constraints, experience of Kellogg community is still a priority.

---

**Kellogg Time**

- Academics
- Networking
- Clubs and Careers

I wish I had more hours in the week to participate in more events.

---

**Common Experiences**

- Kellogg Leadership Journey
- CIM
- LIR
- Capstone
- Cohorts
- Kellogg Table
- Nametags...

---

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS
Naveen Jindal School of Management

2018 MBA Conferences
Building Community in PMBA Programs: The Kellogg School of Management

Are we there yet?
• Commuter to community
• Common experiences
• Relationship building
• NPS increase

What’s next?
• Ask for feedback
• Continuous innovation
• Nametags

UCLA Anderson
FEMBA
UCLA Anderson FEMBA Program

• A 3-year part time MBA program - Focus on program flexibility and customization for the busy working professional

• FEMBA Program at UCLA Anderson
  • Student body of 950
  • Annual intake of ~300
  • 80 Quarter Units (44 core, 36 electives)
  • 5 cohort sections (*for core classes*)
  • 10-unit "master's thesis" field study – Global Access Program (GAP)

Focus on Flexibility – the Program Structure

5 Cohorts - Three Schedule Options

• 2 Evening (weekly on Tuesdays + Thursdays)
• 2 Weekend (weekly on Saturdays)
• 1 FEMBA Flex (hybrid section – 50% online)
  • Weekly asynchronous video content
  • Live classes Saturday & Sunday every three weeks

*NEW: Considering 7-week schedule for all sections, with 30% online content*
Focus on Flexibility – Program Length

Students can complete program in > or < 3 years

- Under current schedule, average FEMBA completes program in 2.5 years
- FEMBA Fast Track – can complete program in 2 years
  - *Start electives in 3rd quarter (3.5 GPA required)*
  - *Summer school electives*
  - *Global immersion or exchange courses*
  - *Complete field study with MBA or EMBA program*
- Students may take up to 5 years to complete (rare)
- If FEMBA students accelerate, they can “graduate early” or continue to take additional electives “for free” (*within 3 year program window*)

Focus on Flexibility – Program Focus

Specializations available for students seeking a focus

- 10 specializations offered to students
  - Entertainment Management
  - Entrepreneurship
  - Finance
  - Global Management
  - Leaders in Sustainability
  - Executive Development (NEW)
  - Leaders in Sustainability
  - Marketing
  - Real Estate
  - Social Impact
  - Technology Management
- 4 classes in specialization field of study
- Some additional requirements (e.g. attending lectures/conferences)
- Business Creation Option (BCO) available in lieu of GAP Program
Focus on Flexibility – Career & Leadership

Personal Development and Career Goal Options

- Leadership Development Series (1 mandatory course + optional program)
- FEMBA Career coaches and executive coaches
- On Campus Recruiting through full time MBA career center
  - But training done through FEMBA Career Services
  - FEMBA students serve as career specialists and coaches
Texas McCombs’ Approach to Working Professional MBA Career Management

Lack of working professional context created mutiny in Summer 2015:

- 530 students enrolled across Evening (Austin) and Weekend (Dallas/Ft. Worth and Houston)
- Lock-Step Cohort Model
- Previous Strategy – Shoehorn into OCR
- All training traditionally based on FT MBA Career Management curriculum

*Took stock of the situation and developed a completely different approach...*

Customized Framework for Working Professionals Developed and Instituted

*Our curriculum and 1:1 advising appointments are tied to the below framework, which students can apply in any phase of their career (enhancer, switcher, entrepreneur, etc).*

- **Market Assessment**
  - Self-assessment
  - Career exploration
  - Network creation

- **Value Proposition**
  - Your brand & competitive advantage
  - Elevator pitch

- **Sales Tools & Channels**
  - Resume
  - LinkedIn profile
  - Interview prep
  - Network cultivation

- **Launch**
  - Plan execution
  - Offer negotiations
Results Show Clear Improvements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+119% YOY</th>
<th>+64% YOY</th>
<th>+71% YOY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advising Appointments</td>
<td>OCR Offers Received</td>
<td>Redesigned Canvas Site Visits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of all students who changed jobs
- 68% Sourced new job via Experienced Hire Search
- 27% Sourced new job via OCR

Improved student reporting from 35% of student body to 76%