

Higher Education & ONLINE LEARNING



ONE OF THE TOPICS ON MANY OF OUR READERS' MINDS IS EDUCATION. THEY WANT TO EXPLORE THE BENEFITS OF an advanced degree for themselves or their employees. They want to know about the latest trends in training for leadership, achieving MBAs and other professional degrees ... and what is being studied by current and future leaders – in class and on-line. They also want to know what higher education institutions are doing to stand apart from the competition.

This special section in the Los Angeles Business Journal takes a look at some of the concepts that contribute to taking local professionals to the next level of excellence, while we also dig into some of the trends affecting the education landscape and how schools are preparing professionals to withstand and overcome challenges and unforeseen circumstances such as economic hurdles.

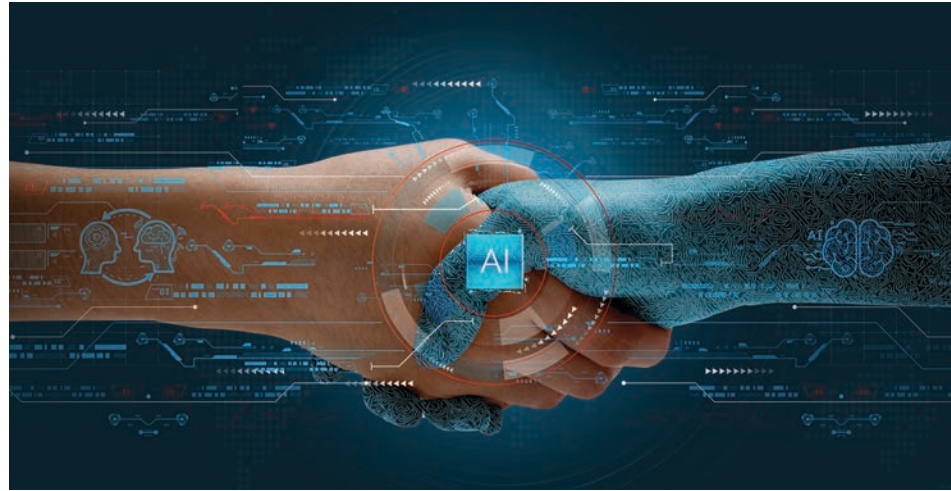
HIGHER EDUCATION & ONLINE LEARNING

Employers Turn to Business School Graduates for Human Skills

Despite concerns about inflation and recession risk, employer confidence in graduate management education (GME) and its ability to prepare business school graduates to be successful in their organizations has reached new heights since the pandemic, according to an annual survey of global corporate recruiters of business graduates released recently by the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC).

This increase in confidence was seen across key industries business education caters to like consulting, finance and accounting, as well as technology. The best news for today's business school graduates is that employer's appreciation translates into optimistic hiring projections, with the majority of global recruiters planning steady or expanding hiring in 2024. A third expected to hire more MBA graduates than last year.

Notably, employers' renewed confidence in GME is reflected in the growing number of them who say business school graduates tend to outperform their other employees, fast-track to upper-level positions, and earn more than other employees, and the share has grown in recent years despite – or perhaps due to – the rapid rise of technologies like generative artificial intelligence. With the attention AI has received, the responding employers do not necessarily believe the predicted changes have hit their workplaces just yet, with only 26 percent considering AI to be an important skill for current GME graduates to leverage in their organizations. However,



when asked which skills will be most important in five years, AI ranked high across regions and industries. More importantly, employers consistently value problem-solving and strategic thinking as the top skills for GME graduates of both today and tomorrow, and these core competencies are seen as essential around the globe.

“As disruptive technologies like generative AI reshape the labor market and the skill economy expands, employers are putting a premium on strategic thinking, people leadership, and problem-solving while betting on the rising importance of tech prowess. To achieve success, future business leaders will need to harness technological advancements and possess the

knowledge and experience to manage the change brought on by these evolutions,” said Joy Jones, CEO of GMAC. “This year's Corporate Recruiters Survey affirms that graduate business programs continue to be uniquely positioned—and trusted for their ability—to develop business talent with increasingly relevant and cutting-edge skills, who are equipped to tackle new and perennial challenges with a balance of tech and human understanding.”

Confidence growth in remote working management skills does not extend to remote learning.

Employers may have grown more confident in business schools related to the changing

context in which businesses and business education operate. Notably, about two-thirds of employers say the skills gained through GME are more important in today's world of remote and hybrid working. This is almost double the share who answered a similar question in 2021 at the peak of the pandemic. The increase in valuation of GME is most pronounced in leading Fortune 100 and 500 companies, the finance and accounting and manufacturing industries. Understandably, organizations in these companies, industries and regions have likely undergone the most changes in remote working situations in the years following the pandemic and are more likely to rely on the skills of GME graduates to manage this disruption.

However, employers' new appreciation for business graduates' ability to manage flexibility in the workplace has not entirely extended to an appreciation for the skills gained in online programs. Overall, two-thirds of employers still believe in-person programs impart stronger technical skills than online programs, and nearly three quarters of global employers agree in-person programs impart stronger leadership and communication skills. But this year, US employers, who in past surveys have been the most skeptical of online degrees compared to other regions, are warming up to the idea that in-person degrees do not necessarily have a leg up on online programs when it comes to development of the above-mentioned skills.

To learn more, visit gmac.com.

“Voice of the Online Learner Report” Reveals Emerging Perceptions

Risepoint, an education technology company that helps universities and their students grow by supporting the development and expansion of online programs for working adults, today announced the release of its annual research report, *Voice of the Online Learner*.

The *Voice of the Online Learner* report highlights the journey of online learners, and the vital role education plays in their personal and professional growth and development. This year's report compiled responses from over 3,400 prospective, current, and recently graduated online learners.

“Risepoint is honored to carry forward this important research, which has been conducted yearly since 2012, most recently under the Wiley University Services business that Risepoint acquired earlier this year,” said Fernando Bleichmar, CEO of Risepoint. “This report is just one way that we work to identify the

current and evolving needs of online learners, which are fundamentally different from traditional, on-campus students. Ultimately, we use this information to help universities create programs that effectively serve working adults.”

Key findings from this year's *Voice of the Online Learner* report include:

- **Decision Factors for Online Students:** When evaluating online programs, the key decision for students is cost, with 86% saying it's extremely or very important. After cost, 84% said accreditation is most important, 75% said program concentrations, followed by 68% of respondents who said it was the time it took to achieve a degree. 38% selected the lowest cost program they evaluated (up from 29% in 2023).
- **Perception of Online Programs:** Students see online programs as equally valid or better at meeting their needs than on-campus degree programs. 83% of respondents prefer the flexibility

of online programs over hybrid or on-campus options, while 90% feel online programs are comparable to or better than an on-campus degree. 83% (up from 71% last year) want no on campus requirement.

- **Degree ROI:** 92% of students who graduated from online degree programs reported tangible benefits to their career, including 44% who received a salary increase.
- **Value of the Degree:** Career outcomes continue to be very important for students pursuing their degree. 86% felt their degrees were important in achieving their career goals, and 61% of online undergraduates are likely to enroll in additional online degree programs to stay competitive.
- **Importance of Local Programs:** Attending a university or college in the state where the student lives and works is also an important decision factor, with 70% enrolled at a higher education institution in the state where they live and/or work. These students say that local proximity creates greater trust, and that they also want to ensure the programs meet local licensing or accreditation requirements, when relevant.

• **Demographics:** The average age for online students enrolled in undergraduate programs is 36 years old, while the average age for students enrolled in graduate programs is 38 years old. Of the students enrolled in undergraduate programs, 40% are first-generation college students.



• **Upskilling is lifelong:** 86% of graduated and currently enrolled students are likely to do another online program in the future to upskill.

• **Generative AI is a concern:** Students want guidance on generative AI, but 75% reported they have received none. 40% of students think it will affect their career positively and 40% believe it will impact them negatively. Nearly half (48%) have used it to help them study.

Learn more at risepoint.com.

‘This report is just one way that we work to identify the current and evolving needs of online learners, which are fundamentally different from traditional, on-campus students.’

FERNANDO BLEICHMAR
Risepoint



THE NEXT GENERATION BUSINESS SCHOOL: UC Riverside's A. Gary Anderson Graduate School of Management

Earn your graduate degree at a business school on the move. Our STEM-based curriculum is taught by world-renowned faculty and researchers.

Our MBA offers concentrations in the fields of business analytics, operations and supply chain management, accounting, finance, information systems, management, and marketing. We bring data, programming, and access to technology-based tools into the classroom.

Choose between the MBA or specialized degrees:

- **MBA**
- **Professional MBA**
- **Master of Finance**
- **Master of Professional Accountancy**
- **Master of Science in Business Analytics**

Advance your career at UCR Business—the nation's leader in social mobility.

Learn more at business.ucr.edu or speak with one of our admissions specialists at ucr_agsm@ucr.edu

HIGHER EDUCATION & ONLINE LEARNING

Technological Integration in Executive MBA Landscape

Earlier this year, EMBAC announced the findings of its annual EMBAC Membership Program Survey which illuminates a compelling narrative of growth and technological evolution within the Executive MBA (EMBA) landscape.

Last year, EMBA programs witnessed a notable surge in interest, as reflected in the increase of average inquiries from 795 in 2022 to 982 this year. Completed applications rose to an average of 113, compared to 104 in the previous year. The most striking growth was observed in the average class size, rising from 46.1 in 2022 to 53.4 in 2023. While acknowledging this growth, EMBAC remains vigilant, closely monitoring class size trends to discern the impact of smaller programs on the industry.

Technology continues to play a pivotal role in advancing EMBA education. An impressive 78.7 percent of programs incorporated distance learning into their curriculum, reflecting a substantial 55.3 percent increase since the pre-pandemic year of 2019. The survey underscores the industry's commitment to innovation, with programs leveraging technologies such as business simulations, virtual learning platforms, and electronic materials to enhance the overall learning experience.

Michael Desiderio, EMBAC executive director, remarked, "interest in EMBA programs remains high, as prospective students recognize the value of the EMBA experience in advancing their leadership development, enhancing their networks, and supporting the next steps in their careers."



The survey also highlights a positive trend in gender diversity, with the percentage of female enrolment reaching a new high of 35.1 percent in 2023.

Other key findings from the survey include the following:

- Globally EMBA programs continue to attract high-quality candidates. In 2023, they averaged 14.9 years of work experience compared to 14.6 years in 2022 and came to the program with 9.2 average years of management experience. In addition, 35.5 percent of students enter the program with an advanced degree, up from 33.5 percent in 2022 and 28.8 percent

in 2019. The average age of students, 39 years, remained the same.

- Executive coaching remains an integral part of EMBA programs: 87.6 percent of EMBA programs offered executive coaching in 2023, slightly below the high of in 2022 of 89.8 percent.
- The percentage of self-sponsored students declined slightly, from 56.2 percent in 2022 to 54.5 percent while the percentage of students who received full scholarship also declined slightly from 16.4 percent in 2022 to 16.1 in 2023. The percentage of students who received some sort of sponsorship rose from 27.5 percent

The survey underscores the industry's commitment to innovation, with programs leveraging technologies such as business simulations, virtual learning platforms, and electronic materials.

in 2022 to 29.4 percent in 2023.

Each year, EMBAC conducts a Membership Program Survey using the current methodology annually since 2003. In 2023, the survey was conducted by Percept Research, held from May 10 to Aug. 7, and was completed by 76% of the EMBA member programs.

EMBAC plays a thought leadership role by engaging in research that offers insights, by generating or packaging relevant content of importance and interest to the membership and industry, by advocating for the industry, and by nurturing an environment of inclusion that inspires all members and stakeholders.

To learn more about the Council and its members, visit embac.org. Prospective students should visit executivemba.org for more information.

How Adult Students are Inspired to Learn

By MATTHEW WELLER

Basic principles of motivation exist that are applicable to learning in any education situation.

1. The environment can be used to focus the student's attention on what needs to be learned.

Teachers who create warm and accepting yet business-like atmospheres will promote persistent effort and favorable attitudes toward learning. This strategy will be successful in children and in adults. Interesting visual aids, such as booklets, posters, or practice equipment, motivate learners by capturing their attention and curiosity.

2. Incentives motivate learning.

Incentives include privileges and receiving praise from the instructor. The instructor determines an incentive that is likely to motivate an individual at a particular time. In a general learning situation, self-motivation without rewards will not succeed. Students must find satisfaction in learning based on the understanding that the goals are useful to them or, less commonly, based on the pure enjoyment of exploring new things.

3. Internal motivation is longer lasting and more self-directive than is external motivation, which must be repeatedly reinforced by praise or concrete rewards.

Some individuals -- particularly children of certain ages and some adults -- have little capacity for internal motivation and must be guided and reinforced constantly. The use of incentives is based on the principle that learn-

ing occurs more effectively when the student experiences feelings of satisfaction. Caution should be exercised in using external rewards when they are not absolutely necessary. Their use may be followed by a decline in internal motivation.

4. Learning is most effective when an individual is ready to learn, that is, when one wants to know something.

Sometimes the student's readiness to learn comes with time, and the instructor's role is to encourage its development. If a desired change in behavior is urgent, the instructor may need to supervised directly to ensure that the desired behavior occurs. If a student is not ready to learn, he or she may not be reliable in following instructions and therefore must be supervised and have the instructions repeated again and again.

5. Motivation is enhanced by the way in which the instructional material is organized.

In general, the best organized material makes the information meaningful to the individual. One method of organization includes relating new tasks to those already known. Other ways to relay meaning are to determine whether the persons being taught understand the final outcome desired and instruct them to compare and contrast ideas.

None of the techniques will produce sustained motivation unless the goals are realistic for the learner. The basic learning principle involved is that success is more predictably motivating than is failure. Ordinarily, people will choose activities of intermediate uncer-



tainty rather than those that are difficult (little likelihood of success) or easy (high probability of success).

For goals of high value there is less tendency to choose more difficult conditions. Having learners assist in defining goals increases the probability that they will understand them and want to reach them. However, students sometimes have unrealistic notions about what they can accomplish. Possibly they do not understand the precision with which a skill must be carried out or have the depth of knowledge to master some material. To identify realistic goals, instructors must be skilled in assessing a student's readiness or a student's progress toward goals.

It is recognized that no grand theory of

motivation exists. However, motivation is so necessary for learning that strategies should be planned to organize a continuous and interactive motivational dynamic for maximum effectiveness. The general principles of motivation are interrelated. A single teaching action can use many of them simultaneously.

Finally, it should be said that an enormous gap exists between knowing that learning must be motivated and identifying the specific motivational components of any particular act. Instructors must focus on learning patterns of motivation for an individual or group, with the realization that errors will be common.

Matthew Weller is a freelance writer.