

GME: TODAY & TOMORROW

FALL 2019

Tests of the Times

at University at Buffalo
School of Management

PAGE 6

KU School of Business
Increased Matriculants by **44%**

HERE'S HOW.

PAGE 14



*Can You Do More
With Less?*

PAGE 8

*A 360° View
of Applicants*

at Northeastern University
D'Amore-McKim School of Business

PAGE 9

Brought to you by **BUSINESSCAS**
by LIAISON

GME Today, Tomorrow...and Beyond!

Are you in the graduate management education (GME) space and frustrated with admissions and enrollment trends? Would hearing how your peers are navigating the same challenging landscape help? If yes, then you've picked up the right magazine.

Gaining insight into how to do this important work is what drove me and 13 fellow GME leaders to join the BusinessCAS™ advisory board and launch *GME: Today & Tomorrow*. Our goal is to ensure the best practices we've shared with each other don't stay behind the closed doors of our board meetings, as we know what we've learned will help you shape your class to match your vision and your goals.



But what is BusinessCAS? It's the Centralized Application Service (CAS™) for the GME world that gives your prospective students the access they seek, the community they deserve and the modern experience they require. BusinessCAS is powered by Liaison, the company that for more than 25 years has provided these services for a majority of graduate disciplines. I've heard CAS referred to as "the gatekeeper to the next generation of leaders," and I believe that's an accurate reflection of BusinessCAS as well.

Put simply, BusinessCAS is the future of GME.

As we navigate the present and future of GME, I'm convinced that we need to work together to find, engage and enroll the students who will define our institutions and shape the future of the workforce. Once you finish reading the articles in this magazine, I think you'll agree with me that together, we're much better positioned to guide our industry forward, today, tomorrow — and beyond!

Please reach out to share what you'd like to see covered in future issues of *GME: Today & Tomorrow*. Our editorial team can be reached at editorial@liaisonedu.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Toby McChesney". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Dr. Toby McChesney

Senior Assistant Dean, Graduate Programs
Santa Clara University

Chair of the BusinessCAS Advisory Board

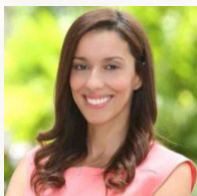
In This Issue

FALL 2019

- 4** **The BusinessCAS Advisory Board:**
Meet the Leaders
Guiding GME Forward
- 6** **Tests of the Times:**
Assessing Outcomes and
Decoding Data at the
University at Buffalo School
of Management
- 8** **Doing More with Less:**
How Three Business
Schools Found the Right
Strategies to Achieve
Admissions Excellence
- 9** **Anatomy of a 360°
View of Applicants**
- 12** **BusinessCAS:**
A State of the Community
- 14** **University of Kansas
School of Business
Increases Matriculants
by 44%**
- 15** **GME Events to Keep
on Your Radar**
- 16** **A History of
BusinessCAS:**
Our Path to Where
We Are Today
- 18** **Penn State's MBA
Admissions Director
Reflects on the
GMAC Survey and
Growth Strategies**

The BusinessCAS Advisory Board: Meet the Leaders Guiding GME Forward

The BusinessCAS advisory board is comprised of subject matter experts from campuses across the U.S. These GME professionals provide strategic guidance and drive the vision for the Centralized Application Service for GME programs. These leaders focus on innovation and collaboration with the Liaison team, and they serve as a connection to the greater GME community.



Dr. Loubna Bouamane

*Director, Graduate
Business Admissions*



Shaun Carver

*Assistant Dean,
Graduate Programs*



Kate Klepper

*Associate Dean,
Graduate Programs*



Sharon Lydon

*Assistant Dean,
Graduate Programs*

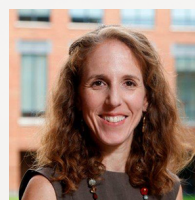


Toby McChesney

*Senior Assistant Dean of
Graduate Programs*



Chair of the BusinessCAS Advisory Board



Alison Merzel

*Former Senior Director of
Graduate Recruiting,
Admissions and Financial Aid*






Lawrence Mur'ray
Senior Assistant Dean
 **FORDHAM** | Gabelli School
THE IRVING UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK of Business



Erin O'Brien
Assistant Dean, Director of Graduate Programs
 **University at Buffalo**



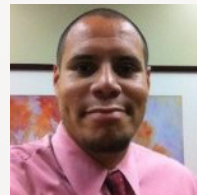
Monica Powell
Senior Associate Dean and Graduate Dean
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The University of Texas at Dallas



Dee Steinle
Executive Director of MBA and MSB Programs
 **KU SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**
The University of Kansas
Vice Chair of the BusinessCAS Advisory Board




Kelly Sugrue
Assistant Dean of Admissions
 **Brandeis** | INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SCHOOL



Alexi Waul
Senior Associate Director and CRM Management
 **USC** University of Southern California



Michael Waldhier
MBA & MOL Director of Admissions
 **PennState**

Erin O'Brien (second from left) works with tomorrow's principled and insightful leaders (and today's UB students).



Tests of the Times:

Assessing Outcomes and Decoding Data at University at Buffalo School of Management

In her almost six years as assistant dean and director of graduate programs for the University at Buffalo (UB) School of Management, Erin O'Brien has witnessed changes in the world of graduate management education.

Whether she's talking about the dramatic shift in international applications away from U.S. b-schools, the increasing number of non-traditional MBA students considering a wide range of educational options or the growing trend of schools creating barrier-free pathways into their programs, O'Brien circles back to two themes: 1) The old ways of pursuing organizational goals are no longer

entirely adequate and 2) Leveraging new sources of data-driven insights is essential for program survival in today's student market.

For instance, consider the ramifications of the evolution of the standardized test score-focused application review process, the gold standard of the past: "Test scores have long been a chief data source for strategic decision-making in our schools and programs," O'Brien says. "What happens to those data sources if we move into a test-optional world? Having multiple strong graduate management data sources is going to be critical."

Quantifying Success

O'Brien is an advocate of continuing to harness data after students have been admitted. For that reason, UB will soon begin updating its internal validity study, which links full-time MBA students' GMAT and GRE scores to in-program academic success and post-MBA career outcomes.

"The validity study we originally conducted was designed to predict academic success in the MBA program by using an algorithm that incorporates all the quantitative data we generate during the admissions process — including test scores, GPA and number of months of work experience," she explains.

“Historically, we’ve used this study to understand academic performance, like how many students are likely to struggle in the first MBA semester. That helps us to plan and to provide resources for those students before they know they’re in trouble.”

Times have changed, however, and so will UB’s next study.

“Our class five years ago looked very different than it does today,” she says. “Five years ago, we had a large concentration of international MBA students. They accounted for nearly 40% of our full-time MBA. Our dual-degree students — those who are in another graduate or professional program on campus or in a joint MBA/engineering program — represented less than 20% of the class. Today, those numbers have flipped. Just on that basis alone, our validity study needs to be refreshed,” O’Brien says. “It’s a different population. Again, five years ago, 80% of students provided GMAT scores. Compare that to the Fall 2018 semester, where at UB, one-third of the enrolled pool provided GMAT scores, one-third provided GRE scores and the rest either provided other scores or received a waiver exempting them from testing requirements.” O’Brien is quick to note that the higher number of dual-degree students is one of the factors behind UB’s shift in GMAT and GRE score reports.

However, revisiting her continual need for data for program decision-making, she believes this shift in test-taking could have risky impact. “I’ve been asking people for years, ‘What are we going to do in a test-optional world?’ More and more schools are building programs that eliminate barriers to entry because we need enrollment. And one of the easiest ways to do that is by rethinking your approach to test requirements, which many applicants consider a big barrier.”

To emphasize her point, O’Brien notes that in their new methodology,

Bloomberg BusinessWeek did not include GMAT or GRE scores in the foundational four core dimensions of their 2018 rankings of graduate business schools, a big shift in how rankings are typically calculated.

Peer Access, Partner Power

In O’Brien’s opinion, one of the best ways to answer the test-optional question is by working with academic peers and other admissions professionals to address their shared needs and challenges. That’s why she decided to join Liaison’s BusinessCAS advisory board. Liaison, based in Watertown, Massachusetts, is a leading provider of online admissions services for graduate management education and a valuable source of data on global application and admissions trends. The company also has strategic partnerships with ETS and other organizations that are innovating standardized testing to keep it relevant to today’s graduate management admissions leaders.

“I need contact with my peers on a regular basis,” O’Brien says. “Liaison’s BusinessCAS advisory board creates a human connection we don’t get sitting in our offices. Knowing there are others I can reach out to and talk with

“I think Liaison is in a unique position within our industry because they have critical data resources. ...Those in graduate management education are data hungry and Liaison is in the perfect position to address this need.”

Erin O’Brien

about the issues we face is incredibly powerful.”

O’Brien continued: “I think Liaison is in a unique position within our industry because they have critical data resources. For me personally, capitalizing on that was another motivating factor in getting behind the BusinessCAS initiative. Those in graduate management education are data hungry and Liaison is in the perfect position to address this need.” ■



Students come to UB to deepen their understanding of management concepts and applications that drive effective organizations.

Doing More with Less:

How Three Business Schools Found the Right Strategies to Achieve Admissions Excellence

At first glance, the graduate schools at Santa Clara University, the University of Kansas and Fordham University might appear to have little in common. One is in San Diego. One is in the middle of the country. One is in New York City. They each offer a unique “menu” of MBA programs. Their student bodies are demographically different.

Yet — as you’ll discover by watching Liaison’s free on-demand webinar, **“How to Do More with Less: The Essential Tools in Three Business Schools’ Admissions Toolkits”** — admissions leaders at the three institutions also have much in common.

For example, they face many of the same challenges trying to recruit best-fit students, including a lack of applicant pool diversity and limited resources in their admissions offices. They have also implemented similar solutions, such as making the decision to adopt Liaison’s BusinessCAS, the world’s only Centralized Application Service (CAS) for graduate management education.

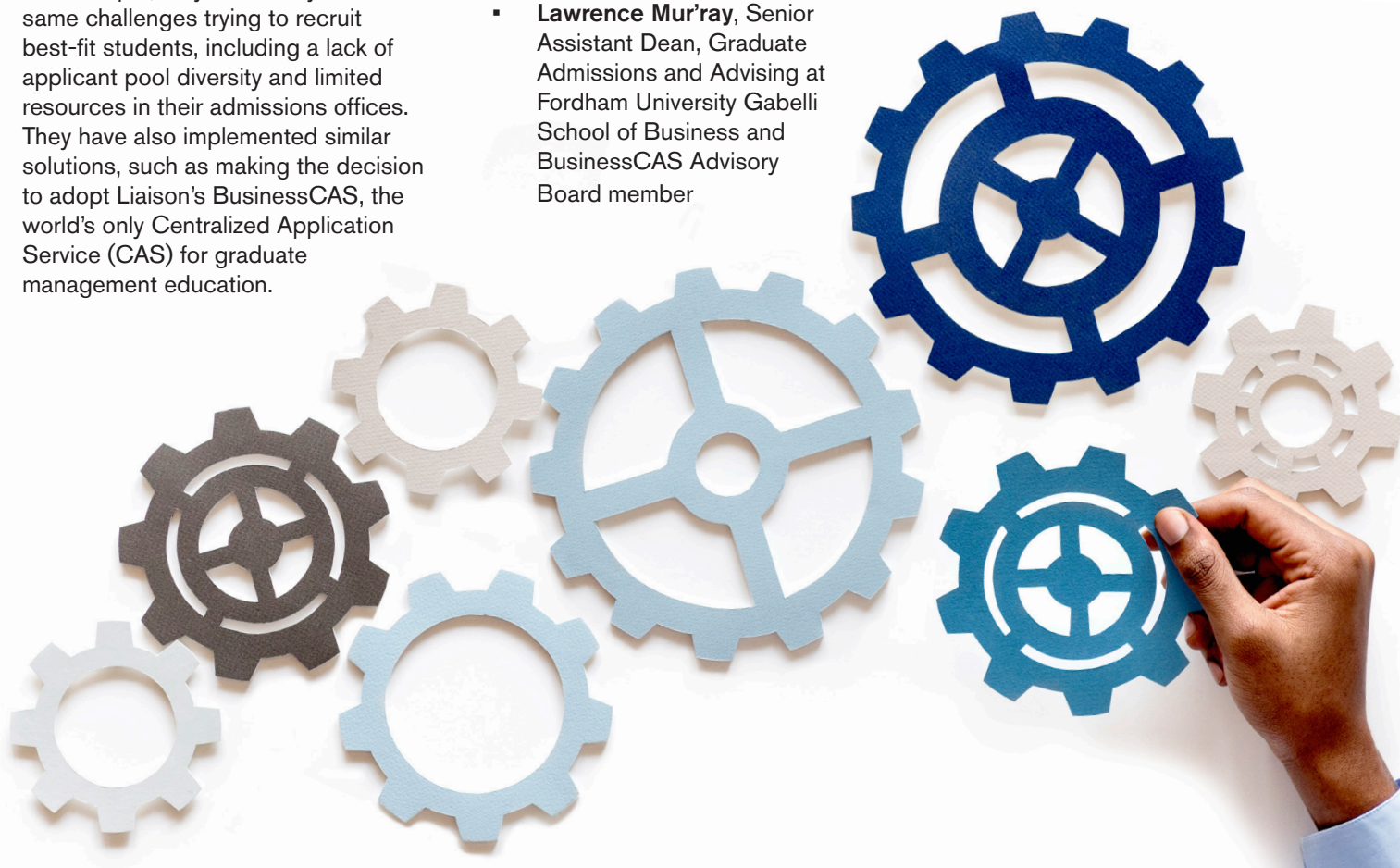
To highlight how these three schools were ultimately able “to do more with less,” the webinar focuses on the lessons learned and strategies implemented by:

- **Dr. Toby McChesney**, Senior Assistant Dean of Graduate Programs at Santa Clara University Leavey School of Business and Chair of Liaison’s BusinessCAS Advisory Board
- **Dee Steinle**, Executive Director of MBA and MSB Programs at the University of Kansas School of Business and Vice Chair of the BusinessCAS Advisory Board
- **Lawrence Mur’ray**, Senior Assistant Dean, Graduate Admissions and Advising at Fordham University Gabelli School of Business and BusinessCAS Advisory Board member

“We have very few people doing a lot of work here,” Steinle says. “It’s important for us to be very creative about how we get it done, and Liaison is a tremendous help. We’re very pleased with our Centralized Application Service. It definitely works for us.”

Dr. McChesney agrees: “BusinessCAS gives my four staff members in admissions more freedom to really focus on the yielding of applications. BusinessCAS helps applicants while simultaneously giving us more visibility. It’s definitely been successful.”

Watch the on-demand webinar at businesscas.org/events. ■



Anatomy of a 360° View of Applicants

An Interview with Evelyn Tate, Assistant Dean and Director of Graduate Recruitment and Admissions at Northeastern University's D'Amore-McKim School of Business

Should we change or drop standardized test requirements? Ask for letters of recommendation? Check applicants' LinkedIn profiles? Extend our admissions deadline to accommodate late applicants, which, according to one industry source, comprises 30% of today's applicant pool?¹ These are just a few of the many questions being debated among GME admissions officers today as they juggle finding best-fit students with filling seats. In such a rapidly evolving environment, it helps to hear from colleagues facing these same issues and hear why they made the choices they did.

Recently we interviewed Evelyn Tate, assistant dean and director of graduate recruitment and admissions at Northeastern University's D'Amore-McKim School of Business. She provided a bird's-eye view of their current holistic admissions process and discussed some newer techniques being used to evaluate candidates. She also addressed the increase in late cycle applicants and spoke to the ultimate benefits reaped as a result of getting to know their applicants.

You have been at the D'Amore-McKim School of Business since 2005. Can you describe what goes into the holistic review process and how it has changed over the years?

Evelyn Tate (ET): First, I would say that we really do strive to get a very clear sense of our applicants. We do this by looking at both qualitative and quantitative factors, from experiences, to undergraduate GPAs and test scores, to leadership potential and communication skills, among others. We do not assign specific weightings to any one factor or part of the application. Rather, we like to remain flexible and look at candidates as individuals. Perhaps the only common denominator is that we

look for students who can contribute to the class in a meaningful way and strengthen their skills to be successful in the business world.

In my view, the most significant change in the review process has been the personalization of the application experience — for the applicant as well as the admissions team. We no longer make decisions based solely on application documents. Instead, we may engage with our candidates multiple times throughout the process. For example, we interview candidates for several of our programs. The interview allows the applicant to provide additional perspective or clarify information in the application. The admissions committee can learn

more about the candidate and his/her potential fit for our program. In particular, our business school programs incorporate team-based project learning. As such, we want students who demonstrate they can work in a group environment. We try to assess this in our interview process. Candidates are asked to provide examples of their actions in team settings as well as experience with leadership. If they are working, we ask for examples of their accomplishments. We also will ask about extracurricular activities if appropriate. All told, we can glean attributes such as leadership skills, emotional intelligence and social and communication skills through the interview process.



Photo: ipbs-network.org

¹ Want a 57% Yield Rate on MBA Applicants? Look to Your Late Pipeline, EAB June 21, 2018

Anatomy of a 360° View of Applicants

Technology has helped to personalize and democratize the review process for candidates. If a candidate cannot travel to campus for a person-to-person meeting, we have other means, including video call and conferencing software and commercially-available video interview packages, for connecting.

Many of your peer institutions are becoming test-agnostic when it comes to GMATs or GREs, or dropping the requirement altogether. Where does Northeastern stand on this trend?

ET: We still require test scores, especially for our full-time MBA program. We accept the GMAT or the GRE. Our full-time program is a smaller program (between 60-70 students). Much is invested by the faculty and career center around these students, and we want to maintain the integrity of that program. The quantitative, verbal and analytical writing sample are all indicators of the candidate's aptitude to succeed in our program. That's why we continue to require the GMAT or GRE for our full-time program.

For the part-time MBA program or certificate programs, there's more flexibility. Individuals with 10+ years' work experience can take classes in one of our graduate certificate programs and then can transfer to our part-time MBA program without taking the GMAT. But in order to be able to determine their success in a part-time program, we do require they take some of the more quantitative classes while in the certificate program.

How about GPAs? Do you factor in where the applicant went as an undergraduate?

ET: We do not compare GPAs from different undergraduate institutions. When we look at GPAs we look at how the candidate performed within their own educational environment. If we know the highest GPA attainable is a 4.0 and someone has a 3.7, that seems good; but then we look beyond the GPA to see what types of classes the candidates took. Did they challenge themselves with higher level courses? This gives us an idea that the person is intellectually motivated and can handle more challenging work. In all cases, however, we do require that the student earned a degree from an

“...we like to remain flexible and look at candidates as individuals. Perhaps the only common denominator is that we look for students who can contribute to the class in a meaningful way and strengthen their skills to be successful in the business world.”

EVELYN TATE

accredited school. For our international candidates, we ask that transcripts are evaluated by World Education Services so we can assess if the degree is comparable to a U.S. bachelor's degree.

A number of schools including USC Marshall recently dropped letters of recommendation as an application requirement. Do you still see merit in recommendations?

ET: Yes, we do; in fact, we ask for two letters of recommendation. We believe these letters can augment our knowledge of candidates, especially in providing information we might not see elsewhere in the essays, personal statement or experiences. Most recommenders are frank in their

assessment of candidates and give us additional perspective that is very helpful.

What percentage of your full-time MBAs have work experience, and is it a requirement?

ET: While not a requirement, we have a strong preference for prior work experience. On average, our full-time students have four years of work experience. Maybe 5-7% come directly from undergraduate school but in those cases, they tend to be students who've completed several internships or might work throughout their summers or

entire semesters. These students must have very strong academic records, credentials and test scores as well.

Does Northeastern check social media profiles, such as LinkedIn, in reviewing candidates?

ET: We will look at LinkedIn profiles. The truth is, many candidates ask to connect with our

admissions folks on LinkedIn, so it is natural for us to view their profiles. LinkedIn provides a great deal of information about candidates. While we don't use LinkedIn formally, it does support what candidates have sent in with their applications in most cases. It also is a great way to see how our applicants present themselves to the professional world. Though we currently don't ask for a candidate's LinkedIn URL on our application, we might move in that direction in the future. We also use LinkedIn to market to prospective candidates.

Is Northeastern experiencing a rise in late cycle applicants? That seems to be an emerging trend.

Anatomy of a 360° View of Applicants

ET: Yes, we absolutely are. There was a time when everything was wrapped up by May, but that's no longer the case. Young professionals are waiting to see if they will get a job they want or a promotion so they hesitate in applying to school until the last minute. Consequently, we do see candidates who emerge or contact us in May or June to see if we still have space for the fall semester. That said, our full-time program did see a rise in applicants early on in the cycle and we were fairly level with last year, but we expect we will see some people last minute. We have met people at MBA fairs in July who start with us in the fall. Our part-time program has seen this too. Sometimes it takes a while to get to a place where candidates can focus on putting an application together.

Diversity is a big focus in higher education these days. Can you speak to the diversity you've seen in your GME programs, and do you focus on this goal in the admissions process?

ET: Our part-time MBA and certificate programs applicants primarily come from the local Boston area. Our full-time MBA program draws mostly from the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region. California is our 4th largest draw with a few also coming from the Midwest. Our two largest overseas contingents are China and India, comprising about 10-12% of our full-time cohort with a few others from Latin America, Canada and Asia Pacific. We also are seeing more students from Africa, in particular Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa. We also conduct outreach with partner organizations to identify students from disadvantaged communities. One of our goals is to help students from these communities excel and take advantage of scholarships available for graduate admissions. As we go through our application pool and make decisions, we want to be sensitive and aware of these candidates.

How many applications do you receive per year on average and how do you organize your staff to ensure each candidate is thoroughly vetted?

ET: We receive about 2,500 applications per year across all our "on-the-ground" programs which include our full-time and part-time MBA programs, our Master of Science program and our certificate programs. We have a team of eight people including myself, two associate directors, two assistants, a recruiting manager and a part-time person. We do hire two or three graduate assistants who help in numerous ways and also hire two part-time employees, 10-15 hrs/week, to help us read applications.

In terms of how we manage decision-making, it depends on the program. For our full-time program, one of our associate directors oversees the entire process. She assigns applications to team members and sets deadlines. She has part-time employees, students and staff members read the applications. The associate director then decides which applicants to interview based on certain criteria. Once the candidate is interviewed and the application is complete, the associate director brings the application to an admissions committee that meets on a weekly basis from November through May/June.

Decisions for our full-time MBA program are made by some members of our admissions team, the director of our career center and the associate dean. We do not use faculty as they are really busy and we feel we're able to remain open and broad-minded to make good decisions. We also are getting input from students and staff. For our part-time MBA program, Master of Science and graduate certificate programs, the entire process is handled by our other associate director and recruitment manager. When they have

questions about an application, they may bring them to the admissions team for input. But in general, they make the decisions.

Wrapping up, can you speak to the benefits your school has received by adhering to a holistic view of your candidates?

ET: Without a doubt, I'd say the greatest benefit is the alumni engagement we see year in and year out due to the rapport we've built. Our graduates are now working throughout the globe. Wherever and whenever we need assistance with recruiting, there's a grad to help us out. We get alumni to respond and come to dinners, recruitment events and help spread the word about Northeastern in general. Invariably at graduation when I congratulate new graduates, they say, "Evelyn, thanks for everything and let me know how I can be of help." So our graduates leave having had a very positive experience which carries over post-graduation. ■



EVELYN TATE

Assistant Dean, Graduate
Recruitment and Admissions

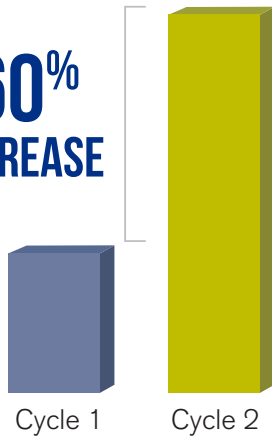
N Northeastern University
**D'Amore-McKim
School of Business**

BUSINESSCAS™: A State of the Community

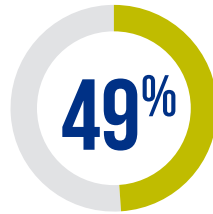
by LIAISON 

Participating Institutions Per Cycle

**160%
INCREASE**



Member Spotlight:



increase in full-time MBA applications



increase in full-time MBA matriculants

TOP 5 APPLICANTS BY STATE:



19%

of BusinessCAS applicants are Hispanic or African American

TOP 5 APPLICANTS BY COUNTRY:



Graduate business and management programs face a host of challenges that would have been hard to fathom even 10 short years ago.

Many colleges and universities are having a hard time attracting and enrolling the international students they once depended on to fill seats. A strong U.S. job market is making it more difficult to lure domestic applicants out of the workforce and into classrooms. Traditional MBA programs are facing new competition from online, part-time and executive MBA programs. And many schools are still struggling to achieve important goals related to diversity and inclusion.

On top of that, limited financial and human resources in admissions offices are restricting the ability of graduate-level business schools to embrace the changes necessary to remain relevant in the eyes of prospective students who have no patience for yesterday's outdated engagement strategies and application processes.

What can we do about it?

It's not all bad news. Over the last couple of years, programs across the country have found a better way to recruit, enroll and admit best-fit students quickly and efficiently using BusinessCAS™, the Liaison-powered Centralized Application Service (CAS™) for graduate

management education programs. BusinessCAS serves as a single portal for prospective students to apply to multiple programs with just one set of application materials.

Today, more than 31,000 academic programs on over 1,000 campuses are members of a CAS. And Liaison has partnered with more than 30 professional associations to create over 40 discipline-specific iterations of CAS, enabling the associations to better support their members by promoting best practices and the adoption of transformative technology.

The second cycle of BusinessCAS is now complete, and the results are impressive. For example, the number



of your peers are advancing the GME community as members of the

BUSINESSCAS ADVISORY BOARD

“I knew we’d get exposure to a whole new pool of applicants who hadn’t considered our programs before when we joined BusinessCAS, but I didn’t realize it would happen this quickly. Excited about being a part of this initiative!”

LOUBNA BOUAMANE, PHD
Director of Admissions



of participating institutions increased 160% from the platform’s first cycle. Applications are coming in from all over the country and around the world. Nearly one in five applicants is African American or Hispanic.

“I knew we’d get exposure to a whole new pool of applicants who hadn’t considered our programs before when we joined BusinessCAS, but I didn’t realize it would happen this quickly.”

Opening doors to a wider world

“I knew we’d get exposure to a whole new pool of applicants who hadn’t considered our programs before when we joined BusinessCAS, but I didn’t realize it would happen this quickly,” says Loubna Bouamane, PhD, director of admissions at University of Miami Business School. “I’m excited about being part of this initiative!”

Dee Steinle, executive director of MBA and MSB programs at the University of Kansas School of Business, shares

that enthusiasm: “With BusinessCAS, schools share a common ‘front door’ where prospective students can research our programs and ultimately send an application,” she says. “When you think about the time and money a

student will save on developing a single application instead of several applications, it is clear that BusinessCAS will be a good move for

our industry. It is definitely a good move for the KU MBA.”

The results say it all. You owe it to yourself — and your future students — to discover the benefits that BusinessCAS can deliver to your program. Learn more and see a full list of participating programs at businesscas.org. ■

The ADMISSIONIST by LIAISON

If you like *GME: Today & Tomorrow*, you’ll love *The Admissionist*.

Subscribe to the quarterly print and digital magazine dedicated to the art, science and industry of admissions today.

liaisonedu.com/the-admissionist



University of Kansas School of Business Increases Matriculants by 44%

University of Kansas (KU) is a public research university with a main campus in Lawrence, Kansas and several satellite campuses, research and educational centers, medical centers and classes across the state of Kansas. The School of Business offers seven graduate programs, including a full-time MBA, an online MBA and an MBA for the working professional.

Dee Steinle, executive director of MBA and MSB programs at KU, was quick to get behind the BusinessCAS initiative as vice chair of the advisory board and as a member of the community for GME programs. Reflecting back, she's glad that she did since the University has seen

significant results after just one cycle in the CAS.

"After our first cycle in BusinessCAS, we saw a 44% increase in our class size. We were expecting significant results after we saw a 50% increase in applications just one month after launching the CAS, but this is beyond what we even imagined," shared Dee.

"Part of the credit for these numbers goes to having our programs listed in the only central directory of GME programs. This extra visibility has expanded our applicant pool, and our new, modern application experience has helped increase completed applications. On our staff's end,

complementary application processing services have reduced our time to decision and our administrative workload while making it possible for us to review even more applications. I'm excited to keep driving impressive admissions and enrollment outcomes with BusinessCAS, and I look forward to seeing how it changes the GME landscape as more programs join the CAS community." ■



After our first cycle in BusinessCAS, we saw a 44% increase in our class size. We were expecting significant results after we saw a 50% increase in applications just one month after launching the CAS, but this is beyond what we even imagined."



BusinessCAS Vice Board Chair Dee Steinle connects with students.



ON-DEMAND WEBINAR:

What's on the Horizon for GME?

Is your business school taking a reactive approach to the ever-changing reality of graduate management education? Or are you taking a strategic approach to ensure you're prepared for what the future sends your way?

During this session, Tad Brinkerhoff and Kate Klepper address these questions from the perspectives of a public institution and a private institution, respectively.



SPEAKERS



Tad Brinkerhoff
*Former Director, MBA
PMBA Programs*

I ILLINOIS

Gies College of Business



Kate E. Klepper
*Associate Dean,
Graduate Programs*

N Northeastern University
**D'Amore-McKim
School of Business**

[Watch it now at businesscas.org/events](https://businesscas.org/events)

GME Events to Keep on Your Radar

Throughout the year, the BusinessCAS team travels to key events to listen to and learn from GME leaders like you. Here's what's on our calendar for the next few months. We hope to connect with you in person soon.

**OCT
2019**

- Council of Texas Business Deans Annual Meeting

**JAN
2020**

- GMAC Leadership Conference
- BusinessCAS Advisory Board Meeting

**NOV
2019**

- AACSB Associate Deans Conference
- New Orleans Invitation-only Networking Dinner

**FEB
2020**

- AMBA Excellence Awards and Gala Dinner
- AACSB Deans Conference

A History of BusinessCAS: Our Path to Where We are Today

● Since Liaison first conceived of the idea for the community in May 2013, the BusinessCAS team has kept busy, traveling around the U.S. and the globe to learn from GME leaders.

● JUNE 2017

BusinessCAS was officially introduced at the GMAC Annual Conference

● NOVEMBER 2017

Hosted first advisory board meeting

● SEPTEMBER 2017

Launched inaugural cycle

● JANUARY 2018

Met with schools at the GMAC Leadership Conference

● FEBRUARY 2018

Participated in the AACSB Deans Conference

● APRIL 2018

Supported the AACSB ICAM

● MAY 2018

Presented at the AMBA Global Conference

● JUNE 2018

Co-sponsored seven California business school events and participated in the GMAC Annual Conference

● JULY 2018

Hosted meetings at the Liaison User Conference

● SEPTEMBER 2018

Opened second cycle and co-presented at the JEBNET Conference at Fordham University

● OCTOBER 2018

Co-sponsored the Council of Texas Business Deans Annual Meeting, the MAACBA Annual Conference and the Rutgers Innovation in GME Conference

● NOVEMBER 2018

Presented at the AACSB Associate Deans Conference

BusinessCAS continues conversations with potential partners

DECEMBER 2018

Conducted campus outreach across the U.S.

JANUARY 2019

Hosted second advisory board meeting and presented at the GMAC Leadership Conference

FEBRUARY 2019

Co-hosted the AMBA Roundtable and Gala and co-sponsored the AACSB Deans Conference

MARCH 2019

Continued campus outreach across the U.S. and released HigherYieldTM with ETS

APRIL 2019

Co-sponsored the JEBNET Conference and participated in the AACSB ICAM

MAY 2019

Served as keynote presenter for the AMBA Global Conference

JUNE 2019

Presented at the MBA Director's Forum and the GMAC Annual Conference and hosted meetings at the Liaison User Conference

JULY 2019

Continued campus outreach across the Midwest and Western regions of the U.S. and embedded the GMAC Common Letter of Recommendation (LOR) in the application

AUGUST 2019

Continued campus outreach across the Northeast and Southern regions of the U.S.

SEPTEMBER 2019

Launched *GME: Today & Tomorrow*

OCTOBER 2019

Supported the Part-time/Online MBA Conference, the Council of Texas Business Deans Annual Meeting, the Executive MBA Council Conference and the MAACBA Annual Conference

Penn State's MBA Admissions Director Reflects on the GMAC Survey and Growth Strategies

After the release of the 2018 Application Trends Survey Report from GMAC, we talked to Michael Waldhier — admissions director of the Smeal College of Business at Penn State and a member of the BusinessCAS advisory board — about how Penn State had anticipated years ago the trends uncovered by the survey; namely, that international applicant interest in U.S. schools would decrease, that the strengthening U.S. economy would make it less likely for adults to return to school and that top 8-10 schools in the U.S. would broaden their pool to capture applicants who would otherwise consider going to schools like Penn State. Read on to learn more about how Penn State responded with strategic moves that have led to a stronger, more robust program even as other programs around the country are shrinking.



When the 2018 Application Trends Survey Report from GMAC came out, it stated that “Regionally, most U.S. MBA programs of all types report declines in application volumes this year, including 70% of U.S. full-time two-year MBA programs.” The actual statistics cited for U.S. MBA programs are sobering — for example, 70% of full-time 2-year programs and 53% of 1-year programs reported a decline.

CNBC reported recently that this downward trend has been attributed to factors including a decline in the value of the degree as the economy has strengthened, as well as rising tuition costs and even immigration policies (for international enrollments).

But you and your fellow BusinessCAS advisory board members actually anticipated these trends a long time ago. How did you see this coming?

Michael Waldhier (MW): About five years ago, the MBA program here at Penn State did a study looking at the trends overall for education. The

results even back then showed that if your program was in the top 10, your pool was growing and the number of applicants was growing. If you were in the top 11-25 or 11-30, you were flat to down in terms of admissions numbers, and if you were below that the results showed you were down significantly.

In other words, to counter the problem of declining enrollment, we recognized early on that top schools would have to start broadening their outreach to bring in prospects they might not have looked at before — and we knew we had to do that, too.

Of course, it makes sense. As the pool of applicants across the board gets smaller, you're going to start offering incentives such as funds and scholarships to folks who otherwise might have gone to a different program.

I think it's important to note that this year was one of the first years that all the top 10 schools saw declines in their application pools. I think that trend will continue, and that as applications drop, even the top 10 schools may struggle to keep their current levels of enrollment.

So as the admissions director at Penn State's MBA program, what did you do when you figured out which way the trends were starting to go?

MW: Because of what we learned from our study, we knew years ago that we had to start looking at ways we could entice top-tier candidates to come to us if we were going to be competitive in what was rapidly becoming an even more competitive marketplace.

We came up with a three-pronged strategy that has proven enormously successful for our program:

- 1) We started offering fellowships. To help make sure students admitted to our program had the best chance possible of graduating and achieving their career goals, we looked at how we might relax other burdens in their lives. One thing we knew we could do right away was to offer financial support options that would allow more students to focus their attention on academics instead of worrying about how they were going to pay for tuition.
- 2) We set an enrollment cap. Our program, which has always been

“I see BusinessCAS helping us – and helping graduate management education overall – by giving us the ability to look through a wider, better lens at trends, so that we can, in turn, make more strategically based decisions in our efforts to stay viable and competitive.”

Photo credit: Jennifer Neal

small, used to take up to about 100 students per year. But we decided to limit the cohort down to 60 students. Most MBA programs don't cap their enrollment, so that was an unusual step, but it's paid off. For the last four years now, we've been capped at 60. And each year, we've been able to get right up to that number, maximizing our enrollment numbers.

3) We launched a specialty master's program. We wanted to make sure people still came to Penn State and viewed it as a destination for graduate study. We also had to consider how to offset the revenue losses that came from slimming down the MBA and adding fellowships. So we launched a number of these one-year specialty master's, which have proven to be extraordinarily successful. We had one that we launched two years ago that is almost at full enrollment already — very uncommon for a new program. We have two more resident specialty master's starting this coming year. On top of all that we also have online programs that are attracting students as well.

Do you recommend that other colleges take the same approach, especially in regard to the specialty master's programs?

MW: To be clear, a number of other colleges and universities had launched these types of programs before we did. What I think made ours so successful was that we were very strategic about it.

We started by asking ourselves questions like, “How do we launch a program that fills a niche within the Penn State community, within Pennsylvania as a whole and maybe within the local area? How do we launch a program that helps support the goals of faculty who want to teach certain subjects? And finally — since after all we are a business college and we do use revenue as a measure of success in the marketplace — how do we launch a program that increases revenue?”

So if I could offer any advice to other programs, I'd suggest that they look at the portfolio of programs they offer and examine which ones are there because of strategic reasons and which ones were launched for no other reason than maybe there was a faculty member who was championing the idea or they just had the capability so they figured, why not? I think that a lot of schools could take a harder look at the “whys” behind what they're doing and then fine-tune what they already have.

How do you see BusinessCAS fitting into all this?

MW: As the application process and the prospective pool gets to be more competitive, we want to position ourselves to be able to reach as many of those prospects as we can. I think having BusinessCAS as a single point of communication and data analysis is going to be helpful.

The other thing I think BusinessCAS does really well is it provides a wealth of data on people who aren't necessarily captured in the GMAC annual trends report — for example, people who don't take the GMAT. It's not always a program requirement, especially for online programs. So those people typically get overlooked. Then there are the non-traditional students who are coming in with eight to 10 years of work experience into something like an executive program. All of these types of individuals may not be reflected in the GMAC report.

I see BusinessCAS as potentially a way to help us include people who may not be reflected in the GMAC report and to start to pull some interesting data out of that broader set of individuals. In that way, I see BusinessCAS helping us — and helping graduate management education overall — by giving us the ability to look through a wider, better lens at trends, so that we can, in turn, make more strategically based decisions in our efforts to stay viable and competitive. ■



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