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

Gonzalo Freixes, Associate Dean, UCLA Anderson

Megan Byrne Krueger, Assistant Dean, Northwestern Kellogg

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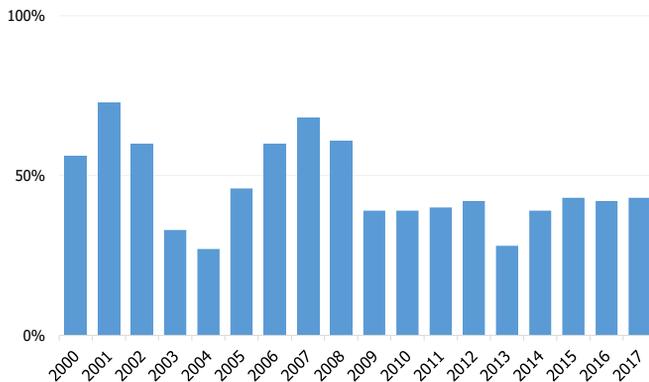Joe Stephens, Assistant Dean & Director, Texas McCombs

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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.

GMAC (2000-2017) Application Trends Survey.

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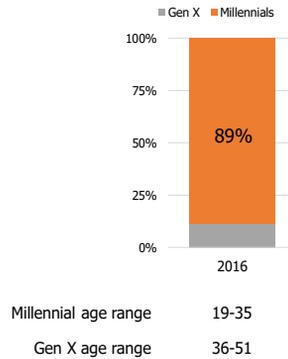
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Millennials are now the largest generation in the workforce, and nearly all of the part-time pipeline

- 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

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

Millennials in 2016	Gen Xers in 2000	Boomers in 1985	Silents in 1964
40%	32%	26%	16%
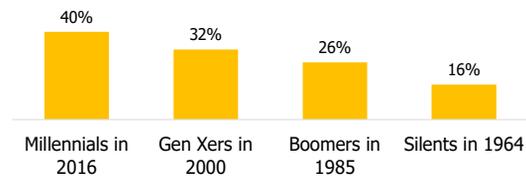
Generational distribution among mba.com registrants considering part-time MBA programs

■ Gen X ■ Millennials

89%

2016

Millennial age range	19-35
Gen X age range	36-51

U.S. Census Bureau. Pew Research Center. GMAC (2016) mba.com Prospective Students Survey.

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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%)

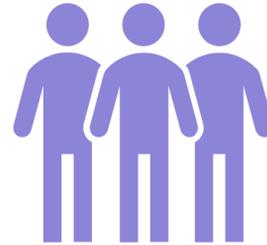GMAC (2012-2016) mba.com Prospective Students Survey.

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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.

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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.

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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 was 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?
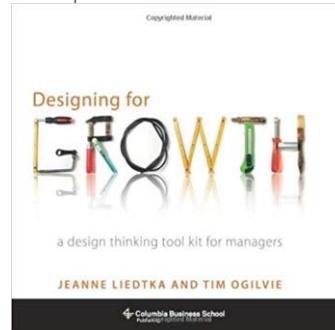
A focused team of MBA students was engaged to conduct an "experience mapping" study

- 5 students from FTMBA "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"
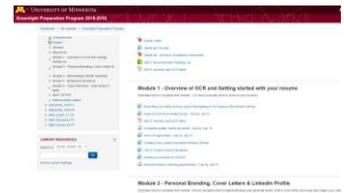 - Insight synthesis (ideation, mapping)
  - Recommendation development

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

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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…)

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Building Community in PMBA Programs:
The Kellogg School of Management

Northwestern
Kellogg
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Kellogg Evening and Weekend Program
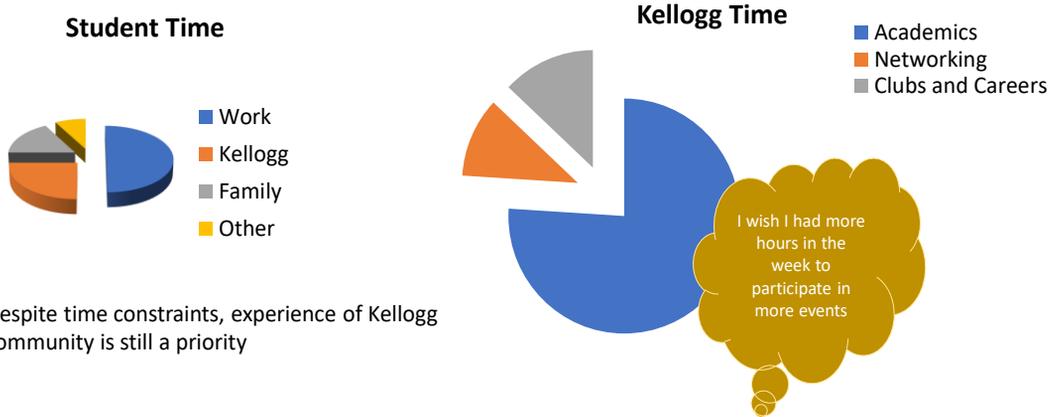
- Chicago campus
- 900 Students
- Classes offered both in Evenings and Weekends
- Pace mirrors the Kellogg Full-Time options
- Quarter system
- One graduation ceremony in June with FT program

Fall
- Traditional
- Accelerated Option

Winter
- Traditional
- Accelerated Option

Spring
- Traditional
- Accelerated Option

Summer
- Traditional
- Accelerated Option

Building Community in PMBA Programs: The Kellogg School of Management

Student Time

Kellogg Time

- Academics
- Networking
- Clubs and Careers

- Work
- Kellogg
- Family
- Other

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

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

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Building Community in PMBA Programs: The Kellogg School of Management

Common Experiences
- Kellogg Leadership Journey
  - CIM
  - LIR
  - Capstone
- Cohorts
- Kellogg Table
- Nametags….

Relationship Building

Collaboration

Community

Respect

Trust

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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

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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

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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*)

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Focus on Flexibility – Program Focus

Specializations available for students seeking a focus

- 10 specializations offered to students

Entertainment Management	Leaders in Sustainability
Entrepreneurship	Marketing
Finance	Real Estate
Global Management	Social Impact
Leaders in Sustainability	Technology Management
Executive Development (NEW)	

- 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

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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*

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TEXAS McCombs

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…

TEXAS McCombs

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	Value Proposition	Sales Tools & Channels	Launch
▪ Self-assessment ▪ Career exploration ▪ Network creation	▪ Your brand & competitive advantage ▪ Elevator pitch	▪ Resume ▪ LinkedIn profile ▪ Interview prep ▪ Network cultivation	▪ Plan execution ▪ Offer negotiations

TEXAS McCombs

Results Show Clear Improvements

+119% YOY
Advising
Appointments

Of all students who changed jobs

68% Sourced new job via
Experienced Hire Search

27% Sourced new job via OCR

+64% YOY
OCR Offers
Received

+71% YOY
Redesigned Canvas
Site Visits

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

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