

# CHAPTER 5

## *The Executive MBA Learning Model*

From lectures to electronic lessons, from independent study to group study, from the university campus to the corporate campus, whether taught locally or globally, the Executive MBA curriculum offers a unique learning experience. The education delivered draws upon a variety of teaching methods and settings to address complex and critical business issues. Professors combine classic managerial theory with cutting-edge technology while students incorporate business principles with a diversity of real-life professional experiences.

### *5.1. The Participants*

#### *The Student Body*

The hallmark of an Executive MBA is the unique learning experience shared by highly motivated students and seasoned faculty. As mentioned previously, the average age and years of work experience is generally seven years greater than the averages of students in most full-time traditional programs. Executive MBA students garner a richer learning experience while remaining employed, as they are able to apply complex business concepts that can make an immediate impact on the job and in the classroom.

Indeed, students frequently lead the class as they analyze real world experiences about the subject at hand. Students share a plethora of enriching stories about professional successes and failures. They learn

as much from each other as they do from their professors. The class will consist of VPs and senior VPs, regional managers, senior engineers, chiefs of staff, and well established medical and legal professionals. They will come from banking, finance, manufacturing, insurance, hospitals, government, non profit, and consulting.

The friendships built through an intense environment will last forever, and have led to an invaluable network throughout the industry. Our trip to South Africa was something special—especially seeing my classmates in action, many of whom work on Wall Street. We met with the Central Bank and business leaders in Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Cape Town. The experience is something most professionals and full-time MBA students will never appreciate.

—Kevin McNally, New York University, Director, Solomon Smith Barney

I was blown away by the talent and the absolute raw intellectual depth of my classmates. We had a cardiologist, a former Navy Seal, and a senior manager of a Fortune 500. At a relatively young age, we were all accomplished in varying ways. Ages ranged from 29 years old to as high as 55 years old. We were competitive but not cut throat. We still stay in touch, have mini reunions and many continued to work together in corporate and entrepreneurial settings. Throughout my experience, I learned as much from my fellow classmates as I did from professors—no doubt about it.

—Matt Brooks, Georgetown University, Director of the Republican Jewish Committee

What were so unique to the EMBA were the types of students the learning model attracts. I had classmates from all over the world and from all types of backgrounds. They

come from all over the world and bring to the table various perspectives that you would otherwise not receive if you were taking classes in a traditional program.

—James Cecere, Duke University, VP of J.P. Morgan Chase

---

Intimate class size: The graduating class of the Executive MBA averages thirty-five candidates. Programs are purposely small due to rigorous selectivity of candidates and maintaining a concise ratio of students to professors.

---

### *The Faculty*

Senior faculty, which includes department chairpersons, industry leaders as adjunct faculty, and guest lecturers who have published or have excellent credentials in a field of expertise, often find the teaching opportunity intellectually rewarding and professionally challenging. They come with high academic achievement and many from diverse personal experience working with national and international companies. In fact, professors frequently compete for teaching positions and often consider teaching in the Executive MBA an honor.

Exceptional faculty, combined with a highly motivated and professional student body, represents an impressive collection of brainpower and real world expertise that generates stimulating class discussions and group projects. Often the dean and other visiting faculty will sit in the back of class as guests quietly, intently absorbing the content on various compelling discussions. In addition, the faculty recognizes the great networking opportunities for their own requirements from the class.

We were really impressed with the quality of the faculty.  
There is a higher level of understanding, higher level of

enthusiasm, and higher level of communication skills coming from the faculty than I ever could have realized. When you have a professor like Aswath Damodaran, who can communicate complex subjects like discounted cash flows in such a manner this makes all the difference.

—RP Singh, New York University, Director of Business Development, Reuters News Service

My favorite classes were Entrepreneurial Law with Dr. Shell, and Negotiations with Stewart Diamond, who put us in groups and made us negotiate, and management courses with Michael Useem, a nationally known professor, speaker and leader.

—Shelley Boyce, Wharton EMBA, CEO of Med Risk

I found professors to be extremely accessible despite their rigorous teaching and consulting schedules. I always found professors were willing to meet before or after class if necessary.

—Mary Kucharz, JD, U of Illinois EMBA, Assistant Corporation Counsel City of Joliet

---

Tenured vs. non-tenured: Some administrators promote their program as only including handpicked, tenured professors. The issue of tenure is somewhat contentious as the notion of guaranteed lifetime employment may raise eyebrows among a classroom full of managers.

However, programs with adjunct professors definitely add value to the mix, particularly when their own enterprising work is entered into the class lectures before reaching the Wall Street Journal, other business publication or TV report.

---

## *The Administrators*

---

Exercises mind and body: "The greatest exercise you get is the first day of class when the books are handed out." – Columbia University Program Administrator

---

Being a student requires managing an already hectic sixty—to eighty-hour workweek, if not more, along with meeting family obligations and now school demands. Most EMBA programs assign administrative staff exclusively to serve EMBA students to help manage the program's administrative issues. Simply stated, you will not stand in line to register for class. They will handle tuition processing, course registrations, textbook dissemination, and scheduling study tours. Administrators offer secretarial support and serve as an extension to the office while in class and serve as advocates for student concerns to the dean and faculty.

I almost had to miss an entire weekend of finals and class presentations. An FDA inspection was coming due. I had prepared for the exams and the thought of missing finals would really set me back. Fortunately, my program offered secretarial assistance. I was only a phone and fax away from my staff before and after classes. Fortunately we passed inspection and I passed all my exams.

—D. Cooper, Fairleigh Dickenson, Vice President, Merck-Medco

Our administrators could not have been better. They were approachable, they were people always present and willing to help—and this was a huge plus. They named an administrative support person who was always there for us. This person got our books and was always extremely well organized.

—Kathryn Beatty, M.D., Columbia University

---

Grade point for tender loving care: Kellogg tops the list for TLC with UCLA's Anderson School, Wharton, UNC, and the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business near the top in student satisfaction. Source: Business Week.

---

### *Questions to Consider:*

- o What is the background of the faculty and how many are tenured, adjunct, or visiting?
- o Can you describe the profile of the incoming class?
- o How many years of work experience does the program generally expect of each student?
- o What is the breakdown of full-time vs. adjunct faculty teaching in the program?
- o What level of support can one expect from program administrators? (Ask a recent graduate.)
- o What other sorts of services do the administrators provide to help students?
- o Does the program offer students with secretarial support during work related emergencies?

## *5.2. Academic Settings*

Welcome back to school! It has been awhile since setting foot inside a classroom. Remember the old dusty chalkboard with pull-down map, doors that creak, and burnt out light bulbs still left unchanged? What fond memories. In the Executive MBA program, chances are that less than half of your class time will even be spent inside a classroom or grand lecture hall. Typically, classes are held in modern electronic classrooms, executive training centers, or even corporate boardrooms of Fortune 500 companies either in the U.S. or abroad. The world becomes a global classroom.

### *Residentials*

Residentials are classes held at a professional training center or other corporate setting away from campus where traditional MBA classes are taught. The venue may represent the setting for the entire two years of the program. Typically a residential is a weekend or weeklong learning session. If the residential is held on campus, like some programs, university housing and executive dining are provided.

When held away from campus, the setting is an executive training centers geared for twenty-first century connectivity: state-of-the-art audio/visual equipment, dedicated T1 lines, and tools for global teleconferencing. These settings may also include access to the sports complex, corporate dining facilities, and four-star accommodations.

Since lectures go late into the evening and start up early the following morning residencies include housing and meals. The hermetic study environment ideally suits the EMBA as it shelters students from outside distractions during the intensive weekend and weeklong learning.

---

Hide and seek: Cornell University alternates weekend classes at IBM Palisades Executive Conference Center and the Cornell campus in Ithaca, New York. The IBM Palisades is a hundred acre corporate campus fifteen miles north of Manhattan and within thirty miles of all New York City area airports. It serves as an ideal setting for classes to meet in state-of-the-art classrooms, and each of the two hundred guest rooms is equipped with an IBM computer featuring Internet connection and desktop applications. The center includes restaurants, world-class

fitness facilities, with an indoor lap pool and outdoor running trails, lounge and recreation areas, and full hotel services.

---

---

A touch of class: Washington University in St. Louis holds classes on campus at the modern five-story, 135,000-square-foot facility. The Center offers EMBA students elegant accommodations, dining, lounge, a fitness center, a pub, and a business center under one roof. Similarly, Fordham University hosts classes in Manhattan at the Lincoln Center campus and three weekend residentials at a beautiful conference center less than a half-hour's drive from the city in Tarrytown, New York.

---

When the residency calls for being on the actual campus of the corporation, the classroom is held in the corporate boardroom and housing at a contracted hotel nearby. When the corporate boardroom becomes the classroom students meet with senior officers from the host company, sometimes with the CEO or CFO, tour the facility, and lunch with employees. When classes are held at the corporation, anything is possible. It is not unusual for Larry Ellison, Bill Gates or Michael Eisner to check in on a class and answer a few questions.

---

Fordham meets Bloomberg: Students received first rate treatment from America's most successful financial media company, met with Mr. Bloomberg, now mayor of New York City, and used Bloomberg terminals for their global financial management class.

---

### *Study Tours*

With study tours, the Executive MBA course work turns the world into a global campus. Study tours are part of the curriculum and a requirement for graduation. Students meet and learn from businessmen and women, government officials and politicians, and senior members of the corporate world. Courses such as cross-cultural negotiations, critical operational analysis, global communications, corporate leadership, and business strategy are taught in the boardroom of Lufthansa Airlines in Germany, a GE power processing factory in Budapest, Hungary, or the halls of British Parliament. Classes begin on the chalkboard back home but ultimately finish on the shop floor next to a computer assembly line in Beijing, China. Intense class discussions combined with electronic case studies, case analysis, guests lecturing, and hands-on consulting projects are often held on location in the territory under study.

Duke's Global Executive MBA may best exemplify how the global community serves as the classroom. Duke's GEMBA (Global) and WEMBA (Weekend) offer more study tours than any other EMBA program.

Special to Duke was the global emphasis. International business practices are best absorbed in an international environment. The fact that the program facilitated the visitation of local or multinational companies, and sponsored speakers from local businesses or government officials, cannot be replicated in a classroom in Durham, North Carolina. There is no traditional MBA program that can address practical business problems and then experience them in a local environment.

Duke arranged study tours throughout the world. For example, we spent time at a Panasonic manufacturing plant in the Czech Republic discussing their business

model and in China we toured technology companies learning various business models under communist rule and also had a day to repel the Great Wall! For our third trip we went to Sao Paolo, Brazil, and a week later went to Santiago, Chile. Duke professors were outstanding and the bonding that forms among classmates and professors was fantastic. Our time is well spent, rigorous and constantly moving forward examining critical business issues many at the company floor in Hong Kong, Prague, Beijing or elsewhere.

—James Cecere Duke EMBA, VP Investor Services, JP Morgan Chase

### *Questions to consider:*

- o How many residentials will be offered?
- o Where will the residentials be held?
- o Which courses will be taught during the residential?
- o Are there external costs associated with the residential?

## *5.3. Inside the Classroom*

A closer review of class schedules and a sample of individual program curriculums can be found in the appendix.

### *Curriculum Model*

#### Year I Curriculum

In year one, the central focus of the EMBA is to lay the groundwork of essential management knowledge. The year will be weighed toward core courses including the basics: economics, finance, managerial accounting, management science, marketing, operations, governmental and legal policy, and business statistics. The first year may conclude with a study tour.