GME: TODAY & TOMORROW

FALL 2020 | WINTER 2021

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The Power of Community

I'm sure you'll agree that the world has changed in previously inconceivable ways since we published the inaugural issue of *GME: Today & Tomorrow* at the end of 2019.

I hope you'll also agree that our original goal for this magazine — "to ensure that the best practices we've shared with each other don't stay behind the closed doors of our board meetings" — is now even more important than it was then. While graduate management education (GME) still faces the same challenges that inspired us to collaborate in years past, we are currently in the midst of a period of existential transformation, unlike any other. Although we all work at different institutions and may tend to view each other as competitors, it is my firm belief that those of us in GME admissions and leadership must now adopt the mantra, "United we stand, divided we fall."

That's why we decided to make the theme of this issue, "the power of community." Without working together to solve universal problems, support each other during difficult times and share best practices, we all run the risk of being left behind by the best-fit students we need to fill our classes and keep our institutions vital.

I hope you enjoy reading the articles in this issue of *GME: Today & Tomorrow*. Among other things, you'll learn how Texas A&M's new "Re-Entry Guides" are helping leaders during times of crisis; how BusinessCAS™ helps build communities; and what applicants have to say about using Liaison's Centralized Application Service (CAS™) for graduate management education programs.

I also hope you join the BusinessCAS LinkedIn Community at lsnedu.com/GME-LI. Along with businesscas.org, it's the best place to keep in touch with your peers and stay up to date with the most important news and ideas across GME today.

Finally, our editorial team is always eager to hear your feedback, as well as any suggestions you may have for future article topics. They can be reached at editorial@liaisonedu.com.

Thanks for reading!

Sincerely,

Dr. Toby McChesney
Senior Assistant Dean, Graduate Programs
Santa Clara University
Chair of the BusinessCAS Advisory Board

In This Issue

FALL 2020 | WINTER 2021

GME: TODAY & TOMORROW

INTRODUCING:

THE

MBA Roundtable

FAST TRACK CURRICULUM INNOVATION AWARD

by Robert Ruiz
Managing Director

BusinessCAS by LIAISON

As this issue of *GME: Today & Tomorrow* went to press, judges were in the process of reviewing finalists' submissions for the first-ever MBA Roundtable Fast Track Curriculum Innovation Award.

Winners of the award, which is an offshoot of the bi-annual MBA Roundtable Innovator Award that's sponsored by BusinessCAS, are scheduled to be announced at the MBA Roundtable's Annual Symposium in October.

MBA Roundtable Executive Director Jeff Bieganek explains the inspiration behind the new MBA Roundtable Fast Track Curriculum Innovation Award, which required that submissions be in direct response to the coronavirus pandemic crisis: "The MBA Roundtable is a global association of business schools that's been around for close to 25 years. "We really try to work with our schools to focus on updating, changing and innovating their curriculums to meet the needs of students and employers."

Innovative, quick changes

"We started the MBA Roundtable Innovator Award in 2011, and we will give it out again in 2021. But people have been doing some really amazing things recently to pivot and meet the needs of students. We're curious about what the long-term impact will be. It's hard to predict. People are creating a lot of innovative quick changes, adaptations and responses to COVID-19 that are really interesting. We wanted something in direct response. Clearly, moving online is a quick pivot, but how did you do that in a very unique way? Or how did you adapt your content, or how did you change your program to make this an important learning experience for your students.

"As a result, our board decided to recognize the importance of this by creating the Fast Track Curriculum Innovation Award. It has three award categories: curriculum content, curriculum delivery and one for unique innovations, such as those that include both content and delivery."

"We just launched this award, and it's been exciting. It's global, so everybody who offers an MBA program can submit. We've been really pleased with the results so far. There are lessons here for everybody in all types of schools, from large public to small private, and from heavily resourced to more challenged with resources. It will be really interesting to see what stays and what goes, in terms of curriculum and content, in the next couple of years."

Helping others

"We submitted the launch of our Impact Consulting Fellowship (ICF) to share an amazing opportunity for other MBA programs to launch as well," said Nima Farshchi, Director, Center for Social Value Creation at the Robert H. Smith School of Business. "ICF is a pro-bono consulting opportunity for MBA students to lead teams of two masters and three undergraduate students in supporting an impact-driven for-profit, b corp or non-profit over the course of the summer."

"We also created a handbook on launching a remote program like ICF for other business schools. Here at Smith, achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is something enrooted in our culture. We wanted to help other programs tackle the SDGs. Our submission shares our best practices with others who have a similar mission."

At Texas Christian University's Neeley School of Business, the goal of submitting to the Fast Track Curriculum Innovation Award was to "put the lie to the idea that higher education and GME are unable to rapidly evolve," said Associate Dean for Graduate Programs David G. Allen, Ph.D.

"Our innovation was to rapidly design, develop, gain administrative approvals, market and launch a graduate degree option for pre-experience seniors graduating into a global pandemic and economic recession — a new one-year MS in Business Analytics. We went from idea to more than 50 students in class in less than 12 weeks with no marketing spend. Moving at the speed of business and innovating in the face of challenges are extremely important for GME."

"I think the Roundtable is an amazing resource hub for the GME industry," said Bieganek. "We're a small virtual organization that tries to deliver big benefits to our members and the overall GME community. We're here to partner with everybody to make sure that the curriculum — co-curricular and curricular — is the best it can be for the students."

Winners of the inaugural Fast Track Curriculum Innovation Award will be announced following the MBA Roundtable's Annual Symposium, which takes place virtually on October 29th and 30th. ■

Dee Steinle discusses navigating post-pandemic campus life with her admissions team.

REDEFINING STRATEGY

Using Partnerships to Expand Capacity

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

Given the seemingly endless demands on their time, how can leaders do more than manage what's immediately in front of them? Where can leaders build in the time to innovate, to develop new solutions or simply to improve processes?

As management wizard Peter Drucker suggested almost 50 years ago, organizations should not require superhumans to run them, so the solution is likely not the development of new mutant powers. Effective, strategic partnerships can, however, give leaders something that might make them feel like a superhero: the additional bandwidth to build relationships with applicants through value-added engagements and the data and analysis tools that help to build stronger classes.

In the context of graduate management education (GME), most partnerships come in a few different varieties:

ACADEMIC/UNIVERSITY: These types of partnerships include accelerated degree programs like 3+1, STEM-based programs that lead to OPT extensions and other exchange-type arrangements that involve two or more schools/colleges.

OPERATIONAL: These partnerships focus on functions that can be "outsourced" without losing brand control, including accounting, finance, applications, document logistics, study abroad, clubs and organizations, feedback solicitation and a whole host of activities that can be completed at a lower cost, with less disruption, less effort and at a same-or-better quality than the school or unit can.

AFFILIATION: These types of partnerships focus on specific interests/identities and specialized areas of the industry; groups like the large and well-known GMAC and AACSB are augmented by a vast network of slightly-smaller groups like The Consortium, the Forte Foundation, Pro Hispanica, the MBA Roundtable and the EMBA Council, to name a few.

THE IDEA IN PRACTICE

Overview

Dee Steinle, Executive Director of MBA and MSB Programs at the University of Kansas (KU) School of Business, faced a common managerial challenge. She was asked to walk the proverbial tightrope — grow enrollment without additional resources. In the highly competitive marketplace for GME, overall enrollment has been fairly static, while the number of offerings has dramatically increased. Enrolling a class of MBA students who have the chance to improve rankings has become so competitive, in fact, that some schools have started offering their degrees at zero cost to attract top students. Steinle needed to determine how to grow enrollment in a rapidly changing environment and do so without any additional resources.

About 30 minutes away from downtown Kansas City, the School of Business at the University of Kansas (KU) sits on an idyllic campus with historic red-roofed buildings reminiscent of a medieval European village. KU is a public R1 university — a classification of the Carnegie Foundation that ranks KU as an institution with the highest possible research activity — with a total enrollment of around 20,000 students. The School of Business has a more modest enrollment of fewer than **800 graduate students**, and it takes great pride in the strong community fostered by a smaller program.

A CASE STUDY

As she was walking to her office on the last day of final exams for Q1 one fall afternoon, a student approached Dee Steinle, Executive Director of MBA and MSB Programs at the University of Kansas (KU) School of Business, and said, "I'm making an app like Tinder, but exclusively for paleontologists; I'm calling it 'Carbon Dating.'" Steinle found herself still laughing as she sat down at her desk moments later. It's not uncommon for students to form quick relationships with Steinle. With an optimism that takes the form of an easy smile and the patience of a monk, Steinle often tells students that she would have been a paleontologist if she weren't a dean. "Carbon dating," Steinle chuckled as she logged onto her computer to a strategic planning template she was completing. Widely seen as an enrollment Jedi, Steinle was spending a lot of time finessing the phrasing in her "Enrollment Goals" section. Of course, enrollment targets are growth targets, but Steinle knew enrollment would be more of a challenge that year because she had to confront the perennial problem of doing more with less. Without significant resources available in time or staffing, she needed to find a way to meet the growth goals that the school increasingly relied upon to support their innovation and community building efforts.

For almost 100 years, the School of Business at KU has been offering graduate management education (GME) that emphasizes practical application and exposure to leading researchers. Today, the School of Business offers a balanced portfolio of programs with a multi-platform MBA and four MS degrees. Cohorts are kept small to focus intensively on the classroom and case method dynamics, and in the School's well-regarded FTMBA

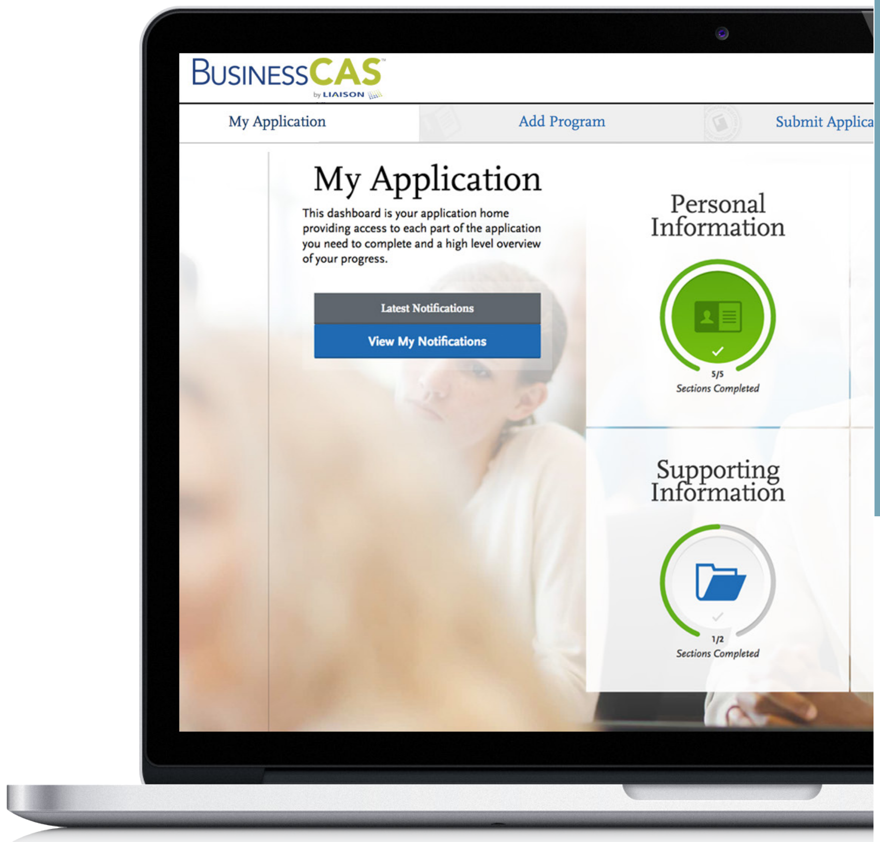
continued from previous page

program, students and grads alike consistently give the school high marks across all of the rankings surveys.

At KU, enrollment in the FTMBA program has long been targeted to a class size of 40, but like many schools in the late 2010s, enrollment in the FTMBA program has become increasingly harder to predict. High competition among schools for applicants with rankings- and employment-friendly profiles has long been *de rigueur* for MBA programs, but the rise in quality and number of international competitors, a complex and sometimes challenging U.S. student immigration system and a dramatic shift in program cost dynamics paired with escalating scholarship competition has had a chilling effect on the FTMBA enrollment at the majority of schools. KU was certainly not immune to these challenges, and as such, the year-over-year application-to-enrollment yield at most schools was a tense roller coaster for leaders like Steinle.

Ultimately, Steinle needed to forge new partnerships to tackle these enrollment challenges. A natural mentor and connector, Steinle has a widely-acknowledged talent for leading her team by example and producing consistent positive results. Her excellence as a leader has afforded her the opportunity to contribute to the broader GME field through leadership service with some of the most important organizations in the field, such as GMAC. In one of these industry positions, Steinle was part of a committee that evaluated the concept of a centralized application tool. Years after this committee service concluded, a colleague who served with her introduced her to the leading Centralized Application Service (CAS™) for GME, BusinessCAS™. Steinle led KU to adopt the BusinessCAS solution for the 2019 cycle, and results took shape quickly.

With BusinessCAS filling the gaps in recruitment, KU's graduate business programs went from an application-to-enrollment yield that slipped to 40% in 2018 to a yield of 70% in 2020, a remarkable increase. During the same period, the program went from enrolling as few as 25 students in 2018 to an expanded cohort of 45 in 2020.



With BusinessCAS filling the gaps in recruitment, KU's graduate business programs went from an application-to-enrollment yield that slipped to **40% in 2018 to a yield of 70% in 2020**, a remarkable increase. During the same period, the program went from enrolling as few as **25 students in 2018 to an expanded cohort of 45 in 2020**.

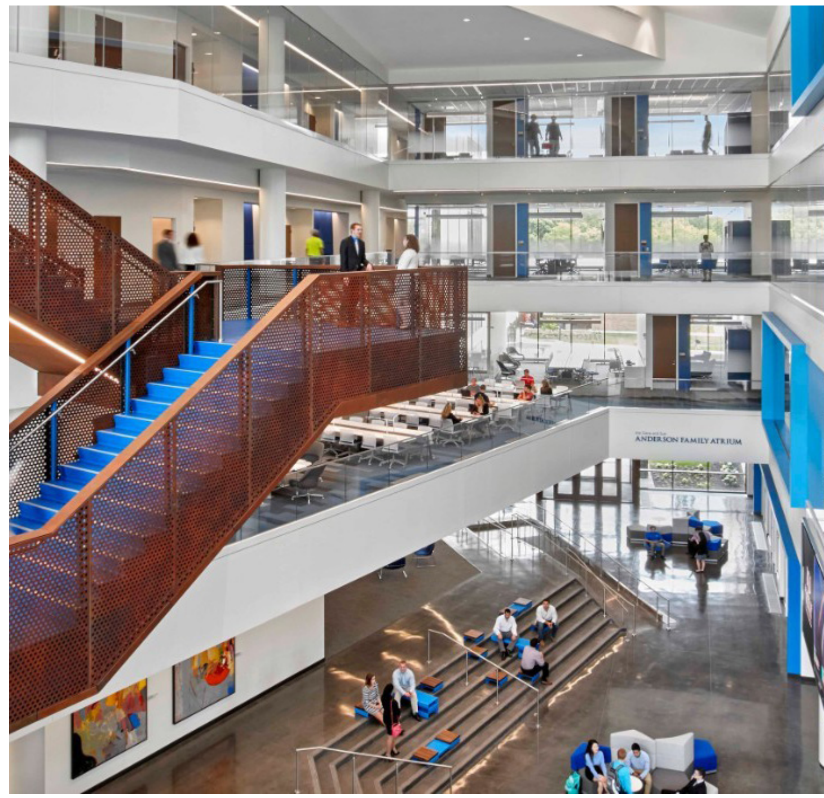
> **"Because of BusinessCAS and some strategic partnerships, we are getting better quality applications. It is not about *more* applications, but *better* applicants."**

A partnership with BusinessCAS translated into a no-cost solution to Steinle's enrollment challenges, and when asked to reflect on her success, Dee observed, "Because of BusinessCAS and some strategic partnerships, we are getting better quality applications. It is not about more applications, but better applicants." Explaining how she has approached enrollment planning in the current environment, she noted, "BusinessCAS has been part of [our] strategy" to adjust for the disruption of international applicants this year by finding new pipelines for domestic students.

In an environment where relationships drive enrollment, leaders are often frustrated that admissions staff sometimes spend the majority of their days managing applications. By comprehensively managing the application process through BusinessCAS, Steinle's admissions team can focus on building relationships with applicants and finding the value-added engagements that help to build a strong class.

Further, BusinessCAS provides additional channels for lead generation, broadening the top of the funnel without any new marketing costs, which was key to Steinle's enrollment growth under budget constraints. Ultimately, BusinessCAS also helped to improve the quality of the class by providing Steinle with the data and analysis tools to not just find great students but to find *more* great students.

BusinessCAS, it turns out, is not only a solution for many enrollment challenges — traditional and current — but also a community, one where leaders like Steinle come together to share best practices and work together to solve common problems. By seeking out innovative partners who understood the unique challenges of her institution, Steinle found a way to not only improve and stabilize her enrollment but also to buck the current industry trend where many schools have a highly volatile enrollment outlook. ■



WHAT WILL YOU ACHIEVE WITH THE BUSINESSCAS COMMUNITY BEHIND YOU?

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Doing More With Data: Strategies to Inform Strategic Decision-Making

by Stephen Taylor
Research Director

BusinessCAS by Liaison

It may seem that the now-ubiquitous term "Big Data" has only recently become enmeshed in our working vocabulary, but according to Google's Ngram Viewer[2], the phrase has been in use since the mid-1990s. Despite its prevalence, most of us would struggle to define precisely what Big Data is. Popular working definitions include the notion of capturing information related to the many interactions an organization has with a stakeholder, but few definitions talk about how to start using Big Data or even what it can do.[3] Universities collect large amounts of data about their communities, and the higher education sector urgently needs to make use of new data analysis tools to recover from the disruptions of the pandemic. Yet, few universities have the decentralized resources necessary to get individual units to leverage their large data sets to ask questions about how best to prepare for the future. At George Mason University (GMU), an innovative duo has managed to overcome the core challenge of using Big Data — getting clear data sets to context experts who can put them to use — and their success reveals how the right analytics can serve as the Rosetta Stone that renders data more comprehensible.

A public research institution in Virginia, GMU is host to almost 40,000 students and offers bachelor through doctoral degrees. With multiple campuses, including one in South Korea, GMU is known for its engineering and business academics. The School of Business itself enrolls almost 5,000 students, with about 4,000 undergraduates. The graduate programs are consistently recognized for their high quality and high return on investment and are annually listed in the Top 50 and Top 100 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings.

The GMU School of Business has a reputation for outstanding programs in the highly competitive Washington DC metro area. I recently sat down with Senior Assistant Dean of Graduate Enrollment Jackie Buchy and Assistant Director of Enrollment and Analytics Kevin Connor to hear their reflections about the way that getting deeper into their data transformed their enrollment.

While 2020 has thrown everything imaginable at higher ed this year, admissions officers may have been under more stress than just about anyone else on campus. To set the stage on how the team used data analysis, generally, the conversation turned toward the complexity of needing to have data to justify requests and support the telling of a story. Research by groups like EDUCAUSE shows that while most school leaders recognize the growing importance of data analytics, far fewer are able to devote the needed resources to developing some skill in this area.[4] And, lest we forget that the year is 2020, we also talked through the complexity of communicating enrollment to all stakeholders.

There are calls for business schools to expand their programs' role in training leaders who will make the world a more just and equitable place. And in light of the ongoing-and-without-a-clear-end pandemic, there are calls for business schools to justify their tuition, their on/"off campus" decisions and their curriculum.

In this environment, Buchy and Connor kicked off a set of projects that would help them weather the storm of 2020 by giving granular insights into how each program's enrollment pipeline was performing. By using existing data sources, starting with the well-known Excel to trial-and-error refine how questions are structured, and by working together to figure out what the data was telling them, they jumped into the Big Data pool with both feet to great success. As we wrapped our conversation, I asked them to share their top three recommendations for others who may be getting started in using Big Data more effectively.

Top Three Recommendations

Start with questions

There is a lot of "buzz word" conversation around the notion of Big Data, or data-driven decision making, but putting data to good use doesn't start with tech or committees, according to the panelists: It starts with questions. "We knew what questions we wanted to ask, what questions our key stakeholders want answers to," said Buchy, adding, "And we worked closely with our leadership to make sure we were asking the right questions." Connor elaborated, "If you don't know what questions you're trying to answer, there's no way to be sure you have the right data, the right views."

Make utility a priority

"Data analysis" as a term itself can be intimidating to those who don't have experience with the extraction, transformation and application of data from large sources. How can a team start to approach the conversation about infusing your planning with support from data? "It's going to be different for every context," answers Connor, "but you don't need to be a programmer in R or Python, you don't need a complex analytics stack, you need something that's usable." The team suggests starting simple with tools like Microsoft Word and Excel to get a sense of how the data fits together.

Consider your narrative

Of the many skills required of leaders in graduate management education (GME), storytelling is chief among the most important. With questions determined and a working version of a data set produced, the big challenge is to interpret the data and use it to tell the story of your situation. "With the high degree of focus that faculty bring to any conversation, supporting our strategy with data has been transformational — especially in our ability to build consensus and get everyone on the same page," Buchy explained when asked about the importance of a data-rich narrative. She continued, "part of my job is to make sure our Dean has everything necessary to talk at the university level about our current position and advocate for the School; having practical tools that leaders can use to explain what we're doing is one of the big keys to our success this year."

Speaking to a group of marketing and IT executives a few years ago, IBM Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Ginni Rometty famously said, "Big Data will spell the death of customer segmentation and force the marketer to understand each customer as an individual within 18 months or risk being left in the dust."[1] As universities look toward an already-uncertain future compounded by the pandemic, social justice concerns and domestic political instability, honing the ability to support the narrative of their utility is perhaps more critical now than ever. As Buchy and Connor point out, developing a set of data to support requests and strategic plans can be done fairly easily. Work with stakeholders to find out the right questions, aim to create workable models by not allowing "perfect to be the enemy of the good" and take the time to understand what your data tells you — these are the first steps on your school's journey toward being more data-driven in planning and decision-making. ■

[1] Rometty, Ginni, Keynote Address. CMO+CIO Leadership Symposium, Sydney AUS, February 11, 2013.
[2] Google Ngram Analysis. Accessed October 11, 2020.
[3] Oracle. "What is Big Data," Accessed October 11, 2020.
[4] Educause, Analytics in Higher Education: Benefits, Barriers, Progress, and Recommendations.

BusinessCAS Facilitates Community When You Need It Most

by Robert Ruiz
Managing Director

BusinessCAS by LIAISON

A lot has changed since the previous issue of *GME: Today & Tomorrow* was published — both in the world of higher ed admissions at large and within the BusinessCAS Community.

One fact remains unchanged, however: It's always easier to achieve important goals when you're working with like-minded peers who share the same priorities, challenges and passion — especially during times of crisis. BusinessCAS, the Centralized Application Service (CAS) for graduate management programs, makes that possible by facilitating new collaborations that drive mutual success for all participating schools and applicants.

As the pandemic unfolds, BusinessCAS is more focused than ever on creating a community that allows your programs to thrive. As a member of that community, you'll gain new insights into best practices shared by your admissions peers from other innovative institutions as well as the highly experienced technology and marketing professionals at Liaison.

For example, BusinessCAS has begun convening a series of focus groups dedicated to enhancing the GME admissions experience for everyone, from applicants to institution leadership. When you're on the Focus Groups site, be sure to explore the other resources available there, including the new white paper based on one of our recent focus groups, Focus on Differentiation: GME Leaders Discuss How to Stand Out in a Competitive Field.

We also encourage you to join the vibrant GME Today & Tomorrow moderated discussion group on LinkedIn. It's another great way to stay on top of the most recent news and important developments in higher ed admissions and marketing.

On top of all that, the entire BusinessCAS team works constantly to leverage the collective strength of our experience and insights into this important shared community. As a result, we're able to provide an incredible amount of information that helps you make better and more well-informed decisions, including (but not limited to) articles, magazines, blog posts, timely data on marketing and enrollment trends and updates on global economic developments and domestic policy change.

The connections BusinessCAS members make create an indispensable network of colleagues who know exactly what challenges and opportunities you face every day — and how to address them in the most effective way possible.

To learn more, visit businesscas.org and sign up for our next focus group at businesscas.org/gme-focus-group-resources. ■

Meet the BusinessCAS Board

When T. S. Eliot said about difficult times, "If you aren't in over your head, how do you know how tall you are?", I don't think he could have imagined the kind of disruption we have all experienced this year. And while graduate management education (GME) may be in for a roller coaster year, the BusinessCAS team is fortunate to have an exceptionally talented advisory board to help us provide the ship-steadying counsel you've come to expect. In this regularly occurring feature, we'll get to know the members of our board, and this week we'll put the spotlight on board member Kate Klepper.

Kate Klepper
Associate Dean for Graduate Programs
School of Business
D'Amore-McKim
Northeastern University

Known as much for her quick wit as her thoughtful questions, Kate Klepper has served as Associate Dean for Graduate Programs since 2005 for the D'Amore-McKim School of Business at Northeastern University in Boston. Of course, you may also know Kate as a member (and Vice-Chair) of the GMAC Board of Directors, of the MBA Roundtable, the Washington Campus or as the only person you've probably ever met who has never tried coffee. Ever. Easy to get to know, quick with questions and eager to share what has worked — and hasn't — for her, Kate's support has mentored new leaders, her service has advanced the standing of GME and her dedication has helped to build D'Amore-McKim into the echelon of excellence it now occupies. If you're looking to start a conversation with Kate, you might ask her about the most recent book she read (*Dear Edward* by Ann Napolitano) or where to shop in London.

Kate's contributions to GME are many and diverse, as she has served not only in key leadership roles, but she's the person in your conference presentation audience who asks a leading question to help you build the discussion or the presenter who reads the room and figures out how to transition from idea to action. Kate has deep expertise in admissions, having served as Dean of admissions at Babson before she joined Northeastern, which might explain her easy laugh. Who is Kate in a song? According to Kate, her stadium walkout music would be Brave by Sara Bareilles, which makes total sense. Brave is a song about the power of speaking out and owning your unique voice because when you do, it inspires others to do the same. It's a great metaphor for who Kate is, really: an encouraging mentor, a unique voice that deserves to be heard and it's popular for good reason. ■

Our Leadership Team

Toby McChesney, Ed.D.
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LEAVEY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY
Advisory Board Chair

Dee Steinle
Executive Director of MBA and MS Programs
KU SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
The University of Kansas
Advisory Board Vice-Chair

Robert Ruiz
Managing Director
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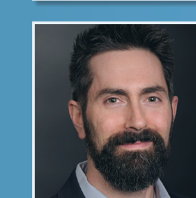

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BusinessCAS by LIAISON

Leadership Lessons:
Sustainable Success in Silicon Valley

THE IDEA IN BRIEF

In the highly competitive marketplace for graduate management education (GME), the San Francisco Bay Area may very well be the center of the universe. More than a dozen colleges offer MBA or MS programs to students attracted by the big brands and even bigger opportunities offered by Silicon Valley and even renowned East Coast schools like the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business and Babson University's Olin School have opened campuses in the area. In this kind of environment, leading a graduate business unit can be exceptionally challenging, especially when the already pressurized goals of rankings, revenue and reputation are constantly competing for priority with the persistent market disruptions of 2020. How can someone be successful in this kind of role? How do leaders figure out what is critical — and what can wait? And most importantly, perhaps, how can leaders and their organizations thrive in this kind of environment? While there may be no perfect answer to these questions, the application of the common leadership frameworks, Situational Leadership and Contingency Theory of Leadership, to this situation yield key insights into how leaders in GME can succeed.

Okay, the BusinessCAS board meeting isn't until noon; I have a meeting in the Provost's office at 2:00 before our meeting with the business analytics students. That means I have time to get that AACSB conference presentation finished up before the alumni meeting tonight, perfect, he thought as he closed his planner and stood up from his desk. To those who work with Toby McChesney, Ed.D., this whirlwind of activity is not new; they know he's always on the move. Currently serving the Leavey School of Business at Santa Clara University (SCU), he wears so many leadership hats that even his formal title is busy: Senior Assistant Dean of Graduate Business Programs, Special Assistant to the Provost, Adjunct Faculty.

In addition to his many responsibilities for SCU, Dr. McChesney serves in leadership roles for at least three key industry associations at any given time, is a sought-after speaker and presenter for conferences across a broad range of topics and is regularly interviewed by a diversity of media outlets for his insights into how higher education and Graduate Management Education (GME) are changing.

Over the past few weeks, Dr. McChesney has been the subject of online conversation and news stories about his success this year. And with just a cursory look at his achievements this year – just four years into his tenure at SCU — it's no surprise that Dr. McChesney is so busy. This year's performance in the increasingly competitive *U.S. News & World Report* Best Business Schools ranking resulted in a two-place rise year-over-year to a rank of 11 for Leavey's EMBA program, which was ranked for the first time ever last year. And in the very competitive part-time MBA ranking, Dr. McChesney has presided over a rise to 25th in the nation, a critical ranking threshold that traditionally serves as a catalyst for lead growth. The students at the Leavey School are highly engaged, serving as ambassadors to prospective students and mentors to first-year students; even the MBA alumni group has been revitalized by the energy and impact of Dr. McChesney's leadership, and they now meet regularly to find ways to support the school. Most impressively, perhaps, Dr. McChesney's leadership drove significant growth throughout the enrollment pipeline during an exceptionally turbulent period of time. Commenting on the contributing factors to this success in a September 2020 interview, Dr. McChesney explained, "That momentum [from joining the BusinessCAS™ Community] resulted in a 50% increase in applications, a 63% increase in admits and a 51% increase in deposits for Fall 2020."

Although he has recently been spotlighted for his annus mirabilis at SCU, Dr. McChesney's career has been one defined by lasting process improvements and a legacy of genuine care and concern for students. Leaders like Dr. McChesney can seem almost preternaturally gifted at holding leadership roles of exceptional complexity and visibility, indeed, thriving during times of crisis. How does he do it?

More broadly, how can Dr. McChesney's success be applicable to others in this kind of role? How do leaders figure out what is critical and what can wait? And most importantly, perhaps, how can leaders and their organizations thrive in this kind of environment?

To paint the academic discipline of leadership studies with an exceptionally broad brush, traditional leadership theories describe effectiveness in a process-oriented way; in other words, do a specific set of things in a specific environment, and leadership effectiveness has been achieved. The exceptionally diverse leadership consulting industry, a great deal of trade press and pop obsession with leaders like Elon Musk all tend to support the notion that contemporary leadership thinking emphasizes the leader as the core of a culture, as the creator of an environment in which goals are achieved. But this difference among researchers does not constrain the ability to evaluate exemplary leadership through some of the more pragmatic lenses of leadership theory. Two frameworks that we can use to gain insight into how leaders in GME can succeed are Situational Leadership and Contingency Theory of Leadership.

Situational Leadership is a theory developed to suggest there is no singular "right" way to lead a team or an organization, but rather that effective leadership results from a positive match of a leadership style to a situation.[3] The two key variables used in the model are leadership style and team/situation maturity levels. Efficacy in leadership happens when a leader adapts their style through the framework of the task/function to the situation and team ability level. Leadership style is explicated to show the dynamic between the task versus relationship spectrum of a leader, and situation maturity levels are detailed to show the task-bound nature of team maturity. The theory is inherently attractive, as it gets to a natural sense of how leaders work to meet each situation based on context, but the model has been broadly critiqued. The model completely excludes how demographic factors or interpersonal team dynamics might influence each situation.[4]

Contingency Theory of Leadership also holds that there is no perfect way to lead a team or organization but attempts to broaden the work of previous models by including more variables. Researchers who have extended the ideas of this theory hold that "effective leadership is about striking the right balance between needs, context and behavior."[2] A successful leader, they hold, has the "ability to assess the needs of their followers, analyze the situation at hand and act accordingly."[2] This theory naturally fits with how many see leadership because it allows for flexibility and matching between all variables, but it has been the subject of many of the same critiques of previous models.

Using the Contingency framework described above, we can think through Dr. McChesney's success in three categories:

Assess the needs of the community

Unit staff, current students, alumni, faculty members, college leadership, business/community partners, prospective students, industry associations and an entire litany of groups with specialized interests in the School are represented here. In GME, this area requires the ability to establish relationships with/between these groups, determine shared interests and conflicts, understand how their needs overlap and create a path for all to contribute time and energy to shared goals.

Analyze and interpret details and context

Competitors, micro-market understanding, macro-market insight, media reports, anecdotal feedback, conference topics and every other imaginable data source are in this category. It includes the dozen-plus competitors within a 50-mile radius of Leavey, all of whom are exceptionally focused on capturing the attention and enrollment of high performing future executives of Silicon Valley. In GME, this area requires high ability in executive function, information acquisition speed and the ability to find and connect seemingly disparate data.

Act based on intersection of needs, goals and context

Knowing the needs of stakeholders and understanding the context of a situation are necessary but not sufficient criteria for effective leadership in any view, and so this element of the model suggests the ability to motivate work completion toward a goal. Involved in that endeavor for leaders in GME is a leader's ability to create and maintain a positive culture, to communicate clearly and candidly and to coalesce information into a compelling narrative that executives and subordinates support.

Dr. McChesney was able to effectively assess the needs of his stakeholder community by strategically planning his time. Among many activities, he speaks regularly with student and faculty leadership, has planned meetings with alumni associations and makes transparency the hallmark of his communication. He has built a strong foundation of trust and confidence with these groups, which has led to their willingness to share real concerns and exert true effort to help.

Understanding the context of the current environment can be difficult, but Dr. McChesney's role in GME allows him to get anecdotal information and trends from the many organizations and schools he serves in volunteer oversight capacities.

Key Leadership Theory Overview

Situational Leadership: This theory suggests that effective leadership requires alignment between the style/approach of a leader and the situation at hand. The model focuses on the interaction between two key variables, the task/function/role of the leader and the capacity — called "maturity" in many of the initial writings — of the team or organization.

Contingency Theory: This theory, of which Situational Leadership is a variety, holds that there is no singular "right" way to lead; instead, effective leadership is contingent on the balance between community/stakeholder needs, situational context and the behavior of the leader and team. Contingency theories have a "natural match" feeling, as it fits with much of observed experience in which a leader attempts to match their style to the situation.

Transformational Leadership: In this theory, a leader's role is to work closely enough with their teams to understand their challenges and identify needed changes. Once those changes are identified, the leader is responsible for creating a vision for the needed changes that motivates the necessary resources to achieve a goal. This theory is sometimes called Inspirational Leadership, as it relies heavily upon a leader with the ability to provide motivation and meaning, challenge a team to perform beyond previous benchmarks and use power effectively to motivate.

Charismatic Leadership: In this trait-based theory of leadership, the focus is on the leader's ability to deploy charisma to motivate a team toward a goal. It requires leaders to completely integrate their person and their profession in a way that can put too much pressure on the leader. These leaders often emerge in times of crisis or disruption, and as a result, much of the scholarship in this area is understandably ambiguous when dealing with the "how" of charismatic leadership success.

> **At the still point, there the dance is.**
> —T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets

His board service, his outstanding relationships with stakeholders on and off-campus and his outstanding faculty for reading industry news have all worked together to give Dr. McChesney a deep understanding of what is happening and why.

Finally, Dr. McChesney created a clear path for action that leads to success. The alumni, faculty, staff and leadership groups – as well as the stakeholder community at large – have a strong understanding of how they work with Dr.McChesney to achieve goals. The industry associations where Toby serves are able to provide broader industry context to his detailed understanding of his Silicon Valley context. But his ability to act on these is the crux of his success. For example, Dr. McChesney used his understanding of where the industry was going and joined BusinessCAS, a platform that supports enrollment growth and a community that drives industry best practices. He has been able to effectively tell the story of his programs, his school, his industry and the role of GME in making the world a better place.

To use Situational Leadership principles here would give us, perhaps, a chance to analyze Dr. McChesney's leadership style. The operational pieces of Dr. McChesney's success include key partnerships, direct communication, tireless effort, kind management and clear vision. And while scholars may have imagined style as something different, there is strong evidence that Dr. McChesney's transparent approach to communication, willingness to work hard and authentic kindness underpins his overall performance as a leader. One might go so far as to call this a leadership style, but without the formal academic meaning of style intended by the Situational Leadership school.

In what is perhaps Eliot's most underappreciated and overquoted writing, "Four Quartets", readers are confronted by moments of prose like this, providing a moving window into the way that time and perspective shape our experience. Finding the "still point" in a professional sense can be exceptionally difficult. There are demands on time and energy from all angles, and there are significant consequences for every decision and every delay. Indeed, "the dance" of leadership is in finding balance among these competing priorities and limited resources. Eliot allows the metaphor to extend beautifully, "neither from nor towards… neither movement from nor towards…neither ascent nor decline… [without] the still point, there would be no dance…" Achieving balance in a traditionally challenging role during a very turbulent time can feel impossible at times, but without seeking that balance there is no "dance," no success to be found. Leaders like Dr. McChesney have relied on exceptional talent, natural ability, consistent self-improvement and hard work to drive success, and they make it look easy. But by applying the most pragmatic elements of traditional and contemporary leadership frameworks, it becomes clear that the "still point of the turning world" can be attained by any leader. ■

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Then & Now:
Graduate Management Education

by Stephen Taylor
Research Director

BusinessCAS

In this regular feature, we'll review historical publications of enduring relevance to graduate management education. In this issue, we examine the introductory section of Harry Jackson's 1933 thesis. A History of Business Education in the United States (HBE). Jackson's master's thesis is still referenced on the University of Southern California's School of Education website as an exemplar of theses from this time period, and exegesis of one brief section that discusses the status and role of business education will shed light on ways that we can prepare our students and our schools for the coming challenges.

> The private business school has passed through three distinct periods of development, which may be characterized respectively as the experimental, when the first schools were being organized and developed; the monopolistic, when the private school dominated the field of business education; and the modern, when business education has taken its place in many types of schools, and the private business school

Jackson outlines the origin and evolution of business education in the U.S., beginning perhaps surprisingly with Plymouth Plantation in 1635. One of the standout elements of this section is Jackson's notion of the progressive developmental stages of business education:

Jackson presents a model of a structured, phase-to-phase history of business education, then asserts that business schools have reached an acceptance echelon, that business education has "arrived." Core to this argument is the assumption that through better organization and standardized practices, institutions advance and improve society. Here, the historical context is key. In the early 1930s, the U.S. was in the midst of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl.

FDR was elected in 1932 on the promise of the New Deal, which redefined Hoover's notion of American self-reliance by expanding social safety nets and creating institutions focused on national improvement projects like the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Federal Housing Authority and the Social Security Administration.

We can imagine our author witnessing the cusp of positive change wrought by New Deal institutions and extending that sense of "improvement through institutions" to business education. We can understand why Jackson felt that business education had "arrived" in some sense, as the proposed evolution of business education was a reflection of the idealism of reform and recovery at the time. But we should also consider how the prevailing zeitgeist of improvement through institutions shaped business education. Around the same time as HBE's completion, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) took a big step forward by formally announcing the sanctioning of five specific types of collegiate business programs. The same period is also marked as one in which new agencies regulated major elements of the economy and eliminated monopolistic business practices.

HBE's description of formalizing institutions, then, was part of a growing aspirational trend in thinking at the time: By formalizing and organizing, institutions can solve large societal problems. The associations and institutions that arose from the complexity of that historical period set virtually all expectations for students, faculty, administrators and even the general public and continue to support the GME enterprise through responsive and comprehensive policy, process and advice.

Jackson's final phase, in which business education is embedded "in many types of schools, and the private business school has had to compete for its place in the educational [marketplace]" has persisted for almost 100 years, but it's safe to say that a new chapter is beginning in the history of GME. As we work our way through a pandemic that has strained the global economy and the deep social and cultural unrest that has fractured communities across the nation, we find ourselves at a moment that parallels the tumultuous 1930s in which Jackson assessed the past and present state of business education.

Just as Jackson triumphantly declared business education had earned its maturity, it would be tempting to uphold the status quo by clinging to the traditional organizations and approaches that have sustained GME for so many years. However, the vast complexities of the present moment and beyond contain new opportunities, particularly if we consider GME as an unfinished enterprise ripe for potential reinvigoration and disruption. The world needs good leaders now more than ever. Our current context is the exemplar of the "VUCA world" (i.e., volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) for which GME trains leaders; how will our institutions evolve to meet the challenge? What associations, partnerships and collaborations will arise to support the innovation schools will need to train the leaders who will shape our future? Certainly, the answers will not lie in referring to the same organizations and practices that have guided and perhaps constrained business education since at least the 1930s. As Socrates is oft-quoted, "The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new." So before you go running to your College of Education to find master's theses that might give you a glimpse of the future, remember that it is up to us to build it. ■

Texas A&M "Re-Entry Guides" Help Leaders Support Their Institutions During Times of Crisis

Shannon Deer, Ph.D., is Assistant Dean of Graduate Programs at Texas A&M University's Mays Business School and a member of the BusinessCAS™ Advisory Board. In her role at Texas A&M, Dr. Deer oversaw the creation of a series of Re-Entry Guides addressing the safe return to the workplace following the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. GME: Today & Tomorrow recently spoke with Dr. Deer about the guides.

The five re-entry guides posted online by Mays Business School address not only re-entering the workplace in the "new normal" but also how to advance with renewed energy. For those who haven't had a chance to read the guides yet, what are the key takeaways?

The guides provide a good reminder that we are all human — as leaders, co-workers and customers. Uncertainty is difficult at any time, but the heightened uncertainty of COVID-19 is having a significant psychological impact on all of us, in addition to the health and economic impacts often discussed. At this time, we are not just navigating uncertainty but multiple fears. As it says in the first guide, we fear returning to work, but we also fear the impact on our jobs/businesses/communities of not returning to work. We are fearful (and maybe a little judgmental) that others are not being as careful. We can't remove all of the risk, fear and uncertainty, but the guides provide tips for creating physical, emotional and psychological safety for our employees.

The guides have three key takeaways:

1) Our employees need to feel physically, emotionally and psychologically safe.

2) What we say and how we say it to our employees can either build or erode trust.

3) Taking every physical safety measure without effective communication will not build trust or empower employees.

What can the re-entry guides teach leaders, in particular, about how to support the people who make up their organizations and how to thrive in today's — and the future's — uncertainty?

One way the guides help leaders to support employees in thriving during uncertainty is by focusing on the future. Leaders are spending so much time right now addressing urgent issues, but they can't forget to focus on the future. Focusing on the future builds hope for employees, which is much needed at this time. The guides provide specific tips for showing kindness and building positivity.

What was the inspiration for creating the re-entry guides?

We adopted the guides because we know everyone is working hard to navigate the COVID-19 environment, which is a crisis for many reasons. We are all experiencing heightened stress, frustration and fear as a result of continuing to do our already demanding jobs and, on top of that, navigating leading through a pandemic. The advice in the guides is valuable at any time but critical today.

Together, the five guides have dozens of insights and tips. Since reading the guides, which tip or tips do you now use the most?

The tip I have used most in communicating with our team is writing an email with the salutation "Dear Mom" and then changing the salutation to "Dear Graduate Programs Team" before sending it. The process has made my emails more thoughtful and compassionate. I forgot to change it one time and sent an email addressed to "Dear Mom." Luckily, our team had seen the re-entry guides, and they knew I was putting them into practice. We had a good laugh about it, though! The practice of pretending I am writing the email to my mom has been extremely impactful. I love my mom, I want her to be safe and I feel compassion when she experiences stress. My employees deserve for me to consistently extend those same courtesies to them, who I also love and appreciate.

There are five guides: The Re-Entry Guide, the Getting Back to Work Guide, the Re-Emergence Guide, the Eleven Re-Entry Wins Guide and the Re-Onboard Checklist. Which one did you find most helpful, and why?

I have found Guide 2, Getting Back to Work: Building an Organization of Trust & Empowerment, to be the most useful as a leader. It has endless practical tips for managing a team at this time. Some tips include best communication practices in a crisis, advice for building short meetings to increase communication effectiveness and the reason we should never start a question we ask an employee with the word "Why."

What advice would you offer to colleagues across the country right now who are trying to figure out how to navigate the challenges of the upcoming school year?

The upcoming school year will require, above all else, flexibility and compassion. People's stress buckets are full. Showing ourselves, and others, some grace is important right now. Our students will behave in ways we have not seen or have seen infrequently in the past because they are stressed. We are still in the business of transforming students; the journey just might be a little bumpier this year.

Dr. Deer and her team at Texas A&M adopted the Re-Entry Guides through a partnership with their marketing firm, Deutser. Access the Guides at mays.tamu.edu/return-to-work. ■

An Interview With Jay Bryant, Strategic Advisor for the Educational Testing Service (ETS):

Standing the "Test" of Time

by Stephen Taylor
Research Director

An interview with Jay Bryant, Strategic Advisor for the Educational Testing Service (ETS), in the style of the Paris Review, is one that has as many twists and turns as a mountain road. Jay speaks with a smile and virtually none of the drawl you'd expect from the Texas native. I waited patiently at my computer as the hands of the clock showed 1:00. "He'll be here any second," I thought to myself, knowing that one of Jay's quirks is that he is always on time. Seconds later, Jay's smiling face showed up on my screen, and his background was enviable. A perfectly sunny San Diego day as his backdrop, his voice dropped and he gave me a serious look, "How are you, Steve, you hanging in there?" No surprise, everyone who knows Jay knows he cares about people first.

But this conversation isn't just to catch up; this conversation is my chance to get a peek into the future of something important to the entire Graduate Management Education (GME) community: testing. Jay knows testing better than most in the field; he taught foreign language to high school students before finding his way into graduate management education. It's no surprise, then, to know that Jay has spent more than a dozen years serving, supporting and improving organizations like the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) and ETS. In fact, Jay is currently working with ETS in a role that supports a growing trend in business schools: use of the GRE test in place of the GMAT. Our conversation covered all things from leadership to curriculum, but the best of our exchanges were around testing and its future. What follows are some highlights from our discussion.

Give us a brief overview of your GME journey; how did you end up working in this space? Why grad business instead of grad medicine or law?
Ironically, as a liberal arts major during my undergraduate studies, going to b-school or working for a b-school was the furthest thing from my mind. As b-schools began to globalize their curriculum, I realized that I could overlay my language and education degrees with a business master's to create a unique track for myself. After four years of teaching AP Spanish at the high school level, I decided to pursue my MBA at Thunderbird School of Global Management.

Upon graduating with my MBA, one of my professors invited me to join the recruiting efforts for the new online MBA program. I would say this career found me, and looking back, I am incredibly grateful that it did! At the graduate level, education is absolutely a global industry — exactly what I was looking for when I decided to go on to my graduate studies.

What are you doing for ETS, and how does it connect to GME?
At ETS, I serve as a strategic advisor for business schools in the Western and Midwestern regions of the USA. My teammates and I are building relationships with business schools on behalf of ETS. We work with several assessments and tools that ETS offers; however, the majority of our work has been educating recruiting and admissions offices about how to use GRE® scores in a holistic approach to admissions, how to show acceptance parity to potential applicants and how to reach those applicants with GRE® Program tools used for recruitment.

So, in a way, I am using all different skill sets developed throughout my career at one time: building a curriculum for holistic admissions fluency based upon models I learned as a classroom teacher, seeing the world through the lenses of a b-school admissions director, which sees the interesting intersection between business and education and evaluating how schools can most effectively use assessment tools as part of my position at ETS.

For those who don't know, what's the difference between the GRE General Test and the GMAT? How does the GRE test make sense for a grad business school prospect? How much is it used?
From my previous admissions director roles, I have about 10 years of experience using both assessments. Overall, the two tests are evaluating the same test-taker skills — verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking and analytical writing skills. The biggest differences are found in the test format and question types and the differing adaptive nature of the tests.

For example, the GRE test is a section-level adaptive test, and the GMAT is question-level adaptive. What this means for the test taker is that the GMAT generates each question based upon your success with the immediately preceding question — therefore, you have to answer each question in each section in order, and you are unable to go back to revisit test questions where you had uncertainties.

On the GRE test, however, you get twenty questions in a timed section, which allows the test taker to use more of their own test-taking strategies like skipping more challenging questions or addressing challenging questions first; they can mark those they skip and revisit questions as long as they are still in the same section of the test. The computer will select the second section based on your performance in the first section. The skills that are assessed by the GRE test are available on the GRE website.

GETTING TO KNOW JAY

Number of Countries I've Visited: *62*

Languages I Speak: *English, Spanish, French (Studied Arabic, but not fluent)*

Number of Countries From Which I've Recruited Students: *61 (don't recall anyone from the Vatican City ever enrolling)*

Favorite Superhero: *I can't choose just one. They are most effective when working together with their diverse backgrounds and talents*

Favorite Starbucks Drink: *Mocha with cinnamon – AKA a Mexican Mocha*

Favorite Leadership Quote: *There are so many… but this is me at my core: "The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers." - Ralph Nader*

My goal as an admissions director was to evaluate the applicants based on specific skills such as algebra, data analytics, reading comprehension, etc. I was less concerned with the format of the question and more concerned with the proof that the individual had the needed skill. I always keep in the back of my mind that the GRE test is the one used for engineering and science programs. I figure that a test that is taken by applicants in engineering, computer science or astrophysics programs is going to tell me plenty about the applicants' quantitative abilities — the primary concern I hear when talking to my colleagues in the field.

Conference conversation sometimes drifts to the topic that research shows entrance exams are poor indicators of future academic performance. Why have tests like this anymore? What purpose do they serve?
There is a proven correlation between entrance exam scores and some aspects of future academic performance, such as cumulative grade-point average, faculty ratings of student performance and research productivity. In fact, an examination of GRE test scores of MBA students from 12 institutions found that GRE Quantitative Reasoning and GRE Verbal Reasoning scores predict both first-semester MBA GPA and graduate MBA GPA, above and beyond undergraduate GPA (Young et al., 2014).

Test scores are intended to help balance out more subjective and variable components of the application to give schools a better assessment of an applicant's skills in areas that are critical for academic success, relative to the skill level of other applicants. For example, let's look at undergraduate GPA and transcript. When used together, they can indicate academic ability and several intangibles that are key to evaluating an applicant, such as growth over time, pursuit of challenging coursework, passion for their subject matter, well-roundedness and cross-discipline interests. But we know that the exact meaning of GPA can differ from applicant to applicant, as it can be skewed by grade inflation, varying institutional rigor and varying grading scales (most colleges in India, for example, either use a 10-point scale or just percentages).

And the same goes for other components of the typical application packet, such as letters of recommendation, which are highly subjective and tend to have positive bias, especially as applicants will actively seek professors or managers with whom they have a positive relationship. Reviewers tend to favor letters that come from people they know or from prestigious institutions, which introduces another form of bias into the process.

So, while these more variable components of the application packet can provide valuable information, for an admissions process to be fair, you want to reduce that variability. Having a test that is research-based, objective and universal among applicants serves that role.

To be very frank, I would never advise using entrance exams as the only indicator of student success in a business school. There are reasons why admissions offices require a number of documents to be submitted. ETS has done a great deal of work to promote holistic admissions, which basically reinforces the idea that, while the GRE test provides three valuable pieces of information about applicants' skill levels in three critical areas, it's only one source.

Personally, I would like to see more b-schools look at assessments like the GRE test as an instrument to help identify individuals who may need extra assistance or pre-work when joining their respective programs. Programs like MBA Math, which I have suggested regularly, have been created to help fill in the skill gaps that standardized tests can identify.

Where is entrance testing going in this era? Does format change? Does proctoring change? Does cost change? Will it continue to be a focus for schools to evaluate candidates?
I think the next few years will be very transformative in this area, and ETS will lead and collaborate to provide solutions that are in line with what the market needs. Maybe the best example of ETS's leadership was the creation and launch of the GRE General Test at-home solution in just six weeks, during a time when graduate school applicants needed it the most. There was a massive problem in the marketplace, and we were able to respond quickly with a solution that allows students to continue their educational journeys without interruption. In fact, ETS was the first organization to transform its test center offering to one that could be taken at home, weeks and months ahead of other companies. This type of responsiveness and nimbleness is where we will be focusing as the graduate education landscape continues to evolve.

One of the things we have heard much about in our outreach is a desire to have more information about an applicant's soft skills. ETS is well-positioned to work with b-schools on the assessment of soft skills, as ETS has been researching and prototyping solutions for a long time. The exact format, proctoring and cost are certainly yet to be determined, but the idea is out there, and ETS is listening. There is a great podcast that I moderated recently with Paula Amorim, Admissions Director at IESE, and Dr. Patrick Kyllonen, Research Program Director at ETS, that talks a bit about what ETS is currently doing to bring standardized soft-skills assessments into b-school admissions.

> **"Testing should help us identify inequities in both education and society and show us all the necessary work we need to do to fulfill our mission.**

With that said, I do think there will always be a need for standardized testing in some form. The format and the use will evolve as time passes — a combination of in-depth research, schools' needs, technology and innovation will determine the final product. It is an exciting time to be working in this industry.

An article in Inside Higher Ed written by a group of faculty from high profile schools urges rankings publications to adjust for diversity and inclusion. Can/should testing do the same? Is it reasonable for the community at large to assume testing adjust for social inequities?
It's important to remember that the value of the test is in its objectivity and its commonality among all applicants. It's a tool that provides information, and it's up to the recipient of that information to determine how best to use it.

Although it's a more simplistic example, think about a thermometer, which measures temperature. You don't change the thermometer based on who is reading the temperature, nor whether it's a humid day, nor whether you're using it at a high or low altitude. And you certainly don't throw it out because you don't like what it's telling you. The temperature is what it is — an indicator of heat at a particular point in time. The information is useful, and it's up to the recipient of that information to place value on that reading. Testing should help us identify inequities in both education and society and show us all the necessary work we need to do to fulfill our mission. If testing helps us identify inequities, then we can work to solve for those. We do this by informing education policy, listening to the needs of educators and students and researching solutions.

As one of the world's preeminent non-profit specialists in educational research and assessment, ETS goes to great lengths to ensure its tests are as free from bias as possible, including following the highest technical standards for test quality and fairness, forming diverse teams to review test questions, training all employees, analyzing test responses using psychometric processes and eliminating test questions that seem to unfairly bias any particular group. While no measure can claim it is 100% free from bias, given its objectivity, research backing and rigorous process reviews, it's the least biased measure in the admissions process. Still, a test is a tool. And it's up to schools to interpret and use scores appropriately — always within the context of other information about an applicant, and never as the sole criteria for making an admissions decision. That's why we're also very vocal in our support of graduate programs adopting a holistic admissions process inclusive of GRE scores as a way to promote equity and diversity, and we have published a website, holisticadmissions.org, to help serve this purpose.

If Bryant's predictions are accurate, using testing as a core element of candidate evaluation is here to stay. But what those assessments measure, how they're presented to students and used by schools and what positive impact they can make are up to the future. And if conference topics are any indicator, there are many unresolved questions related to how GME proceeds as it relates to testing. As for Jay, he's not making any plans to leave GME anytime soon. With no end in sight to the pandemic, ongoing uncertainty in the political realm and the kickoff of the 2021 student recruitment cycle passed, we'll need support from wayfinders in the field, and Jay is just the navigator we turn to when we have questions about testing. ■

Focus on Collaboration:

GME Leaders Discuss Barriers and Opportunities Around Forming Beneficial Partnerships

In times of crisis we look to our peers to gain new insights into problems as they arise and to ease the burden of addressing these challenges head on. Traditionally, these partnerships have been one-dimensional since they typically focused on single issues and existed only for short periods of time. While helpful, they've rarely been transformative. In 2020, however, such collaborations are no longer adequate for the tasks of weathering the pandemic, navigating economic crises and getting to the root of systemic racism and bias in our institutions.

How can you form partnerships in the GME Community that are up to these generational challenges? To help answer that question, BusinessCAS recently convened a new focus group — as part of its Summer 2020 Series — that featured higher ed enrollment leaders from top programs sharing their unique perspectives and offering actionable solutions that institutions of all shapes and sizes can use to address today's most urgent needs.

To share the lessons learned, Liaison also created a new white paper based on this timely focus group discussion, called **"Focus on Collaboration: GME Leaders Discuss Barriers and Opportunities Around Forming Beneficial Partnerships."**

Read the full paper and reserve your seat for our next focus group at businesscas.org/gme-focus-group-resources.

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