

GME: TODAY & TOMORROW

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by LIAISON

Facing the Future Together

Those of us in the world of graduate management education (GME) often think of other institutions, and our peers who work at them, as competitors. Yet as the COVID-19 pandemic has made abundantly clear, we also share many of the same challenges, values and priorities. As a result, I think we should consider ourselves to be members of a single, supportive community that simultaneously benefits our individual schools and programs as well as GME as a whole.

GME Today & Tomorrow is a reflection of that belief. Although this is only our second issue, my colleagues on the BusinessCAS™ advisory board and I believe it is already helping us achieve our goal of sharing the insights we discuss among ourselves on a regular basis with other GME leaders. That, in turn, puts us all in a better position to contribute to the long-term success of the students, schools and professions we serve.

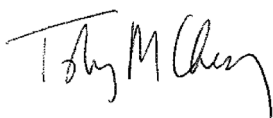
I believe the same can be said for BusinessCAS itself. As you may already know, BusinessCAS — the first and only Centralized Application Service (CAS™) for business programs — gives graduate management admissions offices a better way to recruit, enroll and admit best-fit students while saving money and better allocating staff resources each admissions cycle. Liaison's global platform for driving applicant volume while providing an optimized applicant experience benefits your admissions office by increasing your business programs' visibility, decreasing your time to decision and providing a wealth of data about enrollment trends and performance.

While the COVID-19 crisis has forced all of us to address unprecedented new questions about identifying and achieving our goals, it also reinforces one of my long-held beliefs: Sharing best practices — and using tools like BusinessCAS — is essential for the well-being of everyone in the world of GME, both today and tomorrow.

I hope you enjoy reading the articles in this issue of *GME Today & Tomorrow* and discover inspiring new ways of thinking about your most important class-building priorities. My article on page 4, for example, "Coronavirus' Implications for Higher Ed and Innovation — How China's Cancellation of GRE and GMAT Exams Could Impact U.S. Universities," explores a topic that we all care deeply about right now. Our editorial team would also love to hear your feedback and any suggestions you may have for future issues. 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

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What's the Future of GME Admissions? Four Experts Look Ahead

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How China's Cancellation of GRE and GMAT Exams Could Impact U.S. Universities

By Toby McChesney senior assistant dean of graduate business programs for the Leavey School of Business at Santa Clara University and chair of the BusinessCAS Advisory Board

While much discussion surrounding China's coronavirus outbreak has centered on the fallout for America's public health, trade relationships and corporate giants, the deep implications for higher education are also impossible to ignore.

China's cancellation of February's GRE and GMAT graduate entry exams portends a concerning outlook for international student enrollment in graduate programs. Although data released by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) this month shows increased graduate applications and enrollments at U.S. universities for the first time since fall 2016, the Graduate Management Admissions Council's (GMAC) most recent application trends report documents a steep 13.7% decline in international applications to American business programs from 2018 to 2019.

For as long as China's cancellation of standardized tests persists, business schools and all graduate programs will lose countless applicants from America's largest feeder country for international students. According to the latest Open Doors enrollment survey, the nearly 370,000 Chinese

students at U.S. institutions comprise 33.7% of America's total international students. That proportion is even more substantial at University of California, Berkeley, where China accounts for 40.4% of all international enrollment.

But why does international enrollment matter? Can domestic students not fill the same classroom seats vacated by their peers worldwide, including from China?

In actuality, international students must not be disregarded. NAFSA: Association of International Educators reports that international students studying at U.S. institutions contribute nearly \$41 billion to this nation's economy and support 458,290 jobs — including a \$6.8 billion economic contribution and 74,814 jobs in California alone. For every seven international students enrolled in America, three jobs are created and then supported by spending, which occurs in sectors such as higher education, accommodation, dining, retail, transportation, telecommunications and health insurance.

Further, international students embark on careers which meet America's fastest-growing occupational clusters at disproportionately high rates. The Open Doors survey reveals that 21.1% of international students are enrolled in engineering programs while 18.6% study math and science, aligning with rising demand in the U.S. workforce for STEM professionals.

The impact of threats to international enrollment is hardly limited to tangible factors. What cannot be measured is the vibrancy that our campuses, and by extension, their local and regional communities lose when they are deprived of diverse and global perspectives from China and elsewhere.

Not even the economic ramifications can be completely documented. With specialized knowledge in artificial intelligence and other high-tech areas increasingly representing a prerequisite for success in today's global economy, American businesses across industries depend on academic institutions to strengthen their talent pipeline with the highest-achieving students from around the world.

Accordingly, institutions like Santa Clara University are closely monitoring the coronavirus outbreak and taking steps to minimize its damage. Santa Clara's graduate business programs — which last year enrolled 50 new students from China — are working on a case-by-case basis to meet the needs of Chinese students who were unable to take February's graduate entrance exams, including by allowing them to apply late if needed. Meanwhile, Santa Clara's International Students & Scholars Department has communicated to all international students on campus that the institution will support them in any way possible during this challenging time.

Moving forward, colleges and universities can introduce a number of specific strategies to offset the impact of declining enrollment from China. These include developing closer relationships with local community colleges or smaller colleges that serve large numbers of international students; cultivating and/or subsidizing international student alumni networks, including by sponsoring events where alumni can interact with prospective international students; and expanding recruitment efforts in under-represented countries from an enrollment perspective, particularly Latin America and Africa. In fact, this month's CGS report documents the second consecutive year of substantial growth in graduate applications (11%) and first-time enrollments (22%) from sub-Saharan African students to U.S. graduate schools.

Even amid a confounding public health episode that often feels out of academic institutions' control, colleges and universities cannot afford to fall short in the quest to maintain robust international enrollment. Our campuses have an urgent responsibility first to understand the gravity of the coronavirus crisis, and subsequently, to implement creative solutions.

Originally published in *The Mercury News*





Are B-School Response Strategies Costing Institutions Applicants?

Findings of the 2019 Business School Inquiry Response Project

For a variety of reasons, many business graduate schools are now struggling to meet their enrollment goals. According to the Graduate Management Admissions Council's Application Trends Survey Report 2019, "The combined effect of weak international demand brought on in part by the political climate and a strong economy... contributed to more US programs reporting total application declines (56% of programs) than increases (37%)."

To help institutions determine how well they're responding to inquiries from potential applicants — and to gain insights into how they can do a better job of attracting students — Liaison

International recently conducted a project that involved submitting inquiry forms to 471 business schools and then tracking the schools' responsiveness to those inquiries. The goal was to find out how accessible business schools were to interested students requesting information, how fast they responded, how relevant their responses were and how many communication channels they used.

Among other findings, Liaison's 2019 Business School Inquiry Response Project revealed that academic institutions largely fail to meet basic standards of conducting business when it comes to their communication surrounding business programs.

By uncovering these trends in communications to potential applicants, Liaison was able to identify six best practices regarding inquiry forms and responses. Inquiry forms must be easy to find, user-friendly and mobile-ready. Responses must be dynamic, immediate, personalized and delivered through multiple channels.

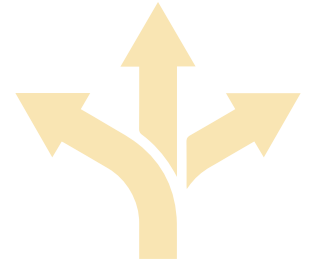
Including all six of those features in an inquiry response strategy will allow a school to clearly explain the benefits of its programs and develop a relationship with students based on meaningful information and communications — even before the application stage.

KEEP FORMS USER-FRIENDLY.

Make sure the RFI form makes a good first impression. Keep it short and ensure all of the information it contains is still accurate and up to date. Also, it's preferable not to require the student to create an account in order to access the form.

WHAT WE FOUND:

- **74 schools displayed outdated information** on their RFI.
- **76 schools had at least 10 required fields** on the RFI forms; the highest number of required fields was 21.



DELIVER THROUGH MULTIPLE CHANNELS.

Messages are more likely to reach long-term memory if repeated across multiple channels. Liaison has determined that adding digital to a search campaign with print and email can increase response by up to 200%.

WHAT WE FOUND:

- Only **7% of schools sent a print piece** within four weeks of a student inquiry.
- **75% of schools used email** during the inquiry process.
- Fewer than **3% used a microsite**.
- Only **2% of schools used three channels of communication**.

MAKE IT ALL PERSONAL.

Studies show a 135% increase in response when a mail piece is personalized with first name and up to a 500% increase in response rate when a piece is personalized with first name plus additional relevant information. It's crucial to show students the courtesy of using the personal information they have provided during every stage of the communication process.

WHAT WE FOUND:

- **59% used the potential applicant's name** plus at least one other relevant factor, which was usually the program of interest.
- **61 schools provided a generic response**.
- **18 used only the potential applicant's first name**.



MAKE SURE YOUR RFI FORM IS EASY.

Graduate school requires a substantial investment of time and money. In order to clearly explain the benefits of a program and develop a relationship based on meaningful information and communication — even before the application stage — prospective students must be able to effortlessly locate an RFI form.

WHAT WE FOUND:

- **77% of business schools had an RFI on their home page**; 14% were visible without scrolling.
- Researchers **could not locate RFIs for 16%** of the schools.
- **92% of schools had a link to an application**.

SEND A DYNAMIC "THANK YOU."

Someone who takes the time to fill out a form is eager to hear more about what that institution has to offer. Don't send a generic acknowledgement of their interest. Provide a dynamic, personalized response based on the information they were willing to submit.

WHAT WE FOUND:

- Nearly **62% of schools display a generic Thank You message** upon submitting the RFI.

BE FAST. BE FIRST.

No one wants to wait for information. Immediate response is key. In fact, one recent study of online students showed that 61% enrolled at the institution that contacted them first. Schools can't afford to take their time replying.

WHAT WE FOUND:

- Fewer than **3% provided an immediate response** with a personalized web page.
- Just **43% responded within one hour**.
- **38 schools did not respond** to a submitted form within four weeks.



6 Considerations for Moving Admissions Processes Online

How enrollment can benefit from the cloud

By Rick del Rosario, associate vice president of enrollment management solutions at Liaison International

The all-encompassing coronavirus crisis is causing professionals and institutions across industries to shift gears. My recent experience at the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) was no different.

After originally planning a presentation on general challenges in graduate school enrollment for that March event, my company's team instead led a session on disruption — a topic that is becoming more relevant by the day, as a growing number of colleges and universities cancel in-person classes and operations due to coronavirus concerns.

Given many higher education institutions' reliance on international enrollment and its associated tuition revenue — particularly from China, which accounts for 33.7% of America's international students, according to the latest [Open Doors enrollment survey](#) — the current pandemic demands a pivot. An effective new approach could entail not only a greater emphasis on online courses but also a move toward cloud-based processes in admissions.

Indeed, the days of the brick-and-mortar admissions office are seemingly on hiatus. What happens when no staffers are present in the office to review an application file that was in progress? Does that prospective student's application end right there? What does that mean for enrollment numbers and institutional revenue in the 2020-21 academic year?

Institutions can no longer afford delays in an increasingly competitive marketplace where students expect immediate and personalized responses. During the CSGS conference, I offered the following six insights:

- 1** Do not stop reviewing applications solely because the admissions office is closed. Although not every staff role in an admissions operation can be seamlessly transitioned to a remote work environment, cloud-based services can help institutions to process applications as well as to grow and shape enrollment without relying on paper.
- 2** With dwindling budgets and resources, admissions teams cannot afford to lose staff to extended sick leave, for instance. While they grapple with all facets of the coronavirus fallout, institutional staffers simply do not possess the time or resources to devote to manual application processing.
- 3** Going paperless in admissions can help alleviate institutions' administrative and technological costs.
- 4** Institutions can no longer afford delays in an increasingly competitive marketplace where students expect immediate and personalized responses.
- 5** Cloud-based application services can help boost enrollment by increasing schools' visibility and exposure among broader and more diverse applicant pools. While the coronavirus threatens the state of international enrollment, intensifying the recruitment of domestic applicants is important — whether that outreach focuses on out-of-state students, those living in more remote regions of an institution's own state or underserved populations.
- 6** Bolstering domestic enrollment means that despite the uncertainty surrounding international enrollment, institutions will have a better chance of maintaining their financial health.

Thoughtful and timely communication to applicants and accepted students is paramount, especially during a time of crisis. It is incumbent upon institutions to nurture applicants by ensuring that prospective students — not just enrolled students — know about any relevant developments surrounding the coronavirus on campus. Such transparency is not only a strategy to boost enrollment; it is simply the right thing to do.

If the coronavirus outbreak has taught the higher ed sector anything so far, it is to expect the unexpected for the foreseeable future. While campus operations continue to shut down for the remainder of this semester, institutions need to stay ahead of the curve by assuming that this public health crisis will also threaten next year's enrollment numbers. This is not pessimism; it is realism and practicality.

Admissions and enrollment efforts that prioritize efficiency as well as more sophisticated interaction with applicants can help institutions weather the coronavirus crisis.

Originally published by *University Business*

BUSINESSCAS™: A State of the Community

by LIAISON

BusinessCAS, the Liaison-powered Centralized Application Service (CAS) for business programs, serves as a single portal to apply to graduate management education programs. For participating programs, BusinessCAS streamlines application review.

Below you'll find a few key stats about the most recent BusinessCAS cycle.

**BUSINESSCAS
OPERATIONS TEAM
IS AVAILABLE**



of your peers are
advancing the GME
community as
members of the
**BUSINESSCAS
ADVISORY BOARD**



of applicants prefer
applying to GME
programs using
BusinessCAS instead
of applying to each
university separately.



16%

of BusinessCAS applicants are
Hispanic or African American

TOP 5 APPLICANTS BY COUNTRY:



TOP 5 APPLICANTS BY STATE:




Learn more about how your GME programs will benefit from BusinessCAS and find a full list of participating programs at businesscas.org.



The first and only Centralized Application Service (CAS) for business programs, BusinessCAS, brings graduate management admissions offices an improved way to recruit, enroll and admit best-fit students while saving money and better allocating staff resources each admissions cycle.

Explore how it works during this on-demand webinar.

 Watch it now at go.liaisonedu.com/see-businesscas-in-action

Award-Winning Educator Dr. Shannon Deer Named to BusinessCAS Advisory Board



As her institution, Texas A&M University, joins the BusinessCAS community, Dr. Deer will add her expertise to the preeminent solution for GME admissions and enrollment



Liaison International has announced the addition of Dr. Shannon Deer, assistant dean of graduate programs at Texas A&M University's Mays School of Business, to the BusinessCAS Advisory Board. Texas A&M joins the growing number of graduate management education (GME) programs turning to the Centralized Application Service (CAS) to drive applicant volume and elevate their entire admissions processes.

Dr. Deer has received numerous teaching accolades, including the Association of Former Students Distinguished Teaching Award, the Ernst & Young Teaching Excellence Award and the Baggett Teaching Award. She is also the author of the textbook, *Financial Accounting and Reporting* (CCH, 2012 and 2016).



Dr. Deer has been a true innovator in her role at the Mays School of Business,” said BusinessCAS Managing Director Robert Ruiz. “We look forward to incorporating her ideas and expertise as we continue to develop the platform and bring new institutions on board.



Image credit:
Texas A&M University | Mark Guerrero

“Business schools face unprecedented challenges as changes throughout the world are felt across every institution,” said Dr. Deer. “BusinessCAS is one of the most effective tools we have for attracting and enrolling the next generation of leaders and thinkers, and I’m honored to have the opportunity to share my knowledge and experience with the team.”

With a background in the energy sector, Dr. Deer has been instrumental in designing energy finance, accounting and modeling courses for undergraduate and MBA students. Known as an outside-the-box thinker in her discipline, she has incorporated bootcamps and online programs to complement her institution’s more traditional course offerings.

“Dr. Deer has been a true innovator in her role at the Mays School of Business,” said BusinessCAS Managing Director Robert Ruiz. “We look forward to incorporating her ideas and expertise as we continue to develop the platform and bring new institutions on board.”

Further, Dr. Deer has long been an enthusiastic advocate for connecting young learners with leaders in the fields of business and energy. For 10 years, she organized the annual Halliburton Energy Case Competition, in which students were given the opportunity to participate in high-impact learning experiences with the company’s senior employees.

“As we look for new ways to support business schools’ efforts to extend their reach and recruit the best students available, voices like Dr. Deer’s are essential to the conversation,” said Santa Clara University’s Senior Assistant Dean of Graduate Business Programs Toby McChesney, who serves as the BusinessCAS Advisory Board chair.

Launched in 2017, BusinessCAS has helped dozens of GME programs achieve their goals. To learn more about how BusinessCAS can help your institution recruit, enroll and admit best-fit students while saving money and better allocating staff resources, visit businesscas.org.



MAKING SENSE OF PART-TIME AND ONLINE MBA ENROLLMENT TRENDS

FIRST THE GOOD NEWS:

Enrollment in online MBA programs has been on the rise in recent years, creating new opportunities for business schools and programs to benefit from a growing marketplace.

NOW THE LESS-ENCOURAGING NEWS:

That growth appears to be coming at the expense of traditional part-time MBA programs, many of which are now experiencing lower application volumes and enrollment. What does the data say about the future of your program? Are you adjusting accordingly?

DIGGING DEEPER

To help find answers, Liaison International gathered deans and program directors from three business schools to share their insights and best practices regarding:

- ✔ How data can drive decisions for individual institutions striving to attract applicants in specific markets or in different geographic locations.
- ✔ How to make sense of recent changes in applications across applicant categories.
- ✔ How they are adapting to better manage enrollment at their own institutions in response to current trends.
- ✔ How the waiver of GMAT and GRE scores may limit the ability of some data to tell the full story about trends in different types of MBA programs.



“For most programs and schools, there just simply aren’t enough resources to do everything you might want to do,” says Dee Steinle, executive director of MBA and MSB Programs at the University of Kansas School of Business and vice chair of Liaison’s BusinessCAS Advisory Board. “You have to be efficient about what choices you make and what programs you feed. So we began to look at not only what was happening in our own program, but also what was happening across programs in the industry. When we went back and looked at the data, we found some pretty interesting trends.”

WHAT’S THE STORY?

Monica Powell, senior associate dean and graduate dean at the University of Texas at Dallas Naveen Jindal School of Management, believes it’s also important to think about communicating your institution’s brand.

“I think the more that you can do to tell the story of your school and your program and your differentiation in the market, the greater chance you’re going to have of identifying the students who will be happy and satisfied there,” she says.

To hear the entire conversation, download Liaison’s free on-demand webinar, “Part-Time MBA and Online MBA Trends: What’s Changing, Who’s Being Innovative and What’s Happening in the Future?” It’s available at bit.ly/pt-and-online-mba.

COVID-19 Has Made It Clear That You Must Move Your GME admissions Office Online. Here's How To Do It.

By Robert Ruiz
Managing Director of BusinessCAS

My thoughts are with everyone impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, and I want to wish all of you good health in the days ahead. I've been amazed at the outpouring of kindness, collaboration and creativity I've seen within our community, from brave healthcare workers risking their own health to save lives, to my colleagues and neighbors sheltering in place in order to help flatten the curve and minimize the reach of this virus.

Though of course our priorities as a country are elsewhere at the moment, I also recognize how important it is for higher education institutions to continue to serve students. With that in mind, a team-wide effort has made it possible for Liaison's [BusinessCAS](#) to continue providing uninterrupted service during this challenging time. Every facet of our lives and work has been upended by the pandemic, and I want you all to know that we stand ready to help.

According to a recent [survey](#), 88% of college and university presidents worry that COVID-19 will cause a decline in future enrollment. While the safety and health of our team and our partners is paramount, the ability to continue to serve your students and applicants is increasingly important. With weeks — or months — still between us and a “return to normalcy,” we can't afford to wait when it comes to adapting and evolving business school admissions to the current reality.

As your institution's enrollment processes change, BusinessCAS will provide you with the tools your school needs to make this transition quickly and effectively while positioning yourself for continued success down the road — all at no cost to your institution.

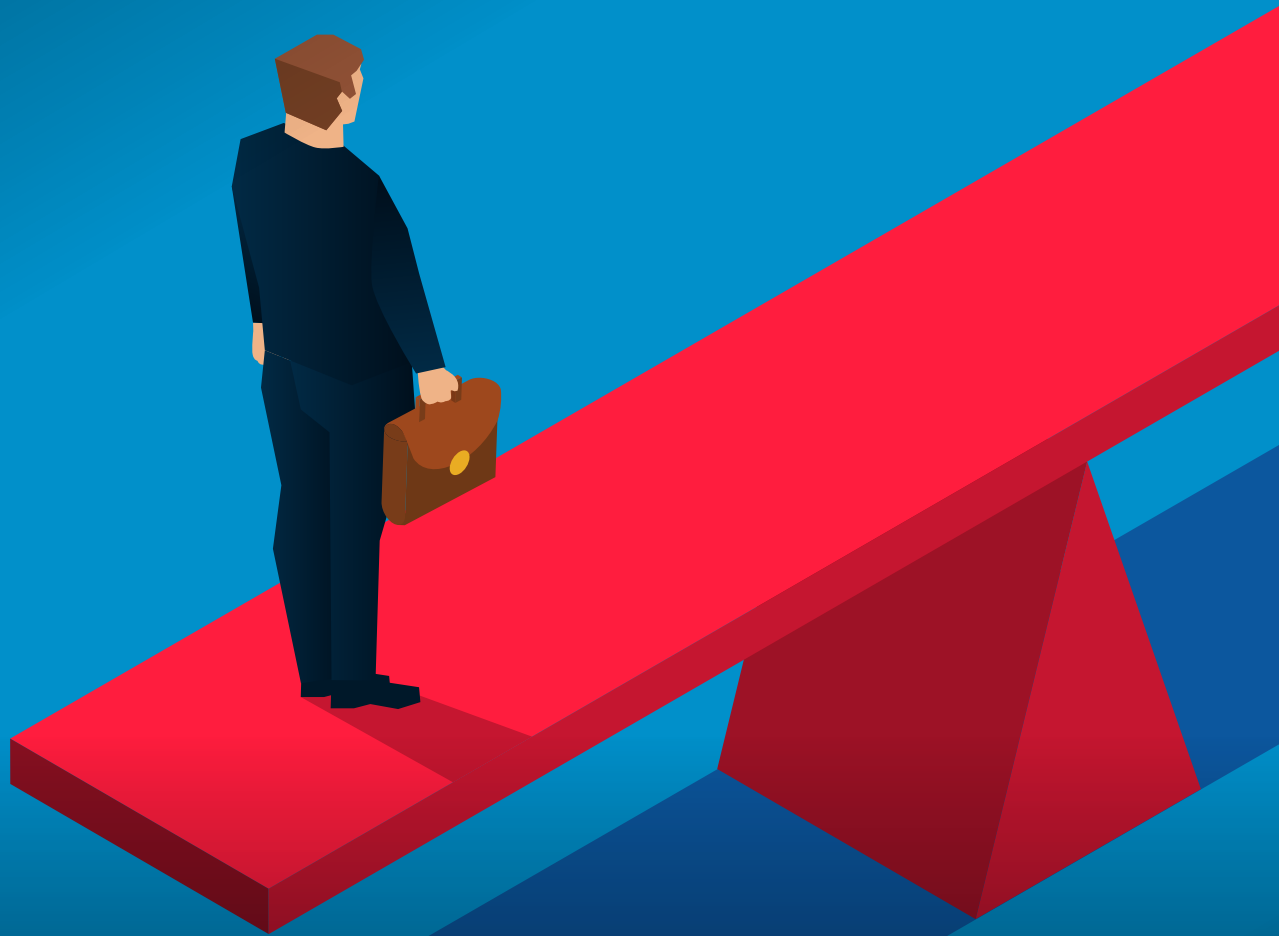
BusinessCAS will help you outsource your effort while retaining the control and decision-making that makes your programs unique. As members of your team navigate the new challenges of working remotely, homeschooling children and caring for loved ones, BusinessCAS can pick up the slack so that everyone may focus on the most important aspects of their job: enrolling the best students into your programs.

Since the pandemic began, our team has worked tirelessly to provide transcript and document scanning, test score verifications, international evaluations, automated communications and customer service. While this has been helpful for the students and admissions officers scrambling to complete and process applications within the new framework of social distancing, the challenges for marketing and recruiting new applicants for the coming academic year may be even greater. Through BusinessCAS, you'll gain exposure to a much larger pool of prospective students, enabling you to broaden your reach and target best-fit students to fill your next class.

Take a look at [Liaison's Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resources for Admissions Offices](#), and then email me (rruiz@liaisonedu.com) to schedule a call when you're ready to take control of your school's admissions in these uncertain times. With just a few minutes of your time, I can show you how BusinessCAS can give your programs a global platform that's helped other institutions experience a 49% increase in applications and a 26% increase in matriculants.



From Business Schools To Boardrooms,





On this year's International Women's Day, I vividly recall the life-changing advice I once received about the delicate balance between career ambition and family.

Could I have a child and still climb the corporate ladder? What if I became pregnant during the interview process?

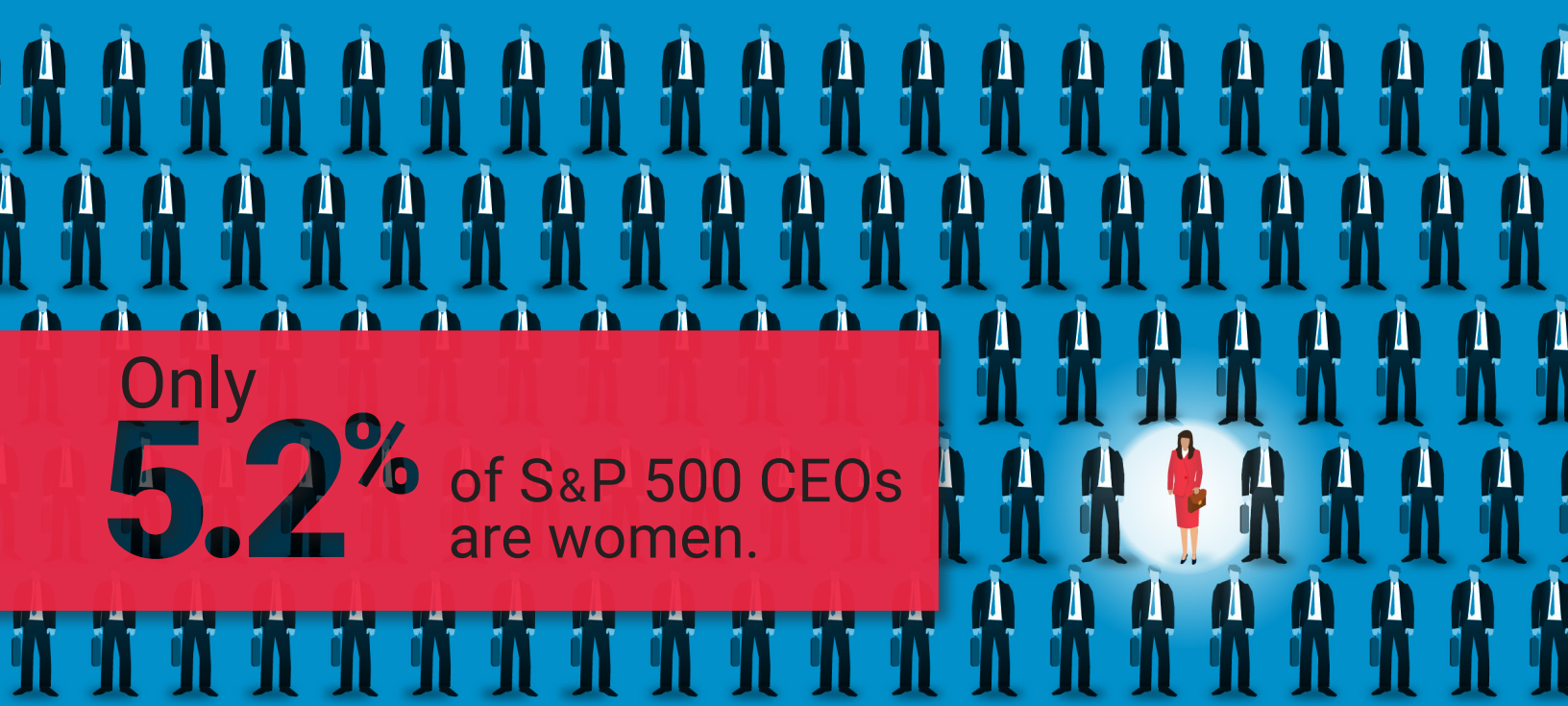
My former manager at IBM encouraged me to flip the script: What if I first got the promotion and then became pregnant? Would my career advancement come to a grinding halt? No. I would keep forging ahead.

In my 14 years there, [IBM consistently justified its usual place at the top of rankings of the best companies for women executives](#). I was surrounded by strong female role models across the company and worked with men who routinely supported women at all levels of their careers.

Regrettably, [that is not the case throughout the workforce, where only 5.2 percent of S&P 500 CEOs are women](#). As Chief Enrollment Officer at the University at Buffalo School of Management, I can say that the business school community is doing its part to effect change. As leaders, we aspire to see the day when rising women's enrollment in MBA classrooms serves a precursor to greater female leadership in corporate boardrooms. →

A Proactive Approach Will Advance Gender Equity

By Erin K. O'Brien, assistant dean and chief enrollment officer for the University at Buffalo School of Management and a member of Liaison's BusinessCAS Advisory Board



Only
5.2% of S&P 500 CEOs
are women.

According to the Forté Foundation, women now account for 39 percent of full-time MBA students in the U.S. and 36 percent outside of America. Yet while men receive an average of 2.3 promotions after completing their MBA program, women receive 1.8. Men have an average of 3.3 employees reporting to them, and women have 1.8.

Progress will not occur without action. Just as I proactively sought out advice on work-life balance from my former manager at IBM, business schools need to intentionally brainstorm and execute strategies around women's empowerment if they wish to play a leading role in creating a more equitable workplace.

This means building campus infrastructure that ensures women are welcome, valued and heard. It also involves placing the priority of countering gender and diversity inequity at the forefront of the business school mission. Some specific steps could include:

Appointing a senior leader for diversity and inclusion. With a visible leader, conversations and ultimately policy changes around gender equity actually take place. In any organization and especially in business schools, change occurs because stakeholders such as applicants and current students demand that change—through enrollment or through voicing their concerns.

Engaging with external diversity organizations. When the University at Buffalo School of Management sought to increase enrollment from veterans, we knew we could not accomplish that alone. We partnered with veterans' organizations and employers, joining forces to make a much stronger statement than we each would have made in isolation. The same model should be implemented for goals pertaining to diversity and equity.

Increasing the representation of women in business case studies and other course materials. As Colleen Ammerman—director of the Gender Initiative at [Harvard Business School](#)—has said, case studies “send a broader message about what leadership looks like.” When the leader archetype is very narrowly defined, it not only hinders the ability of students who don't share those characteristics to identify with the protagonist, it also reinforces stereotypes about who ‘real leaders’ are.

Accommodating mid-career and nontraditional students who face complex life decisions. [Deloitte has found](#) that 40 percent of the U.S. population believes it is impossible to succeed at work and have a balanced family life. Business schools can change that narrative by expanding part-time and online program options.

The University at Buffalo School of Management is making a concerted effort to contribute to this paradigm shift, including prioritizing the hiring of women as instructors, incorporating diversity and inclusion elements into courses, choosing gender-neutral names for classroom exercises and appointing a diversity and inclusion officer who teaches in all four of our core business school programs. We also bring experiential learning and volunteer opportunities to campus in partnership with organizations like [Stitch Buffalo](#), a group that advances social justice for refugee women through textile arts.

Gradually, but effectively, our business school and others nationwide are using their campuses as influential vehicles for women's empowerment. On this International Women's Day, leaders across academia and industry should remember that while they alone cannot solve the dilemma of gender inequity, they also must not sit by and wait for it to be solved by someone else. ■

Originally published in *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*



How the Integration GMAC's Common Letter of Recommendation into BusinessCAS Enhanced the Reviewer Experience

For more than a year now, graduate management education (GME) programs that are members of Liaison International's BusinessCAS — the Centralized Application Service (CAS) for GME programs — have been able to make the recommendation component of their application more consistent through the Graduate Management Admission Council's Common Letter of Recommendation (LOR).

To address redundancies and introduce more efficiency to the GME application process, GMAC's Common LOR replaced the need for applicants, recommenders and reviewers to manage multiple ad hoc recommendation forms. Business schools that accept the Common LOR leverage a common set of questions that facilitates a more holistic review of applicants.

"The Common LOR simplifies the business school application process and reduces the workload for candidates and their recommenders," said Joy Jones, chief product officer at GMAC. "We're excited that Liaison decided to adopt the Common LOR into its BusinessCAS offering."

Through integrating the Common LOR into BusinessCAS, Liaison enhances the experience for reviewers of applicants with a digitized, reader-friendly PDF output. The result is a streamlined recommendation process that provides deeper insight into a candidate's capabilities.

"When our GMAC Application Process Advisory Group began discussions about simplifying the GME, we knew we wanted to eventually get to a place where all of the components of this process were simplified. Based on our resources, we started on what we saw as one of the core pieces: the recommendation form," said Dee Steinle, executive director of MBA and MSB programs at the University of Kansas School of Business and vice chair of the BusinessCAS advisory board.

“Bringing together the Common LOR and BusinessCAS truly took us to the next level of evaluating leadership potential, character and quality of candidates, helping us to build a diverse workforce of innovative, forward-thinking leaders.”

In addition to simplifying the recommendation process, BusinessCAS further benefits participating schools and programs by adding them to a global GME marketplace and:

- + Driving awareness of business programs through a streamlined application process and communication tools that enable targeted, personalized communications to prospective students.
- + Decreasing time to decision by providing a processing team to scan transcripts and package application components as an extension of staff.
- + Providing insight into enrollment trends and performance on campus and within GME through robust analytics and reporting tools.

BusinessCAS benefits applicants by:

- + Offering a modern application experience that guides them through the application process.
- + Streamlining the process for those researching and applying to multiple programs of interest.
- + Providing 24/7 access to real-time application status updates.



Graduate Management Programs Realize Unexpected Benefits With BusinessCAS

When Kansas State University decided to sign on with Liaison's BusinessCAS™ in 2018, Dee Steinle, executive director of MBA and MSB Programs, expected efficiencies in the processing of applications and time to decision. But to her surprise, KU also enjoyed a 50% increase in applications within one month of implementation.

"I'm personally excited about what this means for my institution, and I'm thrilled about the overall momentum of the BusinessCAS initiative!"

Loubna Bouamane, former director of Admissions at University of Miami's Business School, likewise saw a rise in applicants:

“Even before we redirected our official application to BusinessCAS, we had new applications coming through organically just because the Miami Business School was listed in this central directory for graduate management education programs. I knew we'd get exposure to a whole new pool of applicants who hadn't considered our programs before when we joined BusinessCAS, but I didn't realize it would happen that quickly. Excited about being part of this initiative!”

Over the last two decades, Liaison has launched over 40 Centralized Application Services (CAS) for graduate programs to optimize the admissions process for all stakeholders. BusinessCAS offers graduate management admissions offices access to this improved way to recruit, admit and enroll best fit students while saving time, money and headcount in the process.

Simplifying the Holistic Admissions Process

By its very nature, the holistic admissions process adapted by most GME programs today is time and document intensive. Collecting transcripts and test scores, reading essays and recommendations, getting faculty input and tying it all together to make admissions decisions can be a lengthy process. Adding to that pressure, applicants often pick the program that admits them first. So a program that's slow to process applicants may miss out on best-fit candidates.

With a CAS, the holistic admissions process can be streamlined. Professional graduate schools that have implemented CASs for programs such as engineering and health sciences have reported a reduction in the application review process from 8 days to 1.5 days and a 69% decrease in time to make admissions decisions. An additional benefit of a CAS is the ease of access among constituents reviewing applicants. In particular, time-strapped faculty can review candidates at the touch of a button, review and make recommendations or input ratings that are automatically captured in the system.

Creating an Audit Trail

Another issue that can hinder the holistic admissions process is determining evaluation criteria. While test scores and GPAs are easy to quantify, personal attributes, work experience and recommendations are less so. Couple those with socio-economic background and other factors and measurement becomes even harder. In order to ensure an equitable, standardized review process, a uniform set of criteria or rubrics must be developed.

Here again, BusinessCAS can offer a solution. A set of agreed upon rubrics can be loaded into the platform to ensure uniformity of evaluations by admissions staff, faculty and administrators alike. Moreover, an audit trail is created throughout the process, which can be obtained in cases of disputes, internal inquiries or requests from accreditation agencies.



Future Returns

While GME programs that have implemented BusinessCAS cite immediate benefits, the data captured within the platform offers long-term benefits as well. GME programs that have adopted the platform have mentioned being able to see what feeder colleges applicants are coming from, which has been helpful in their recruitment efforts. Others mention they can see if they are meeting or falling short of their diversity goals and make adjustments as needed. Such a feedback loop can help refine admissions criteria and practices as well as curriculum offerings.

With so many moving parts to juggle in today's GME admissions process, why not see what advantages BusinessCAS can bring to your program? To learn more about how BusinessCAS can facilitate your holistic admissions process and provide exposure to a broader applicant pool, download our white paper *Simplifying Business School Admissions* at go.liaisonedu.com/Simplifying-Business-School-Admissions.

Regardless of your graduate management education (GME) program's unique qualities, there's no denying that we're living in a time of radical change in the world of GME admissions.

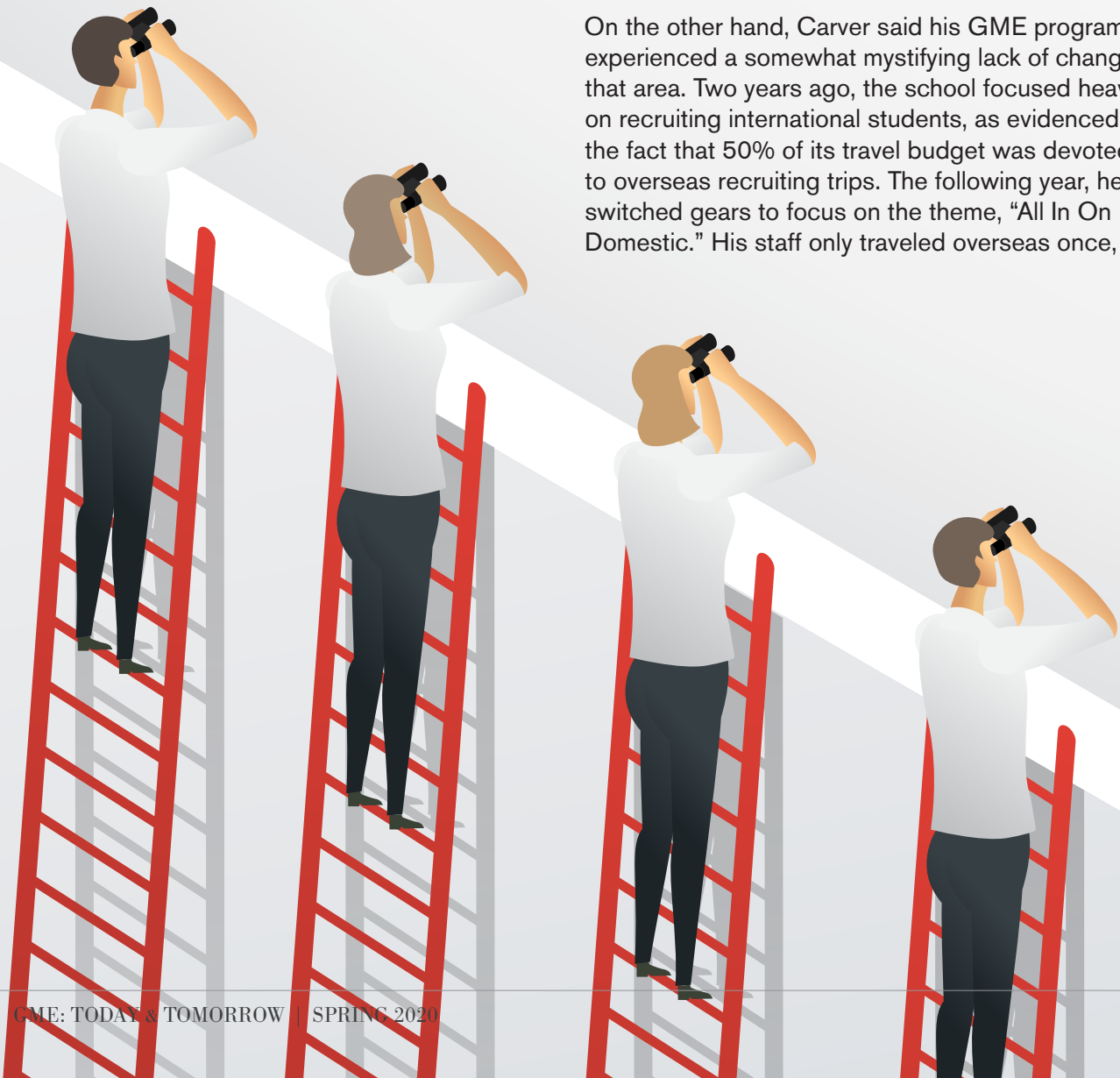
In order to spark discussion about the challenges ahead and inspire new approaches for overcoming them, Liaison International recently hosted a roundtable forum featuring several GME experts.

The forum was moderated by Robert Ruiz, Managing Director of BusinessCAS. Below are just a few of the factors the group identified as key drivers of today's evolving GME environment.

UNPREDICTABLE INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION TRENDS

It would be a mistake to assume that every GME program shares the same concerns about international applications. For example, international students accounted for 50% of the University of Kansas GME applicant pool in 2015, according to Steinle. By 2018, that figure had dropped to just 11%.

On the other hand, Carver said his GME program had experienced a somewhat mystifying lack of change in that area. Two years ago, the school focused heavily on recruiting international students, as evidenced by the fact that 50% of its travel budget was devoted to overseas recruiting trips. The following year, he switched gears to focus on the theme, "All In On Domestic." His staff only traveled overseas once,



What's the Future of GME Admissions? Four Experts Look Ahead

focusing instead on U.S. recruiting fairs. The result? There was almost no change in the percentage of domestic or international applications either year.

Carver concluded that, "Graduate fair ROI is very low and diminishing. Now we need to ask whether we should be doing any of these at all. It's not how students want to be recruited anymore. But do we focus instead on digital strategies, knowing we're not yet as good as we'd like to be? How do we transition?"

FEWER RESOURCES IN ADMISSIONS OFFICES

When McChesney pointed to "declining human capital" in GME admissions offices as one of his key concerns, the sentiment was quickly echoed by other forum participants. Strategies he's embraced to counter the challenge of "doing more with less" include hosting more information sessions, coffee chats, webinars and Facebook Live events. He has also pushed for additional staff. And he decided to join BusinessCAS, Liaison's online recruitment, admissions and data

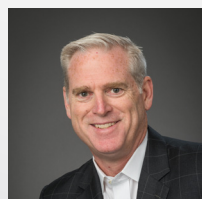
management portal. "It's been fascinating," he says of his experience with BusinessCAS. "My team at Liaison really hit the ground running."

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MARKETPLACE AND THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMY

"There are simply too many GME options out there today," Powell said. "It creates incredible confusion in the marketplace."

But that's not Powell's only concern. She also worries that the public perceives the MBA brand as "outdated" and that fewer potential applicants appreciate the value of an MBA. A strong domestic economy and lower unemployment also mean that the appeal of going back to (or staying in) school may have diminished, she added. "So how do you create and promote change on campus?" Liaison's Ruiz asked the group. Listening to the discussion that followed should be a top priority of every GME admissions professional in the country. Watch the on-demand version at bit.ly/future-of-gme-admissions. ■

PANEL MEMBERS INCLUDED:



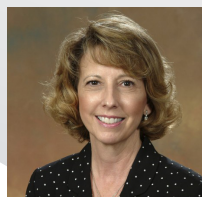
SHAUN CARVER

*Former Assistant Dean,
Graduate Programs*



DEE STEINLE

*Executive Director of MBA
and MSB Programs*



MONICA POWELL

*Senior Associate Dean
and Graduate Dean*



TOBY MCCHESENEY

*Senior Assistant Dean of
Graduate Programs*



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