

## **STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR GLOBALIZING MBA PROGRAMS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Recent research suggests that Master of Business Administration [MBA] prestige is defined by the degree to which graduates master international business. This paper explores how 56 of the most popular MBA programs have adopted international management into their curricular offerings. Comparing global focus to tuition costs revealed four distinct types: elite, parochial, economic, and progressive MBA programs. Implications also are discussed.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Business education should prepare students with the skills necessary to succeed in the global marketplace (Baruch, 2009; Kelan & Jones, 2009; Middleton, 2010; Seligman, 2001). As U.S. corporations continue to expand globally, the demand for cross-culturally competent job candidates grows. The U.S. needs professionals who are trained in the languages and cultures of international trading partners (Broughton, 2010). Global awareness has emerged as one of the most attractive and marketable features of an MBA program (Byrne, 2006; Chestnut, 2010; Gopalan, Pagiavlas, & Jones, 2008; Hatfield, 2010; Maich, 2009; Pilarte & Sapp, 2006). This paper explores the various strategies business schools are pursuing to realize that goal (Kathawala, Abdou, & Elmuti, 2002).

The markets that business schools are operating in are continually changing and becoming more challenging (Ivy, 2008; Thiede, 2008; Wipperfurth, 2001). To keep pace, schools must offer a dynamic yet concise program so that their graduates are ready for the future (Porter, 2008). One dimension of such programs involves international management skills. In a survey of managers, about half of the survey respondents said they are seeking MBA graduates with more global experience (Alsop, 2010; Finley, Taylor, & Warren, 2007; Randolph & Nielsen, 2008). Developing an awareness of diverse management styles, ethical values, and communication styles in the context of complex international systems is necessary to succeed in cross-cultural ventures (Bisoux, 2005; Bonvissuto, 2004; Gabriel & Griffiths, 2008; McGee & Festervand,

2002; Seybolt, 2004; Statland de Lopez, 2001; Tuleja, 2008). A recent *Wall Street Journal* analysis of MBA programs used "global mindset" as one of two primary criteria in its rankings:

Global Mindset: About half of the survey respondents said they are seeking MBA graduates with more global experience, but only about 20% are recruiting more often at schools outside the U.S. to find such students. Nevertheless, three European schools -- Insead, London Business School and IMD -- are among the MBA programs that recruiters rated as most outstanding for teaching international business. (Alsop, 2010, p. 1)

In addition, the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business MBA program states:

At Wharton, learning is something you *do*. You actively engage in the challenges of today's global business with analytical, rigorous thinking. You learn how to make decisions, reason strategically, and understand all the dimensions of a business problem. (Wharton MBA, 2010)

While the general goal of going global has been uniformly accepted by major business schools, the nature of their responses is quite varied (Czinkota, Grossman, Javalgi, & Nugent, 2009; Gopalan, Stitts, & Herring III, 2006; Kathawala, Abdou, & Elmuti, 2002; Kelly, 2009; Liang & Lin, 2008; Pimpa, 2009; Schaur & Watts, 2010; Shahaida, Rajashekar, & Nargundkar, 2009; Tanova, Karatas-Ozkan, & Inal, 2008). This paper develops an empirically based conceptual model to explore these differences.

## METHODOLOGY

Using a population of the most popular MBA programs, as defined by Internet hits on FindMBA.com, a random sample of 25% (56 MBA programs) was selected, and explored to determine the extent they incorporated international business into their curricula. According to Pritzwalks Limited (2007), there are 728 MBA programs in the U.S. and 363 in Europe, and data was collected from approximately 56 or 5% of the schools listed. A larger sampling of the schools in both the U.S. and Europe were originally selected however many of the schools either did not list sufficient website information or were not written in English. Data was collected on:

- Yearly tuition costs
- Global involvement (entire program/major/concentration)
- Global or international business classes (frequency; offered versus required)
- Global/international emphasis in website public relations material

A global focus score was computed for each institution. If global offerings were required of all students, rather than being merely elective options some students could choose to opt out of, they received higher global focus scores. Point values were assigned accordingly:

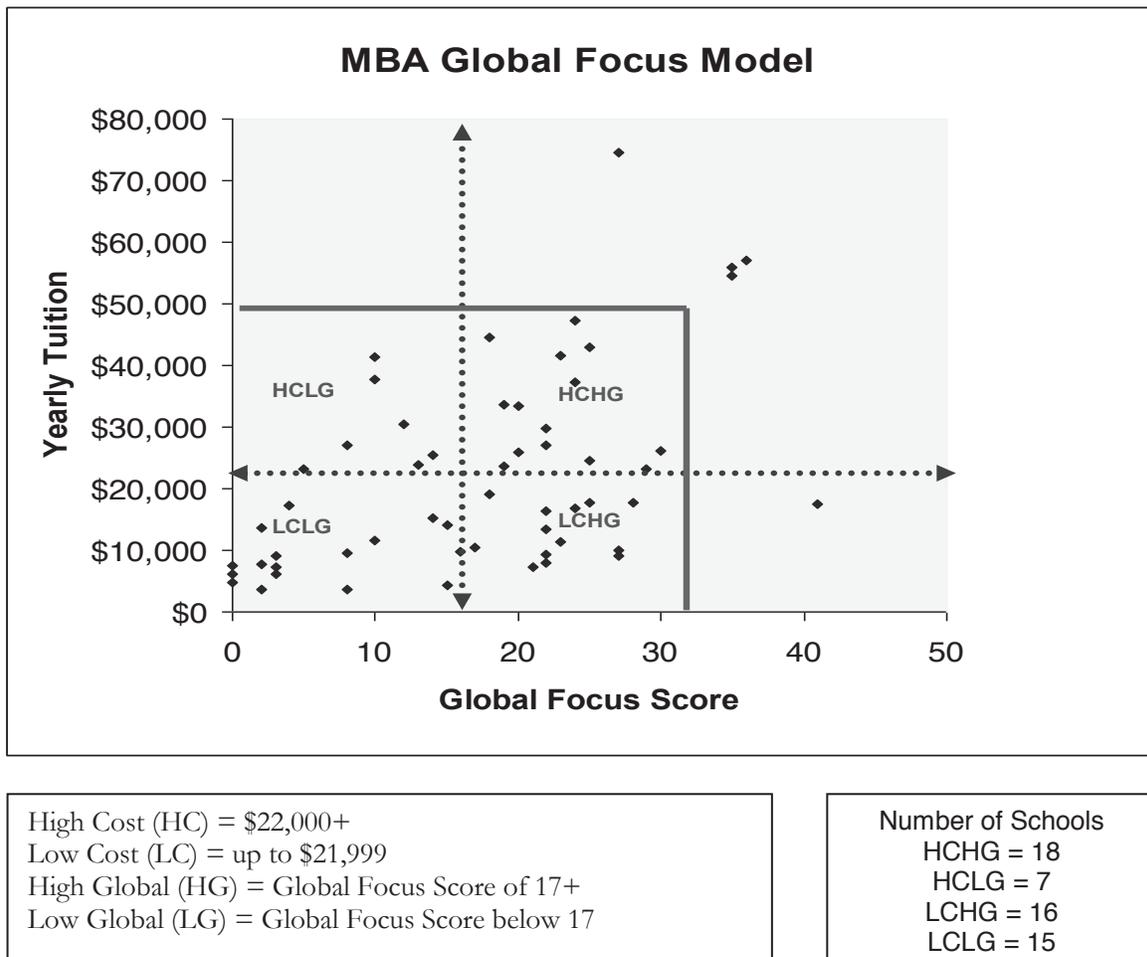
- Foreign language offerings (1 point)
- Foreign language requirements (10 points)
- Study abroad opportunities (3 points)

- Study abroad requirements (10 points)
- International internship opportunities (5 points)
- International internship requirements (10 points)

For a complete listing of the institutions analyzed, see Appendix 1.

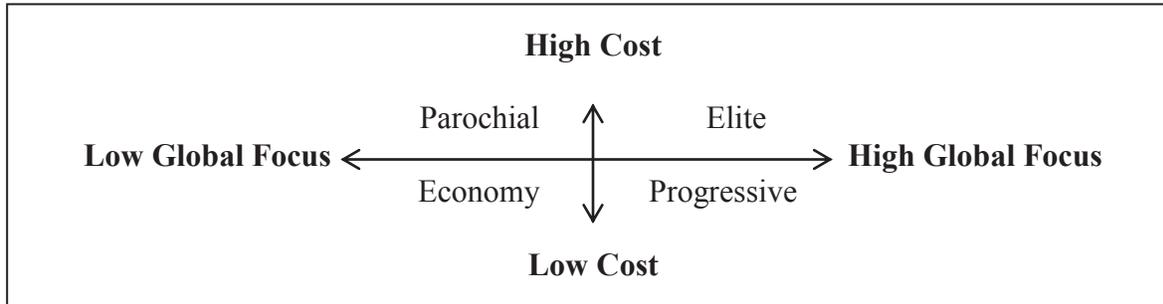
## GLOBAL MBA STRATEGIC POSITIONING

The level of commitment to preparing students to succeed in the global market varies greatly among MBA programs (Cotner, Jones, & Kashlak, 2003; Paucar-Caceres, 2008; Steagall, Michelman, & Traynham, 2004). Tuition costs at business schools also vary greatly, although high tuition costs do not necessarily indicate a greater global focus in curriculum and international study opportunities. This following scatter diagram revealed natural clusters of programs emerging with tuition on the y axis and the global focus score (GFS) on the x axis. This revealed a concentration of data within a yearly tuition range up to approximately \$50,000 and global focus score up to 30. This diagram is presented in Figure 1:



**FIGURE 1. GLOBAL FOCUS VERSUS COST**

The MBA Global Strategies Model (GSM) identifies four global strategies: high cost/low global focus, high cost/high global focus, low cost/low global focus and low cost/high global focus. The GSM is summarized in Figure 2:



**FIGURE 2. MBA GLOBAL STRATEGIES MODEL**

**Parochial: High Cost/Low Global Focus**

Parochial schools offer a limited global focus in their curriculum. They focus on local and regional business needs. Generally, students who consider these schools are more willing to pay top dollar for an education from a well established school, but do not understand or value the need to develop a global mindset through their education.

Seven or approximately 13% of the 56 business schools researched fall into this quadrant. Yearly tuition costs range from \$22,000 and up and the global focus scores are less than 17. Within this group are the more traditional and conventional MBA programs such as Boston College, Syracuse University and Vanderbilt University. The core competencies of these business schools reflect a history of tradition and excellence, are well recognized in their regions, and focus primarily on the U.S. business structure. Like Boston College - Carroll School of Management, their distinguishing factors are “a rigorous, challenging curriculum and an extraordinary spirit of community reflected in a shared understanding of our core values” (Boston College, 2010, p. 1). Their core values include promoting the highest standards of honesty and integrity to ensure that all members of the community recognize the benefits of living those ideals and to guarantee that academic performance is evaluated reliably and rewarded fairly. They strive to create an environment where students can pursue the highest level of academic performance and personal development for themselves and their community. The Carroll School offers one elective international business course involving some international travel (Boston College, 2010).

**Elite: High Cost/High Global Focus**

The schools in this quadrant offer a variety of courses with a global perspective, study abroad opportunities, foreign languages and international internships (see Appendix A). The MBA programs are focused on providing a world class education so that, upon graduating, the student will be better prepared for the global market. Students will have a greater understanding of international business and the skills needed to be successful when working with different cultures. They offer a full range of international business experiences, from a full range of

international courses to internships to study abroad experiences with foreign business school partners.

Eighteen or approximately 32% of the 56 business schools researched fall into the high cost/high global focus (HCHG) quadrant. Yearly tuition costs range from \$22,000 and up and the global focus scores are greater than 16. Within this group are business schools like Yale, Dartmouth, and ESADE in Spain that have a high commitment to preparing students for global business. Like the Yale School of Management's MBA mission to educate global leaders for business and society, they "provide a rigorous training in fundamental skills as a foundation to help students develop meaningful aspirations" and are "infused with a restless ambition - a willingness to think creatively and take risks in order to improve the world" (Yale School of Management, 2010, p. 1).

The schools in this quadrant offer a variety of courses with a global perspective, study abroad opportunities, foreign languages and international internships. These MBA programs are focused on providing a world class education so that, upon graduating, the student will be better prepared for the global market. Students will have a greater understanding of international business and the skills needed to be successful when working with different cultures.

#### **Economy: Low Cost/Low Global Focus**

Economy providers build basic, affordably priced and convenient MBA programs for a culturally diverse student body. Often public institutions, their mission focuses on an accessible, affordable, quality education. A majority of their students are non-traditional: transfers, working, older, commuters. This type of program meets the needs and perceptions of the students and community while making it difficult for other educational institutions to deliver the same quality education at such an affordable price. However, the income and lifestyle limitations of non-traditional students seriously constrain the feasibility of many international options, such as overseas internships. These schools have made the strategic choice of favoring access and convenience over international experience.

Fifteen (or 27%) of the 56 business schools fall into the category of low cost/low global focus. Yearly tuition costs are below \$22,000 and the global focus scores are less than 17. The MBA programs in this quadrant are economical and efficient. They tend to offer a consolidated, comprehensive, standardized general program whose goal is to provide each student with a relatively uniform educational experience involving a critical foundation of important skills and concepts.

#### **Progressive: Low Cost/High Global Focus**

Schools in this quadrant provide affordable, low cost programs with a high global focus which gives them a sustainable competitive advantage over all other quadrants and Southern Connecticut State University. They offer a variety of globally focused courses, study abroad opportunities, international internships, and in some programs, an international concentration or an international MBA program.

Sixteen (or 28%) of the 56 business schools fall into the category of low cost/high global focus. Yearly tuition costs are below \$22,000 and their global focus scores are greater than 16. For example, University of Texas at San Antonio (2010), a low cost, high global focus school (GFS=21), with an MBA tuition of \$7,268, excels in their international and exchange programs. They are dedicated to creating, applying and sharing knowledge that translates theory to practice; combines rigor with relevance; and provides innovative solutions to global business challenges. For students wishing to work in Latin or South America, UTSA is a university of choice.

## COMPARATIVE MBA EDUCATION

European business schools are decidedly more international (Davie, 2010; Paliwoda & Librowica, 2007; Paucar-Caceres, 2008; Schaur & Watts, 2010; Thiede, 2003). Foreign language fluency and in-program international work experiences are required for graduation.

According to both corporate and academic respondents, U.S. colleges and universities are turning out job candidates with high levels of domain knowledge. But with respect to cross-cultural competence, job candidates are much less well prepared. They are unlikely to understand the international dimensions of their major academic field and many have not had exposure to other cultures and languages. Compared to international students, our respondents believed U.S. students to be at serious competitive disadvantage in the global labor market. (Bikson & Law 1994, pp. 65-66)

In 2007, Antunes and Thomas studied the differences between European and U.S. models of business education. They concluded that although some elements of European business schools are borrowed from the homogeneous U.S.-style model, European schools focus on reflective, integrative learning and offer a greater sensitivity to international relations. European models have adapted to the institutional frameworks and the many different languages, cultures and regulations that exist across Europe (Middleton, 2010; Parry & Wharton, 2007; Randolph & Nielsen, 2008; Sisco & Reinhard, 2007). Differences between the American and European models are summarized in Table 1 (adapted from Antunes & Thomas, 2007).

As U.S. corporations continue to expand globally, the demand for cross-culturally competent U.S. job candidates grows. Management on both sides of a relationship should be aware of their counterparts' differences in philosophy. In particular, managers of U.S. companies have been slow to perceive a need to consider cultural differences (Tung & Miller, 1990). Adler and Graham (1989) note that undesirable outcomes at the negotiation table are often the result of cross-cultural communication problems. Two different cultures can have very different ideas about what constitutes a working relationship (Volkert, 2007). As more business leaders are recognizing this need there will be continuous movement among U.S. schools of business toward developing international business programs and requiring language competence, since this is already standard in Europe (Schorr, 2000). In response to a report published in 2003 by the European Commission on the impact of workforce diversity policies on European business, Wolfgang Wagner (2004) concluded that:

Given the combination of diversity and economic vitality that characterizes the European market place, and the resulting depth of practical experience in operating across diverse

cultures, European companies may be well placed to turn diversity into advantage on the world stage. Europeans are less prone to ride roughshod over local sensibilities and cultural values. European businesses have a tradition of diversity in their inputs to decision making. Europe's comparatively inclusive and consensual approach to management is in stark contrast to the narrower 'professional' decision making that [has] historically been employed in Anglo-American Businesses. The world is a diverse environment and so is Europe. The experience and ability to manage and exploit this diversity are increasingly critical capabilities. Across all industries and business model, this is an area where European corporations have a competitive edge. (p. 13)

**TABLE 1. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EUROPEAN AND U.S. BUSINESS SCHOOLS**

<u>Institutional Differences:</u>	<u>Europe</u>	<u>U.S.</u>
Language/Culture/Regulation Standardization	~ Many languages ~ Multicultural ~ Heavy regulation ~ Slower acceptance and institutionalization of B-schools ~ Small to medium size	~ Single language ~ More homogeneous culture ~ Low level of regulation ~ Fast acceptance and institutionalization of B-Schools ~ Medium to large size
<u>Competitive Differences:</u>		
Governance/Values Funding/Endowment	~ Predominantly public funding ~ Strong public sector linkages ~ Small endowments ~ Weaker resource base	~ Predominantly private funding ~ Weak public sector linkages ~ Large endowments ~ Strong resource base
International Mindset	~ International in outlook ~ Students/faculty more international	~ Less international, more insular ~ Students/faculty less international
Innovation Knowledge	~ Practical, problem-based learning ~ Critical reflective thinking ~ Range of models: one year	~ Discipline and research based ~ Two-year model for MBA
Transmission	~ Distance and action orientated learning ~ Knowledge conveyed in books and practice-oriented journals ~ Extensive executive education	~ Knowledge conveyed in academic research based journals ~ Focus on full time students
<u>Social Capital:</u>		
Rankings	~ Strengths - career progress - international outlook - value for money	~ Strengths - initial salary - career progress - alumni networks - research quality
Reputation	~ Some strong brands but, generally, lower brand identity and reputation; strong corporate linkages	~ Many strong brands and reputation, particularly private schools; some corporate linkages

European programs often approach the global ideal where international management topics are integrated into most of the coursework. For example, examine the course offerings of INSEAD (2009), a French business school:

**TABLE 2. INSEAD MBA GLOBALLY FOCUSED COURSES**

<p><u>Core:</u> International Political Analysis Macroeconomics in the Global Economy</p> <p><u>Electives:</u> Strategies for Asia Pacific Economics and Management in Developing Countries Going Global: Varieties of Capitalism Europe and the EU in a Changing World International Business and Government Policies Building Business in India Building Business in Silicon Valley International Financial Management Global Strategy and Management (INSEAD, 2009)</p>
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## **IMPLICATIONS**

All too often, business education in the U.S. tends to respond to the global environment with an ethnocentric perspective (Currie, Matulich, & Gilbert, 2004; Gopalan, Stitts, & Herring III, 2006; Ramamoorthy, Gupta, Sardesai, & Flood, 2005). U.S. business schools have gotten away with this because U.S. companies have tended to adopt the attitude that international business is the same as intra-national business (Tung & Miller, 1990; Volkert, 2007). By defining U.S. program offerings as best practices, both U.S. universities and corporate recruiters expect mimetic isomorphism (Anonymous, 2010; Delaunay & Blodgett, 2005; Kalbag, 2009). This is epitomized by the fact that while corporate recruiters stress the importance of global awareness, they primarily recruit graduates from U.S. schools with global training, not from comparable international schools (Alsop, 2010). As international business becomes increasingly important, how long such preferences will persist becomes increasingly problematic (Clarke III & Flaherty, 2002). The ethnocentric attitudes of U.S. businesses can threaten their ability to successfully compete in other countries (Beech, 2006; Budden, Baraya, & Juban, 2005).

While some U.S. business schools have been slow to "go global," the same cannot be said of Europe. A more holistic approach embracing international diversity towards business education is already standard in Europe (Middleton, 2010; Randolph & Nielsen, 2008; Schaur & Watts, 2010; Schorr, 2000). In 2007, Antunes & Thomas (2007) concluded that although some elements of European business schools are borrowed from the homogeneous U.S.-style model, European schools feature a greater focus on reflective, integrative learning and offer a greater sensitivity to international relations (Coomber, 2009).

In part, European models have adapted to the institutional frameworks and the many different languages, cultures and regulations that exist across Europe due to accreditation standards with an explicit global focus. The primary European accreditation agency, Equis, has a broad focus and clear examination of executive education and corporate linkages, with a formal requirement to explain international linkages. The American equivalent, AACSB, does not require any discussion of corporate or international linkages. AACSB simply accredits the institutions range of degree and educational programs, the faculty inputs and curriculum designs (Antunes & Thomas, 2007).

In conclusion, as more and more businesses expand globally, both business and educational institutions will recognize the need to develop global strategies to manage the risk of falling behind (Roome, 2005). Parochial and economic focused MBA programs will need to emulate the strategies of the more globalized elite and progressive programs, or run the risk of obsolescence (McDonald, Bocchi, & Gooding, 2004; Walker & Jeurissen, 2003). In order for these schools to remain competitive in the MBA market, they will need to eventually update their programs to include a more global perspective (Finley, Taylor, & Warren, 2007). This is particularly true if they expect to keep charging high prices for their programs. Elite and progressive business schools maintain a very sustainable competitive advantage through rigorous curriculum with a global perspective (Anonymous, 2009a). This not only allows elites to charge high prices for their education, but also maintain their position in the market as an education leader (Anonymous, 2009b). However, the high prices can be a downfall, eliminating the opportunity for many candidates, and strengthening the progressives "best value for the buck" proposition.

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APPENDIX A

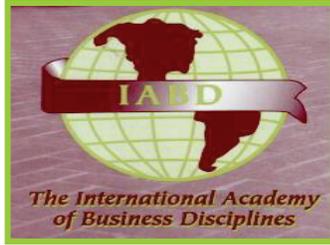
MBA Research Data Results

School Name	TOTAL GLOBAL FOCUS SCORE	Yearly Tuition Resident (USD)	Quadrant
1. Albertus Magnus	2	\$13,536	LC - LG
2. <b>Arizona State University (ASU) - W.P. Carey School of Bus.</b>	22	<b>\$16,400</b>	<b>LC - HG</b>
3. Babcock Graduate School of Mgmt -Wake Forest University	20	\$33,400	HC - HG
4. <b>Boston College - Carroll School of Management</b>	8	<b>\$27,000</b>	<b>HC - LG</b>
5. Case Western Reserve University - Weatherhead School of Mgmt	19	\$33,650	HC - HG
6. <b>Clemson University</b>	3	<b>\$7,282</b>	<b>LC - LG</b>
7. Dartmouth College - Tuck School of Business	25	\$42,990	HC - HG
8. <b>Duke University - Fuqua School of Business</b>	23	<b>\$41,670</b>	<b>HC - HG</b>
9. East Carolina University	0	\$4,670	LC - LG
10. <b>ESADE Business School - Barcelona Campus</b>	27	<b>\$74,620</b>	<b>HC - HG</b>
11. F.W. Olin Graduate School of Business at Babson College	36	\$56,973	HC - HG
12. <b>Hawaii Pacific University</b>	22	<b>\$13,440</b>	<b>LC - HG</b>
13. HEC School of Management, Paris	35	\$54,600	HC - HG
14. <b>Insead Europe Campus</b>	24	<b>\$47,236</b>	<b>HC - HG</b>
15. Istanbul Bilgi University	4	\$17,200	LC LG
16. <b>Lehigh University</b>	23	<b>\$11,340</b>	<b>LC - HG</b>
17. Marymount University	16	\$9,825	LC - HG
18. <b>Michigan State University - Eli Broad Graduate School of Mgmt</b>	25	<b>\$17,750</b>	<b>LC - HG</b>
19. MIT Sloan School of Mgmt, Massachusetts Institute of Technology	18	\$44,556	HC - HG
20. <b>Montclair State University</b>	22	<b>\$8,000</b>	<b>LC - HG</b>
21. North Carolina State University	25	\$24,522	HC - HG
22. <b>Nyenrode Business Universiteit</b>	10	<b>\$41,300</b>	<b>HC - LG</b>
23. Ohio State University - Fisher College of Business	29	\$23,260	HC - HG
24. <b>Portland State University</b>	22	<b>\$27,000</b>	<b>HC - HG</b>
25. Quinnipiac University	21	\$16,740	LC - HG
26. <b>San Diego State University</b>	27	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>LC - HG</b>
27. SBS Swiss Business School	14	\$25,541	HC - LG
28. <b>Schiller International University - Florida</b>	18	<b>\$19,000</b>	<b>LC - HG</b>

APPENDIX A

MBA Research Data Results (Cont.)

School Name	TOTAL GLOBAL FOCUS SCORE	Yearly Tuition Resident (USD)	Quadrant
29. Schiller International University - Madrid, Spain	19	\$23,550	HC - HG
30. <b>Southern Connecticut State University</b>	2	\$7,774	LC - LG
31. Stevens Institute of Technology - Howe School of Technology Mgmt	15	\$4,425	LC - LG
32. <b>Stony Brook University (SUNY)</b>	8	\$3,550	LC - LG
33. Stuart Graduate School of Bus. - Illinois Institute of Technology	5	\$23,260	HC - LG
34. Syracuse University - Whitman School of Management	12	\$30,360	HC - LG
35. <b>Temple University - Fox School of Business and Management</b>	28	\$17,756	LC - HG
36. University of California, Irvine - Paul Merage School of Business	30	\$26,190	HC - HG
37. <b>University of Colorado at Boulder - Leeds School of Bus.</b>	3	\$8,982	LC - LG
38. University of Connecticut	19	\$9,510	LC - HG
39. <b>University of Georgia - Terry College of Business</b>	22	\$9,328	LC - HG
40. University of Houston - C. T. Bauer College of Business	15	\$14,000	LC - LG
41. <b>University of Massachusetts Amherst - Isenberg School of Mgmt</b>	3	\$6,050	LC - LG
42. University of Minnesota - Carlson School of Management	13	\$23,818	HC - LG
43. <b>University of New Haven</b>	14	\$15,120	LC - LG
44. University of Oregon - Charles H. Lundquist College of Business	10	\$11,592	LC - LG
45. <b>University of Piraeus</b>	17	\$10,500	LC - HG
46. University of Pittsburgh - Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Bus.	22	\$29,676	HC - HG
47. <b>University of Rochester - Simon Graduate School of Business</b>	24	\$37,215	HC - HG
48. University of San Francisco - Masagung Graduate School of Mgmt	20	\$26,000	HC - HG
49. <b>University of South Carolina - Moore School of Business</b>	41	\$17,500	LC - HG
50. University of Texas at San Antonio	21	\$7,268	LC - HG
51. <b>Vanderbilt University - Owen Graduate School of Management</b>	10	\$37,834	HC - LG
52. Virginia Commonwealth University	2	\$3,612	LC - LG
53. <b>Virginia Tech - Pamplin College of Business</b>	27	\$8,986	LC - HG
54. Wayne State University	0	\$6,218	LC - LG
55. <b>Western Connecticut State University</b>	0	\$7,448	LC - LG
56. Yale University	35	\$56,000	HC - HG



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