

The number of students interested in business has multiplied rapidly over the past ten years. UC Davis students are no exception to this trend, with more and more undergraduates interested in pursuing future careers in business. Many of these students have questions about what educational route they should take to best prepare them for a future business career, or further study at the graduate level. What follows are some brief answers to the most typically asked questions of pre-business advisers.

DOES UC DAVIS HAVE A “PRE-BUSINESS” PROGRAM?

Many students have the misconception that “pre-business” is an academic major; it’s not. A student pursuing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) might have earned an undergraduate degree in engineering. Usually when students refer to “pre-business,” they mean one of two things: either a designation for a career objective (“John is a pre-business student; someday he plans to attend an MBA program.”) or a generalized course of study (“John is an engineering major but he is also taking pre-business courses as prerequisites for business school.”).

Many UC Davis students consider themselves “pre-business” and receive preparatory counseling from the MBA adviser at Advising Services as well as the Internship and Career Center.

WHAT KINDS OF OPPORTUNITIES DOES UC DAVIS HAVE FOR THE PRE-BUSINESS STUDENT?

Prominent employers from business and industry regularly look to the UC Davis campus for well-qualified graduates for placement in positions of responsibility. While UC Davis does not offer a formal undergraduate degree in business, students who wish to pursue an MBA, or to work in business after graduation, find that their undergraduate preparation at Davis is excellent. Many pre-business students at Davis choose either economics, international relations, managerial economics or sociology–organizational studies as a major (though any major is suitable). UC Davis also offers a minor in technology management, offered through the campus’ Graduate School of Management. This background coupled with the available on-the-job experience obtained through internships sponsored by the Internship and Career Center, and preparatory counseling available from the MBA adviser at Advising Services, gives students a strong foundation for an ultimate business career.

WHAT IS THE BEST EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION FOR A CAREER IN BUSINESS?

An undergraduate major in business is not required to successfully pursue either a career or advanced education in business. In fact, many graduate schools of business prefer students who have majored in fields that provide interdisciplinary training. Students are free to major in virtually any field and are able to enter business or graduate programs successfully. The only concrete rule to follow is to plan broad undergraduate preparation that crosses many different subject areas. Most MBA programs value students who have had exposure to a wide variety of courses ranging from math and science to the social sciences and humanities. MBA programs also value individuals with internship and full-time work experience. In addition, courses which develop specific analytical and communication skills are also important. Accounting, computer science, economics, math (calculus and statistics) and English are particularly helpful in preparing students for the type of decision-making environment they will face in business.

WHAT ARE THE UNDERGRADUATE SUBJECT REQUIREMENTS FOR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS?

Choose a major that allows you to be flexible and take a variety of courses. A year of calculus is the only course requirement for several MBA programs. The following courses are only suggestions and meant to be used as a guideline: accounting, agricultural & resource economic courses, communications, computer science, economics, English composition, literature and statistics.

IS AN MBA FOR ME?

With the increasing complexity of society’s organizations, the need for professional managers has grown rapidly. Creative thinking, quick and precise decision-making and adaptability to changing situations—all fundamental prerequisites for today’s effective managers—have expanded in both necessity and value. Future managers must have the knowledge, skills and creativity to meet the challenge of a complex, rapidly changing environment. One path towards accomplishing this task is through a graduate education in business.

Many students at UC Davis are now becoming “pre-business” with the notion of later obtaining a Master of Business Administration. Though not the only means of successfully entering business, the MBA, with its emphasis on professional management, provides individuals with a solid foundation of knowledge, skills and decision-making capabilities that employers value in their candidates for top management positions.

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION TO BUSINESS SCHOOL?

Broadly speaking, applicants to most graduate programs of business are judged on the basis of academic achievement, scores on the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT), full-time work experience, letters of recommendation, personal essays and the potential for leadership and management as evidenced by prior work experience. The admission requirements for most schools are quite flexible and allow for a diversity of students with different educational backgrounds.

Each year the country's 700-plus business schools churn out 75,000 graduates, up from only 5,000 in the 1960s. With this expansion in the number of schools and graduates, competition for those spots in the top schools has become fierce. These schools also emphasize postgraduate work experience prior to admission. Students attending the top MBA schools worked an average of four to six years in a postgraduate career-related job. Increasingly, where the business degree is obtained takes precedence over the degree itself when it comes to initial job offers and future advancement opportunities.

WHAT FIELDS OF SPECIALIZATION ARE AVAILABLE FOR STUDENTS INTERESTED IN BUSINESS?

A professional manager has the opportunity to manage people, money, natural resources, institutions and business. Areas of specialization include: finance, accounting, consulting, marketing, non-profit organizations, international business, management information systems, educational administration, arts management and health care administration.

DOES UC DAVIS OFFER AN MBA?

Yes, UC Davis offers an MBA degree through the Graduate School of Management. The Graduate School of Management opened its doors to students in the fall of 1981, and was accredited as an MBA program in the winter of 1990. In a recent survey by U.S. News & World Report, the MBA program at UC Davis was ranked among the top 20 public institutions in the country. The program is divided into two parts, applicable to a broad range of private and public management and policy issues. It is largely from these core courses in economics, accounting, decision sciences, marketing, finance, organizational theory, policy analysis and other areas that the student's "tool kit" of analysis is acquired. The second year is characterized by its flexibility, with the encouragement for students to take electives they find useful and to focus on one of 10 "standing" concentrations. These include, for example, concentrations in management policy, either in general management, agricultural management, international management, environmental and natural resource management, or (through a joint degree) engineering management. There are also specialized concentrations in management functions, such as finance, accounting, marketing and management information systems. In addition, individual specialized concentrations are possible with faculty approval.

QUESTIONS?

Pre-MBA Advising, University of California, 160 South Silo, One Shields Avenue, Davis, California, 95616-8508, (530) 752-4475, advisingservices.ucdavis.edu.

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