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Customizing An MBA Program For The Online Environment

BY: FREEMAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AT TULANE UNIVERSITY ON JULY 15, 2024 | 366 VIEWS



MBA degrees have always been popular, and in today's increasingly tech-focused society, online programs have been in high demand. In fact, the e-learning market is **projected to grow by 20.5%** between 2022 and 2030.

Online enrollments peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are many reasons why professionals would choose an online MBA instead of a traditional on-campus program. With more and more companies requiring employees to return to offices, access to flexible options for higher education is very appealing to anyone seeking a healthy work-life balance.

Laura Henley, a student in the **Online MBA program** from the Freeman School of Business at Tulane University, finds that online education is a great fit for her needs. "I wanted to do an online MBA program because I frequently move around for work. Being able to be mobile was really helpful for me," said Henley.

"I decided to enroll in an MBA program, and ultimately I decided to do an online program so that I had the flexibility to run my businesses while also taking class on my time," said Stephen Nutting, a fellow Tulane student and owner of two businesses in the New Orleans market.

Creating an online MBA requires careful thought and intentional planning. Read on to see what elements are crucial in the design and development of online MBA programs.

Keep Your Audience in Mind

Some people assume that online learning is inferior to in-person learning, but with a well-designed online MBA program, that's just not the case. By recognizing that online MBAs will be different from traditional MBAs and conducting program design with a virtual audience in mind, your MBA program will foster success in its students.

A study conducted by McKinsey in 2021 found that to engage most effectively with students, online higher education should focus on eight dimensions of the learning experience:

1. Building the education road map
2. Enabling seamless connections
3. Offering a range of learning formats
4. Ensuring captivating experiences
5. Utilizing adaptive learning tools
6. Including real-world application of skills
7. Providing academic and non-academic support
8. Fostering a strong community

An online MBA may consider incorporating a couple of these dimensions into their program.

"Freeman's Online MBA program was designed specifically for working professionals engaged in a rapidly changing business environment," said Ashley Francis, director of online learning at the Freeman School of Business. "Students have the flexibility to log into their course when they're feeling most motivated or when their schedule allows, and then they come together weekly via zoom to work with their professors/other students to reinforce what's been learned that week. Along the way, faculty are interacting with students, but it's primarily about flexibility and convenience for the student."

Many educators and course design experts recognize that the key to a successful online program is keeping the content of an in-person MBA but adapting the format. One example might be offering concentration options as you would in an in-person program.

"We make sure that the quality is there," said Dean Paulo Goes of the Freeman School of Business about the Online MBA. "We have the same materials and faculty teaching in the online environment, but in a new format. Quality is paramount and we are going to always pursue that."

Focus on Engagement

Whether an MBA program is in person or online, students want to engage with their peers and faculty members. There are several ways to create engagement opportunities in a virtual setting:

- Discussion boards allow classmates to interact with one another while maintaining flexibility.
- Group projects offer students a chance to work with their peers.
- Virtual office hours give students another opportunity to ask questions and gain a better understanding of assignments and classwork.
- Live sessions are another important aspect of remote programs.

The **Online MBA at Tulane** is a high touch point program, offering opportunities for students to work directly with classmates and faculty. It features both asynchronous and synchronous coursework, with weekly, hour-long synchronous sessions where students have a chance to build connections. Synchronous sessions give students the opportunity to engage with one another, which is helpful both in understanding the class content and in creating connections.

"I've really found value in that we have mostly asynchronous learning with an hour round table of synchronous learning," said Henley. "It's been great to have that hour a week where I get to interact with my peers and the professors."

Networking is another important aspect of any MBA program, and successful online programs incorporate it in a way that makes sense for their audience. Networking in the virtual world can come in the form of learning from guest speakers, joining student associations, and attending events, such as the ones offered by Freeman's Career Management Center.

Create a Supportive Online Environment

Students who choose to pursue an online MBA program often manage a wide variety of responsibilities from their families and workplaces to communities and more. Adding graduate-level education to one's obligations might require a new set of skills, including time management, organization, self-motivation, communication and basic technology skills.

Developing these skills doesn't happen overnight, which is why the Freeman School of Business offers concierge-level support to Online MBA students who are navigating graduate education.

"The online learning office provides robust holistic support throughout the student's time with us, whether it's through academic tutoring, time management and wellness support, or financial counseling, we have someone dedicated to helping you," said Francis.

Leverage Technology

While it is important to incorporate technology into graduate education in general, it is pivotal for online programs. Using the latest technology shows commitment to progress and relevancy. And incorporating technology into coursework can make the learning experience more seamless as students transition between their professional jobs and their coursework.

The incorporation of technology into online learning helps prepare students for today's workforce. For example, the use of AI and other new technologies in coursework gives students a chance to use these tools to increase efficiencies in organizations.

"The great thing about the online experience today is that technology has evolved, so the online classroom experience is in no way inferior to the in-person classroom experience. "In many ways, it's going to be better."

— Gans Narayanamoorthy, Faculty Director, Online MBA Program

About the Online Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the Freeman School of Business at Tulane University

The **Online Master of Business Administration (MBA)** from the Freeman School of Business at Tulane University is structured to allow you space for in-depth exploration within your areas of interest alongside the development of core competencies in accounting, data analytics, finance, marketing and operations. While a concentration is not required as part of the 46 required credits, you may pursue up to two of the following concentrations:

- **Business Analytics** – Gain an understanding of advanced spreadsheet modeling, databases and web analytics.
- **Finance** – Study financial statement analysis, investments and valuation.
- **Marketing** – Delve into web analytics, strategic brand management, social media and online marketing and innovation and technology management.

The program is designed to meet the needs of professionals from a wide range of academic and professional backgrounds. Regardless of your desired concentration or industry, you'll graduate with a comprehensive understanding of business and managerial concepts and the practical skills to make informed business decisions and lead in your organization.

The **Online MBA** offers a mix of conceptual rigor, deep-thinking exercises and real-world examples to prepare you for the future of business. The program is taught by Freeman School of Business faculty who bring their expertise to the classroom, sharing proven research and the latest developments in a wide range of fields.

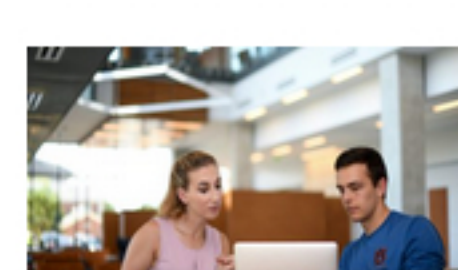
In the 2024-2025 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, Freeman climbed 19 spots among the nation's top MBA programs. This is one of the biggest year-over-year changes among ranked programs and reflects Freeman's continued commitment to excellence and innovation in business education.

[Learn more about the Online MBA program at the Freeman School of Business](#)



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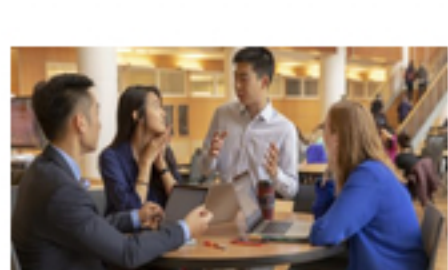
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