

## Insights About International Students in Business Schools

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## What We'll Cover

- Based on "Fall School Tour":
  - On-site workshops
  - Webinars
  - Video feedback
  - Student evaluations
  - Student conversations
  - Conversations with administrators / advisors / staff / faculty

## Three Areas We'll Cover

- Key Findings\*
- Recommendations\*
- Group Dialogue / Q&A

**\* Our Findings and Recommendations represent a general overview. They are not meant to be a “one size fits all”, as schools vary widely in programs, size, % international students, approaches.**

## Nomenclature

- Unless otherwise indicated, “international students” encompasses both MBA and Masters Programs.

## Less Market Ready Relative to American Peers

International students, in both MBA and Master Programs, are sometimes significantly weaker than American peers in persuasive career storytelling and professional-social interactions, decreasing their competitiveness for job offers, independent of visa sponsorship issues.

## Masters Program Students Lack Practical Professional Knowledge and Social “Grace”

Master program students arrive to the US with little / no work experience or US exposure. They seem to have less job search / professional development versus their MBA counterparts. As a result, while academically knowledgeable about their professional field (e.g. finance), most have below-par understanding of the practical job tasks and duties and poor professional-social skills that hurt them in networking and interviewing.

## Large Variation in Approaches Across Schools to Professional Development of Students

Some schools have mandated career courses in MBA programs, lesser so for Masters programs

Orientations for International Students vary: none, a couple of hours, one day, three day, one week+

Some schools have an international student advisor, international programs coordinator (for international and non-US jobs), one advisor covering all sectors, sectors specialists

## Career Programs Heavy Up When Students Have Least Bandwidth to Absorb / Attend

Most career programs peak during the Fall, when students are in survival mode and focused on academics and settling in the US, thus putting little time in for career related activities, other than what is required. Less experienced students report going to networking events feeling lost and bewildered. Students mention having more bandwidth before arrival or in the Spring.

## Career Programs Not Mandatory and Thus Suffer Low Attendance

Most career services programs are not mandatory and are subservient to academic programming and schedules thus causing uneven learning and lower efficacy for students. Some of the students who most need it don't know enough in the Fall to attend career programs. Yet job placement results is a critical measure for schools, especially for the MBA ranking.

## Career Programs May Not Fit International Student Needs

Most career services programs were designed for a 2+years-of-work-experience American student. However, international students need significantly more assistance in Contextual Intelligence:

- 1) knowing how the US job search system works, *in comparison* to their native country,
- 2) possessing adequate knowledge about US industries, job responsibilities and work habits and
- 3) professional-social communications / etiquette.

## Style of Learning Most Effective for Students

As adult learners who are crossing cultures, students need repeated learning opportunities on one concept that are experientially oriented and rich in personal feedback.

## Approachability of Career Services & Advisors

Students report to us that the tone from administrators / career services often is “you need to be more American” with the consequence that -

- 1) they do not return for services, feeling inadequate or offended or
- 2) students get 1-on-1 feedback that is not actionable, given students don't have the implicit US cultural knowledge that advisors assume they have when giving feedback.

## Advisor Overload

Many advisors in Masters Programs have seen year-on-year growth in international students. These students are less market-ready, yet each advisor is likely to have more students. Advisors want to do more for each student but don't feel they have the bandwidth to do continued individual advising for each student, though many need such advising.

## Recommendations

**#1****Increase programming during Pre-Arrival and the Spring, when students are receptive to career-related topics**

- Student feedback was very positive to our Pre-Arrival videos, citing most helpful learning were:
  - Understanding the business school experience
  - Understanding the role of individualism and independence in the US
- Students tell us they are most ready and feel urgent during the Spring, when they are ready to network / find a job

**#2****Make career courses mandatory with strong focus on experiential learning / feedback**

- Students tell us they are so jammed academically in the Fall that unless something is mandatory, they tend to not go
- Students feel greater urgency for their academics than job search in the Fall
- Students continually talk about their desire for role play and specific feedback, especially about implicit, cultural misses



### #3

## Build Contextual Intelligence and Communications Skills for Students

- Students need to understand why a resume / cover letter are important in the US
- Students need to understand why they are encouraged to sell to recruiters at networking events and taught explicitly what appropriate selling looks/feels like
- Students need to understand how career stories are told with specific feedback on story logic, flow and delivery (“natural”)

### #4

## Build Contextual Intelligence and Communications Skills for Advisors – Cultural Training

- Advisors have the opportunity to be aware of their “assumed knowledge” for students – what they assume students should already know before attending business school
- Some advisors can develop greater cultural compassion – “this is how Americans do this...what is it like in your culture?”
- As advisors understand what career services do in other countries / how interviews are conducted, they can provide *relative* advice to students

**#5****Critical Content to Teach to All International Students,  
but Especially to Less Experienced Students**

- American professional – social etiquette and communications, applied to social situations (cocktail party conversation, small talk) and professional situations (recruiting event, networking, interviewing)
- Relevant and adapted story content and persuasive storytelling
- Practical US industry knowledge, job deliverables, and corporate cultural etiquette

**#6****University Elevation of Importance of  
Career / Professional Skills Development  
in Business School Curriculum**

- Affects university branding every time a student is at a career conference, recruiting event, networking meeting, interview
- Direct correlation of student social readiness and job search marketability

