



## 2010 Application Trends Survey: Full-Time and Part-Time MBA Programs in California

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### Introduction

This paper, derived from the GMAC 2010 *Application Trends Survey*, focuses on the responses of 17 full-time, eight part-time, and seven flexible (on-campus) MBA programs in state of California. For the purposes of this document, responses from six flexible MBA programs that were delivered primarily in a part-time format were combined with part-time MBA programs. In addition, responses from one flexible MBA program that was primarily full-time were combined with full-time MBA program responses. Data summarized in this publication are based on 32 participating programs—a small fraction of the 223 full-time MBA programs and 111 part-time programs that participated in the *Application Trends Survey*. The margins of sampling error for the total full-time and part-time program samples are  $\pm 6.6$  percent and  $\pm 9.3$  percent, respectively. The margins of sampling error for full-time and part-time programs in California are  $\pm 23.1$  percent and  $\pm 26.2$  percent, respectively.

### Key Findings

- Application volume in 2010 is down for the majority of full-time (72%) and part-time (83%) MBA programs in California. The downward trend is driven primarily by a decline in the number of domestic applicants.
- Despite a decline in application numbers, full-time and part-time MBA programs in California remain competitive for candidates. A typical full-time MBA program received five applications for each place in the incoming class; a typical part-time MBA program in California received four applications for every open spot in the incoming class.
- Participating program administrators shared that economic conditions and student challenges to finance education were primary reasons behind the overall decline in application numbers.

### Applicants

In 2010, the candidate residence profile of full-time and part-time MBA programs in California was similar to that of the United States overall (Table 1). A higher proportion of foreign citizens (23%) in the applicant pool to part-time MBA programs compared with the all-US percentage (15%) indicates a larger share of permanent residents who applied to programs in California.

	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA	All US	CA	All US
By location	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 126	<i>n</i> = 13	<i>n</i> = 79
National <sup>a</sup>	65%	62%	90%	94%
Local <sup>b</sup>	44%	44%	94%	90%
International	35%	38%	10%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
By citizenship	<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 141	<i>n</i> = 13	<i>n</i> = 81
Domestic	54%	52%	77%	85%
Foreign <sup>c</sup>	46%	48%	23%	15%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

<sup>a</sup>. Includes permanent residents.  
<sup>b</sup>. Within the city or metropolitan area of school location. Derived as percentage of national applicants.  
<sup>c</sup>. The term "foreign" is defined by applicant citizenship and refers to any applicants whose citizenship differs from that of the country where they apply. Foreign applicants include permanent residents of a given country if they do not have the country's citizenship.

Compared with all participating programs across the United States, full-time MBA programs in California received proportionally more foreign applications from Europe (16% versus 8% for US programs) and less from the Asia-Pacific region (63% compared to 71% across all US programs) (Table 2).

	Full-Time MBA	
	CA ( <i>n</i> = 12)	All US ( <i>n</i> = 90)
Africa or Middle East	7%	10%
Asia-Pacific	63%	71%
Canada	6%	4%
Europe	16%	8%
Latin America	8%	7%
Total	100%	100%

The work experience profile of full-time MBA program candidates in California was comparable to the overall US profile, whereas part-time MBA programs in California attracted more experienced candidates (Table 3).

<b>Table 3. Work Experience of Full-Time and Part-Time MBA Program Applicants, California and all US</b>				
	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA (n = 11)	All US (n = 93)	CA (n = 10)	All US (n = 63)
Less than 1 year	18%	16%	2%	7%
1 year, but less than 3 years	25%	25%	12%	19%
3 years, but less than 6 years	40%	39%	40%	34%
6 years, but less than 10 years	14%	14%	28%	23%
10 years or more	4%	6%	18%	16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

One-third (33%) of full-time MBA programs and one-fifth (21%) of part-time MBA programs in California observed an improvement in applicant quality compared with the previous application cycle (Table 4). This was proportionally less than the percentage of programs reporting candidate improvements in the US overall. In addition, nearly 3 in 10 part-time MBA programs (29%) reported that candidates were slightly less qualified than in 2009.

<b>Table 4. Quality Assessment of Full-Time and Part-Time MBA Program Applicants 2010 vs. 2009, California and all US</b>				
	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA (n = 18)	All US (n = 142)	CA (n = 14)	All US (n = 89)
Significantly more academically qualified	11%	4%	7%	7%
Moderately more academically qualified	5%	15%	—	13%
Slightly more academically qualified	17%	28%	14%	18%
About the same quality as last year	61%	42%	50%	47%
Slightly less academically qualified	6%	9%	29%	12%
Moderately less academically qualified	—	1%	—	2%
Significantly less academically qualified	—	1%	—	—
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
More qualified	33%	47%	21%	38%
About the same	61%	42%	50%	47%
Less qualified	6%	11%	29%	15%
Total	100%	100	100%	100%

## Overall Application Trends

In 2010, both full-time and part-time MBA programs located in California received more applications per program, on average, than all surveyed full-time and part-time MBA programs across the United States (Table 5).

	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA	All US	CA	All US
All applicants	<i>n</i> = 18	<i>n</i> = 146	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 87
Mean	1,118	791	264	155
Median	345	285	185	105
Domestic applicants	<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 141	<i>n</i> = 13	<i>n</i> = 83
Mean	409	352	180	117
Median	119	131	158	80
Foreign <sup>a</sup> applicants	<i>n</i> = 17	<i>n</i> = 135	<i>n</i> = 12	<i>n</i> = 71
Mean	351	345	57	24
Median	91	124	28	10
Female applicants	<i>n</i> = 16	<i>n</i> = 135	<i>n</i> = 13	<i>n</i> = 83
Mean	264	199	92	52
Median	116	92	51	30

<sup>a</sup>. The term "foreign" is defined by applicant citizenship and refers to any applicants whose citizenship differs from that of the country where they apply. Foreign applicants include permanent residents of a given country if they do not have the country's citizenship.

Between 2009 and 2010, the total number of applications to full-time and part-time MBA programs that reported data for both years declined both in California and in the United States overall. Full-time MBA programs in California experienced a 12 percent decline in the number of domestic applicants, three times the decline experienced overall in the United States. The number of female applicants to full-time MBA programs in California declined nearly 4 percent, a smaller decline than seen in the United States overall (Table 6).

**Table 6. Annual Percentage Change<sup>a</sup> in Number of Full-Time and Part-Time MBA Program Applications, 2009–2010**

	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA ( <i>n</i> = 12)	All US ( <i>n</i> ≤ 113)	CA ( <i>n</i> ≤ 9)	All US ( <i>n</i> ≤ 45)
Total applications	-3.8%	-1.3%	-9.7%	-10.3%
Domestic applications	-12.0%	-4.3%	-20.8%	-13.6%
Foreign applications	+6.1%	+3.4%	+4.0%	-9.7%
Female applications	-3.6%	-10.4%	-18.0%	-11.9%

<sup>a</sup>. Statistics for each applicant group are calculated based on the number of applications reported over a two-year period by the same programs.

In 2010, 72 percent of full-time MBA programs in California reported a decline in application volume (Table 7), reversing the trend in 2009 when the majority of full-time MBA programs (79%) experienced an increase in application volume compared with 2008. Only 17 percent of part-time MBA programs in California enjoyed stronger application volumes than in 2009 while 83 percent saw a decline—continuing a trend from 2009 when two in three (66%) part-time programs in California saw a decline in the number of applicants.

	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA (n = 18)	All US (n = 139)	CA (n = 12)	All US (n = 83)
Up significantly (21% or higher)	11%	14%	8%	7%
Up moderately (11% to 20%)	11%	9%	—	11%
Up slightly (1% to 10%)	6%	18%	8%	20%
Flat (no change from previous year)	—	6%	—	13%
Down slightly (-1% to -10%)	28%	27%	33%	24%
Down moderately (-11% to -20%)	39%	16%	25%	12%
Down significantly (-21% or lower)	6%	9%	25%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Up	28%	41%	17%	39%
Flat	—	6%	—	13%
Down	72%	53%	83%	48%
Total	100%	100	100%	100%

The vast majority of admissions professionals in California attributed the decline in applications primarily to economic conditions and employment outlook (Table 8). In addition, seven in 10 part-time MBA programs experiencing a downward trend in application numbers, cited student challenges in financing their education as a reason for the decline in applications.

**Table 8. Primary Reasons for 2010 Decline in California Full-Time and Part-time MBA Program Application Volume<sup>a</sup>**

	Full-Time MBA (n = 11)	Part-Time MBA (n = 10)
Economic conditions and employment outlook	73%	90%
Financing education, including tuition fees, school financial aid, and employer sponsorships	36%	70%
Marketing and recruitment efforts	18%	—
Other reasons	21%	8%

a. Based on open-ended optional responses.

## Domestic Application Trends

Domestic applicants accounted for 77 percent of the total applicant pool of part-time MBA programs in California and 54 percent of total applicants to full-time MBA programs (Table 1). The majority of full-time (70%) and part-time (75%) MBA programs in California reported a decline in applications from domestic candidates from 2009, however (Table 9). In comparison, slightly more than half of similar programs across the United States experienced a decline in domestic applicants.

**Table 9. Change in Full-Time and Part-Time MBA Program Domestic Application Volume 2010 vs. 2009, Percentage of Programs, California and all US**

	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA (n = 17)	All US (n = 133)	CA (n = 12)	All US (n = 77)
Up significantly (21% or higher)	12%	14%	8%	8%
Up moderately (11% to 20%)	6%	5%	—	8%
Up slightly (1% to 10%)	6%	14%	8%	17%
Flat (no change from previous year)	6%	11%	8%	16%
Down slightly (-1% to -10%)	41%	29%	33%	27%
Down moderately (-11% to -20%)	29%	14%	33%	13%
Down significantly (-21% or lower)	—	13%	8%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Up	24%	33%	17%	32%
Flat	6%	11%	8%	16%
Down	70%	56%	75%	52%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

## Foreign Application Trends

Although there was a six-percent increase in the average number of foreign applications per full-time MBA program in California between 2009 and 2010 (Table 6), it was driven by just one quarter (24%) of participants (Table 10).

**Table 10. Change in Full-Time and Part-Time MBA Program Foreign<sup>a</sup> Application Volume, 2010 vs. 2009, Percentage of Programs, California and all US**

	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA (n = 17)	All US (n = 131)	CA (n = 12)	All US (n = 77)
Up significantly (21% or more)	18%	15%	—	14%
Up moderately (11% to 20%)	—	9%	—	9%
Up slightly (1% to 10%)	6%	18%	17%	10%
Flat (no change from previous year)	6%	11%	25%	32%
Down slightly (-1% to -10%)	41%	22%	17%	14%
Down moderately (-11% to -20%)	12%	14%	17%	6%
Down significantly (-21% or less)	18%	11%	25%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Up	24%	41%	17%	34%
Flat	6%	11%	25%	32%
Down	71%	47%	58%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

<sup>a</sup> The term "foreign" is defined by applicant citizenship and refers to any applicants whose citizenship differs from that of the country where they apply. For example, French citizens will be considered foreign by a program in the United States, and US citizens will be considered foreign by a French program. Foreign applicants include permanent residents of a given country if they do not have the country's citizenship.

## Female Application Trends

Consistent with 2009, 35 percent of 2010 applicants to full-time MBA programs in California were women—proportionally more than in the United States overall (Table 11). Within the context of an overall deceleration in the number of applications in 2010, however, a decline in the number of female applicants appeared to affect programs in California to a lesser extent (-3.6%) than overall in the United States (-10.4%) (Table 6). In addition, half of full-time MBA programs that received fewer applications from women than in 2009 experienced only a slight decline (Table 12).

	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA (n = 16)	All US (n = 136)	CA (n = 13)	All US (n = 82)
Female	35%	29%	39%	37%
Male	65%	71%	61%	63%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA (n = 17)	All US (n = 127)	CA (n = 12)	All US (n = 78)
Up significantly (21% or more)	12%	13%	8%	10%
Up moderately (11% to 20%)	12%	6%	—	9%
Up slightly (1% to 10%)	12%	21%	33%	13%
Flat (no change from previous year)	6%	9%	8%	18%
Down slightly (-1% to -10%)	29%	22%	17%	26%
Down moderately (-11% to -20%)	18%	13%	25%	12%
Down significantly (-21% or lower)	12%	16%	8%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Up	35%	40%	42%	32%
Flat	6%	9%	8%	18%
Down	59%	50%	50%	50%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

## Acceptance, Enrollment, and Class Size

The average full-time MBA program in California had an acceptance rate of 46 percent in 2010, comparable to the all-US average (Table 13). On the other hand, California part-time MBA programs appeared to be more competitive for candidates compared with other programs in the United States—only 59 percent of applicants, on average, compared with 71 percent overall, received an offer of acceptance from part-time programs. Of the accepted applicants, an estimated 59 percent would enroll to full-time MBA programs and 67 percent to part-time MBA programs in California. Both 2010 acceptance and enrollment rates are comparable to those seen in 2009, which implies that a decline in the application volume did not affect program selectiveness in California.

	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA (n = 17)	All US (n = 132)	CA (n = 12)	All US (n = 71)
Percentage of total applicants that received an offer of acceptance				
Mean	46%	49%	59%	71%
Median	43%	44%	62%	74%
Estimated percentage of accepted applicants who will enroll				
Mean	59%	59%	67%	78%
Median	55%	57%	67%	80%

As expected, with a downward trend in application volume, MBA programs in California had conservative class size plans. Half of full-time MBA programs (50%) expected to have the same number of seats available in 2010 as in 2009; so did more than one-third (36%) of part-time programs (Table 14).

	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA (n = 16)	All US (n = 130)	CA (n = 14)	All US (n = 74)
Targeted 2010–2011 class size (#)				
Mean	159	129	106	114
Median	75	77	75	83
Actual 2009–2010 class size(#)				
Mean	156	126	106	111
Median	71	78	81	71
Percentage change (%)	+1.9%	+2.3%	0.0%	+2.7%
Growth plans				
Expect to increase	44%	37%	36%	31%
Do not expect to change	50%	46%	36%	47%
Expect to reduce	6%	17%	28%	22%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

## Program Profile

Table 15 presents characteristics of participating full-time and part-time MBA programs in California, which are comparable with the characteristics of all full-time and part-time programs in the United States that participated in the survey.

<b>Table 15. Full-Time and Part-Time MBA Program Profile, California and all US</b>				
	Full-Time MBA		Part-Time MBA	
	CA (n = 18)	All US (n = 146)	CA (n = 14)	All US (n = 90)
<b>Program tier<sup>a</sup></b>				
First	22%	27%	14%	17%
Second	11%	18%	14%	10%
Third	67%	56%	72%	73%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Class size</b>				
50 students or fewer	35%	30%	36%	37%
51 to 100 students	24%	34%	14%	19%
More than 100 students	41%	36%	50%	44%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Funding sources</b>				
Receives government funding	44%	47%	57%	49%
Program operates with private funding	56%	53%	43%	51%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Enrollment type</b>				
Class begins once a year	67%	77%	57%	26%
Class begins several times a year, including rolling admissions	33%	23%	43%	74%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
<sup>a</sup> Program tier is defined by the average media rankings of full-time MBA programs across those published by <i>BusinessWeek</i> , <i>Financial Times</i> , and <i>U.S. News &amp; World Report</i> . First-tier programs are first through 50th in average media rankings, second-tier are 51st to 100th, and the third-tier programs include the remaining schools and those not ranked.				

## Concluding Note

Findings presented in this paper are based on the 2010 GMAC *Application Trends Survey* data analysis. For questions or comments regarding the study findings, methodology, or data, please contact the GMAC Research & Development Department at [research@gmac.com](mailto:research@gmac.com).

## Acknowledgements

Paula Bruggeman, GMAC, editorial services.

GMAC extends sincere appreciation to MBA programs in the United States that participated in the 2010 *Application Trends Survey*, including 32 participating full-time and part-time MBA programs in the state of California that provided survey data.

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