

Enhancing Student Readiness through Business Fundamentals

Discover how Oklahoma State University's Spears School of Business implemented Business Fundamentals to better equip their cohort of working professionals before entering their Online and Professional MBA program.

By partnering with Business Fundamentals, the school sought to provide a solution that would bridge the gap and alleviate concerns, especially for students with a significant time gap since their last quantitative classroom experience.

The challenge

Working professionals returning to school often face time constraints and apprehension about navigating academic challenges, particularly in quantitative subjects. In Online and Professional MBA programs, students may feel isolated, adding to their concerns about academic readiness and success.

When reviewing applications, Matt Bowler, Director, and Emily Murphy, Academic Advisor II of MBA Programs at Oklahoma State University, Spears School of Business, noticed that many incoming students lacked quantitative preparation, and with it, the confidence needed to succeed in the program.

The need for quantitative preparedness was evident as promising students presented the following challenges:

- Little to no quantitative focused educational background
- A lack of work experience in a quantitative field
- Significant time gap since last academic course work

“Quantitative classes are always a concern on both sides so that’s always something we are striving to help students feel prepared for” says Emily.

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“Students saw the value in the courses. It was good prep for them especially because a lot of them are concerned that if they don’t have quantitative experience how they are going to do, so it helps ease those fears and anxieties.”

Emily Murphy

Academic Advisor II, MBA Programs at Oklahoma State University,
Spears School of Business



The solution

To address these challenges, the Spears School of Business team implemented the Business Fundamentals courses to ensure that all students were given the best chance of success in their pursuit of an MBA.

For new admits lacking sufficient quantitative background, the school required completion of the Business Fundamentals courses in accounting and statistics before enrolling in their first semester. Additionally, the finance course was recommended later in the program to align with the curriculum progression.

Spears School of Business used the customized webpage created by the Business Fundamentals team to direct all students to purchase all 3 courses (Accounting, Statistics, and Finance).



The outcome

This initiative provided students with a foundational understanding of key concepts before starting their MBA program, filling a previously identified gap in preparedness by Spears School of Business.

The team noted that students recognized the value of the Business Fundamentals courses in preparing them for the rigors of the MBA program. Emily emphasized how these courses eased fears and anxieties.

Over time, that stronger foundation translated into measurable results: Online MBA probation rates dropped from an average of 1.7% to 1.0%, while dismissal rates fell from 3.7% to 2.1%. The Part-Time program saw similar gains, with probation rates declining from 3.9% to 2.2%. This outcome demonstrates the scalable impact of Business Fundamentals, as both programs grew significantly over the same period. By providing this baseline to their students, Spears School of Business instilled confidence and readiness for success in the program.

In summary, through the strategic implementation of Business Fundamentals courses, Oklahoma State University's Spears School of Business effectively addressed the challenge of student preparedness, ensuring that working professionals entering their MBA program are equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in a demanding academic environment.

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“I liked the structure of the classes to date. Topics do tend not only to build logically upon each other but seem to overlap slightly. This is a firmly in the “benefit” category for me, as the recap helps trigger my memory of the previous lesson when there is an interval of time separating lessons.”

Bill Braun

Student, Oklahoma State University Professional MBA Program