

# **MBA PROGRAM AT THE CROSSROADS: CONSIDERING PROGRAM INNOVATIONS FOR CLOSER CUSTOMER-STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

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## **CASE DESCRIPTION**

*The primary subject matter of this case concerns strategic managing decisions about the best options for offering the MBA degree considering internal and external demands. The case examines one public university located in Kentucky, Western Kentucky University (WKU). The university name could be removed depending upon the preference of the instructor. Secondary issues examined include issues relating to the curriculum, technology, faculty development, political and structural relations within a bureaucratic organization. Funding models, staffing, and other issues are also included. The case is presented in two parts focused upon two “decision points.” While the case has a difficulty level of four, five, and above (appropriate for senior, first year graduate level, and above) this is based more upon interest and understanding rather than difficulty. Since there is little use of statistical analysis the case is accessible to students at all levels. Students need to be able to apply SWOT and industry analysis. The case is designed to be best taught in two or three class hours and is expected to require one hour of outside preparation by students.*

## **CASE SYNOPSIS**

*Many business students have an interest in the MBA degree, its design, and have their own opinions and preferences on both. It has been common for small and mid-sized universities to offer only a part-time evening MBA option. WKU is in a precarious position at the first decision point in this case: MBA enrollment and graduation rates are moving in the wrong direction for its only option, an evening program. Readers are allowed to innovate and be creative in considering alternative approaches to improve enrollment and graduation rates while meeting external and internal demands. Our business students have always had lots of ideas for how to improve an MBA program. Students using this case in our classes have employed a SWOT and an industry analysis to structure analysis.*

*WKU decided to address facts in “decision point one” by separating the one program option into four “boutique” or limited sized MBA program options. Small accelerated/full-time, online, professional, and international MBA options were created admitting only the number of students who can fit into a single room. At “decision point two” readers are asked to reconsider, improve, and make other decisions following the initial decision to move to the complex boutique approach. This requires analysis of somewhat fuzzy outcomes along with data on some key variables.*

## BACKGROUND ON HISTORY OF MBA PROGRAMS

Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs are experiencing changes in demand which are capable of driving innovations in program design as well as modes of educational delivery. The demand for MBA degrees is healthy. The 2015 MBA survey performed by Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) reported a 10% increase in the demand of MBA graduates domestically and internationally in just one year, 2014 to 2015 (Estrada-Worthington, 2015). The Corporate Recruiters Survey is a year-end poll of employers conducted annually by GMAC, the owner of the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT). The 2015 survey revealed that 96% of employers thought hiring recent business school graduates created value for their companies. Seventy-five percent of employers expect to hire MBA graduates in 2016 and 85% of this group plans to hire as many or more of these candidates than they did in 2015. Further, a majority of employers reported that they expect to increase annual starting salaries in 2016 at or above the rate of inflation for new MBA hires. (2015).

The increase in the employer demand for MBA graduates may be partly explained by a general increase in the stability of the economy. For instance, the U.S. unemployment rates showed steady improvement after the dramatic lows reported at the start of recession of 2009. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, the national unemployment rate was 10.0% in October 2009 and improved to 4.6% in June 2016 (2016).

Second, increased employer demand for MBA graduates may also partly explained by the increasing availability of MBA graduates. The MBA degree has recently become the most popular master degree in the US. The U.S. Department of Education reported that business surpassed education as the most popular postgraduate degree according to 2011-2012 data. In that year some 191,571 students graduated with advanced degrees in business which represented 25.4% of all master degrees (Byrne, 2014).

Third, increased employer demand for the MBA degree may also be explained by the increased complexity and demands of organizational leadership. "Businesses have grown enormously in complexity and scope, and more than ever, they need ethical, skilled, well-educated, creative leaders who are global in outlook," says Paul Danos, Dean of Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business (Byrne, 2014). "Business education in general and the great MBA programs in particular have adapted as these demands have grown, perhaps better than any other form of advanced education."

Recounting the history of MBA programs helps in understanding the current programs. There has been innovation to meet the customer in MBA programs since their inception. Harvard offered the first MBA in 1908 with 15 faculty members and 33 regular and 47 special students (History – About Us- HBS, 2016). The popularity of this new MBA degree at Harvard is well demonstrated by its student enrollment growth: 80 students in 1908, over 300 in 1920, and 1070 by 1930 (Leach, 1993, p.288). Following Harvard's successful lead, the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business started the second MBA in 1940. Even this, the second, MBA program, demonstrates a movement toward a somewhat different customer. The Booth MBA was the first "Executive MBA" (EMBA) which was different because it had different entrance employment requirements and made other modifications to the Harvard-type program (About Chicago Booth: Key Facts, 2016).

These two programs provided two paths for later MBA programs which proliferated in the US and in other countries. The folklore is that the MBA program growth was driven by the need

to provide engineers, and other highly educated individuals without business degrees, with a business education without needing to complete a second undergraduate degree. Generally, the US and international universities offered full-time two-year MBA programs primarily to continuing students and to those willing to leave employment to return to school. More selective EMBA programs also were created in major universities and in urban locations to serve the demands of business at first for the executive suites and later to prepare those who were on a fast track to executive positions. These two programs were positioned to address different markets: students with little managerial or professional work experience (MBA), and those with a lot of such experience (EMBA).

Recently there has been an increase in innovation in MBA “options” in the US. The EMBA has sometimes been separated into different programs: true executive programs; and programs positioned someplace between the EMBA and the part-time evening program. Such programs have names like “Professional MBA (PMBA),” or “Weekend MBA”. The level and amount of leadership work experience requirements are often used to separate the “executive” or elite MBAs from the PMBAs. Yet all of the EMBA derivations generally meet fewer hours than the standard class schedule, in what comes to be called, an “executive” schedule.

There also is a long term trend to offer specialized MBAs “in” topics – like Finance MBA, International Business MBA, Healthcare Administration MBA, and Pharmaceutical Management MBA. The better known “MBA in” programs require the standard broad core of business courses then add a substantial number of courses in the named specialized field. The MBA Guide from the Australian Education Network (AEN) lists 156 different specializations, alphabetically, from Accounting to Urban Estate Management (MBA Guide, 2016). Specialization can be a way to achieve distinction among the 500 accredited US business programs with the cost being the added credit hours.

MBA degrees also may coordinate with other degrees in a single campus, allowing for simultaneous graduations in a dual degree approach. For instance there are many JD-MBA, MD-MBA, MBA-MSN, MBA-MS and other combination degrees (Hass, 2009). The incentive for the student is that these combination degrees generally share electives so that perhaps 3 elective courses are counted as electives toward satisfying two different degrees.

In addition to combination and specialized degrees, some schools have decided to target a specific student set from the standpoint of enrollment. The “Physicians MBA” at the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University Indianapolis (2016) only enrolls physicians.

Furthermore, some schools have altered their curriculum and/or course scheduling. Many universities now offering “Accelerated MBAs” which has a curriculum and schedule which allows students to graduate in as short as one year. These come in at least two varieties: part of the design of a school’s EMBA program or part of their full-time approach. As a result, today there is an alphabet soup of MBA options expanding the early paths of the MBA and the EMBA. EMBA, DMBA (distance), IMBA (international), OMBA (online), PMBA (professional and physician), WMBA (weekend), and many other combinations are now coined by programs and universities.

While the growth of programs continues and innovation in curricula add-ons, the first MBA innovation in delivery occurred when the first online MBAs emerged around 1987. Aspen University, in Denver, Colorado, was founded and offered the first accredited online MBA program in 1987 (eLearnPortal, 2016). The online MBA innovation started during the explosion of distance education using improving technology which allowed the expanded use of the internet and supporting platforms, instructional television, and more immersive video conferencing.

Research performed by Marina Murray revealed that about 50% of U.S. universities that offer master degrees offer an MBA degree (Murray, 2011). MBA program expansions at universities continued even during tough economic times (Alsop, 2006). As discussed earlier in the case, satisfaction with the MBA is high among employers. This satisfaction extends also to both alumni and students. Both groups are very satisfied with the potential benefits of their degree, rate their programs highly, and feel very positive about the value of their MBA regardless of which type of MBA program into which they are enrolled (Bruce, 2010).

## **BACKGROUND ON THE MBA AT WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY**

Western Kentucky University (WKU) was founded in 1906 and is public university with about 20,000 students including 2,000 undergraduate students majoring in business and about 125 MBA students. WKU is the second largest university in the commonwealth of Kentucky for undergraduates, third largest overall, and is a comprehensive university offering a full range of majors.

WKU's main campus is located in Bowling Green, Ky. The town has a population of 70,000, and is located 100 miles south of Louisville, KY and 55 miles north of Nashville, TN on the I-65 corridor. WKU has regional campuses in Glasgow, Owensboro and Elizabethtown (also serving Radcliff and the Ft. Knox military base). Bowling Green, KY was recently ranked as # 19 in its ranking for "Best Small Places for Business and Careers" (Forbes, 2009) and #12 as "Best Places to Launch (a business)" among small metro areas (CNN/Money, 2009), The College Heights Herald reported that it was listed in the 2015 Top 10 College Towns to live in (2015), and repeatedly "Top 25 Places to Retire" (Forbes, 2016)

The Graduate School at WKU offers 125 different graduate degrees including the Master of Business Administration (MBA). WKU only recently added a small number of applied doctorates in education, nursing, clinical psychology, and physical therapy. Otherwise, the largest portion of graduate degrees are master degrees.

In June 1963, WKU merged with the Bowling Green College of Commerce, formerly the Bowling Green Business University, which traces its own history to 1892 (Niedermeier, 2003). The Bowling Green College of Commerce and the Graduate School became the first two colleges within WKU's academic structure. In 1998 WKU's business college was named the Gordon Ford College of Business based upon a gift from a successful graduate. The college has been accredited by AACSB International for many years. AACSB accreditation assures high standards in faculty qualification, curriculum relevancy, student outcomes, and resource availability.

WKU had offered the MBA program during various periods in the past but was without one in the early 1990's. Reasons for suspension of the WKU MBA during that period included problems with staffing classes at the distant sites to meet regional demands, meeting AACSB accreditation standards, and low enrollment. Eventually the business community, represented by the Chamber of Commerce and a newly formed Business Advisory Committee, told WKU that local employers needed an MBA program to help with regional economic growth. A new dean formed an interdepartmental MBA committee with broad powers to formulate curricula and establish policies. Input from the departments led the MBA committee to create a 30 credit-hour (10 semester courses) program consisting of one course from each department, a capstone course, and three electives. A new MBA program was designed as a part-time evening program to serve working professionals in the region. The WKU-MBA program was reinstated in the fall of Year

1. Pent-up demand helped the evening program grow for a few years. After strong growth for 4 years enrollments dropped noticeably by Year 6 of the program.

Internal pressures on the MBA program included staffing concerns related to enrollment and faculty dissatisfaction with student preparedness. In reaction the MBA committee 1) expanded the list of prerequisite courses required prior to taking MBA classes to eight and 2) raised the GMAT entrance minimum to 500 (28<sup>th</sup> percentile). The minimum undergraduate overall GPA remained 2.75 on a 4 point scale.

Externally the WKU regional campuses were making strong pushes to have MBA classes offered again at their sites. Owensboro, KY was, at the time, larger than Bowling Green, KY but has no four-year public university. Army officials at Ft. Knox wanted WKU to offer the MBA to what could be hundreds of students in the military. In response, a college task committee was formed in Year 6 to investigate how to meet external demands. The outcome was to initiate an all online MBA program in spring Year 7. Since curriculum, admission requirements, policies, and faculty remain the same, the online approach was considered a separate delivery “option” rather than a separate MBA “program.” The option was to be called “e<sup>2</sup>MBA” (executive and electronic). Faculty felt “executive” overstated the category of students we were likely to enroll so the option was called “eMBA.” However, the program found that WKU’s “eMBA” caused confusion with EMBA (executive) programs in terms of recruiting, rankings, and reporting.

Since some faculty members were inexperienced at 100% online teaching, a series of seminars were offered to those who wanted to teach online MBA courses. Over half of the college faculty attended the voluntary training. The schedule was designed by more experienced business faculty in a unique way based upon the adult-learning theory (andragogy) principle of content focus and immersion. The online program design was somewhat unique. Students took up to one biterm (7 week) course at a time and then move on to another subject, if they wished, in the next biterm. This enabled students to graduate in two to five years. This small online program (25-30 students per class) filled as soon as the option was offered in the spring of Year 8. In Year 9 the number of courses offered was doubled, two courses in each bi-term, to allow for enrollment growth.

Public institutions were under financial pressures during this period and the hiring of additional faculty could not occur. However, the number of undergraduate business students in the college had doubled over the past 10 years. Therefore, faculty schedules were full. Online MBA courses had to be staffed without adding faculty positions. The approach taken was that faculty worked and were paid “off load” - in addition to their normal duties and pay - for teaching in the online MBA option. A fee, \$250 per course, was added to the online MBA tuition rate to cover the off load payment to the professor.

The MBA committee adopted a 5-year review for the MBA curriculum. Input from students, the business community, MBA administration, and faculty led to improvements in the program which included expanding the number of credit-hours required for the WKU MBA from 30 to 33. The MBA committee also agreed upon 6 learning objectives and identified strategies for collecting data assessing learning in these areas: leadership in written and oral communication, leadership in team skills and ethical knowledge, applying the best practices, and engaging in critical thinking.

In summary, the MBA added an online delivery option to its remaining part time evening program to better meet the demands of external constituents and operated within internal constraints.

<b>Table 1</b>	
<b>WKU-MBA HISTORY</b>	
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>EVENTS</b>
1963	Business University merges with WKU
	MBA offered at various times
1992	MBA Program suspended
Year 1	MBA Program reinitiated
Year 8	Online MBA starts (spring)
Year 9	Faculty Coordinator position created to manage programs
Year 9	Online MBA doubles capacity
Year 10	Professional MBA and Full-time Programs start
Year 10	“Trilateral” (international) MBA starts
Year 12	Full-time MBA fills, online and Trilateral MBAs underperform
Year 13	“Telepresence” allows 2 <sup>nd</sup> campus to join PMBA (scheduled)
Year 14	Online MBA relaunch (scheduled)

## **PART ONE**

### **DECISION POINT ONE**

There were a number of internal problems related to that remaining part time evening program. Once MBA enrollment fully separated into two groups in Year 9 with the rollout of the online option, the composition of those remaining in the part time evening program could be analyzed more easily.

First, evening enrollment numbers decreased as online enrollments increased. Second, almost half of part time evening credit-hours were now generated by international students. The evening program was a part-time program with classes offered on an 18-month rotation. This time frame did not fit well with the visa residency requirements of most international students. They needed to complete the MBA program in a shorter time frame since they spend one year in their visa allowed two years just studying English in an ESL (English as a second language) program. Many domestic students in the traditional program were “roll-over” or continuing BS-MBA students who wanted to go directly from the undergraduate business program to the MBA program. A few students each year wanted to go on for a Ph.D. and wished to move quickly through the MBA. Other students were temporarily unemployed or underemployed and really wanted a full-time program. Accounting students wishing to sit for the CPA exam had to accumulate 150 credit-hours to sit and they wanted a full-time program. Finally, since most of the online students had substantial business experience, the increasing small number of students with years of business experience remaining in the part time evening program reported feeling “out of place” since they were surrounded with students with little business experience.

Another internal problem was the inability to create a viable MBA Student Association (MBASA) or MBA Alumni Association. The international students seemed to be the only evening students who viewed themselves as sufficiently attached to the program to participate. However, almost all of the WKU MBA international students left the US after graduation for reasons including visa requirements, returning to family businesses in other countries, and other reasons. Domestic evening students failed to join or identify with the MBA student groups.

Internally, there was also a problem with MBA graduation rates for evening students, especially domestic students. Class sizes, while declining in the evening, were still acceptable.

However, only a small number of these students actually graduated in any given year. In summary, the program was not successfully addressing the needs of a several sets of students. The evening program only seemed to be meeting the needs of the kind of domestic student who wished to take an MBA class every once in a while and was not focused upon degree completion. MBA leadership, which included faculty and staff, needed to rethink the part time evening program now that the online MBA was having success.

At the same time, there were significant external demands related to the MBA program. Several physician/entrepreneurs asked for an MBA open only to doctors. A study was conducted in Year 8 to determine whether there was a critical mass for creating a “Physician’s MBA” cohort, like the Indiana University at Indianapolis model mentioned earlier in the case. While there was insufficient interest in terms of numbers to create an entire physician’s cohort in Bowling Green, KY, the resulting community dialogue was interesting. When feedback on the physician MBA study was shared, broader community interest in the MBA degree emerged. Input from the college business advisory board and university’s business advisory panel indicated support for the creation of a “professionals MBA” cohort using an EMBA model targeted to serve regional managers and professionals.

Externally, there were also competitive moves from other MBA programs in the region at this time. This included one from the University of Louisville (UofL), the closest large public institution within the state. UofL was creating a weekend “Professional MBA” with higher than normal tuition and its advertising included the local Bowling Green market. WKU’s president asked the WKU MBA program whether it had any plans to meet this competition from a rival institution.

Kentucky, and most of its border states, have lower than the average number of undergraduate and graduate degrees per capita compared to the national average. This means the market is not saturated with MBA degree holders.

At this point the MBA program was considering how to meet the internal and external demands while still operating within very tight internal parameters. Tough state public finances would not allow additional hiring. Limited MBA operating expenses, including marketing, also could not be increased unless added fees could be approved on MBA classes. Now that enrollment in the evening program was dropping, the MBA program was at a crossroads.

## **PART TWO DECISION POINT TWO**

All of the internal and external demand demands and opportunities were shared with the MBA committee in meetings throughout Years 9 and 10. The committee decided that the MBA program could not solve its problems and meet its demands using the current part time evening option and the new online MBA. WKU’s MBA leadership consisted of a newly appointed program director who was also a faculty member, an MBA admissions advisor who was a staff member, and a MBA faculty committee representing the 6 business departments. MBA leadership decided that the program should move closer to serving different future student’s needs using a more complex, three-pronged approach: 1) a new one-year, full-time “accelerated” option to meet the needs of international, roll-over, advanced degree-seeking, and accounting-CPA students; 2) a “Professional” MBA (PMBA) option with executive MBA style policies for experienced professionals and managers; and 3) maintaining the online MBA as the part-time option. Each option (full-time, professional, and online) would be small in enrollment, typically 20-35 as a class size. Such niche or limited-sized options have been called “boutique” program options.

In fall of Year 10 the new full-time and PMBA program options were rolled out. Each was a lockstep option. This means that students were locked into a particular schedule of courses. This had to be done in the fulltime program since the number of sections had to be limited to the number already being offered in the evening program. Full-time MBA classes, like the in the evening program option, were always staffed “in load” meaning faculty taught these courses as a regular part of their schedules. This was in contrast with the new online MBA program which had to be taught off load.

Each new option was also a cohort program, meaning that classmates entered together in the fall, took all classes together, and graduated together. The full-time option was also “accelerated” meaning that students graduated in 12 months. Full-time students took 12 credit hours in both the fall and spring terms and 9 credit hours in the summer. The PMBA option met every other Saturday with two classes per semester, three semesters per year, allowing PMBA students to graduate in two years, six semesters. Online MBA students were able to take one bi-term class per bi-term, which amounted to 2 per semester.

The online option also was mature enough for reevaluation. In Year 10 a survey of online MBA students assessed the effectiveness and preference for the innovative biterm format. The survey revealed that about 90% of the students had a preference toward the biterm format and only 10% wanted to change to a regular semester (16 week) format. This validated using adult learning principles in the online option design.

The financial model for the PMBA required groundbreaking cooperation from various arms of the university administration which allowed the MBA program to charge and keep substantial PMBA fees to pay off-load faculty, market, and administer the program option. The continuance of the online option also required financial arrangements more favorable to the college to also pay for those same expenses, including the off-load pay to online faculty.

Since the college had its first one-year MBA program it was able to cooperate with an international program about which it was aware called the “Trilateral MBA” (TMBA). This program was a cooperative venture in which three colleges shared resources to create an international experience for their students. A French-speaking university in Canada, a Spanish-speaking university in central Mexico, and WKU in the US each agreed to allow four students from each school to attend their schools in rotation but only pay tuition to, and receive degrees from, their home schools. This twelve-student cohort would spend one semester together in one country then move on to the next until all three countries and semesters were complete. Each college received three semesters tuition from its four students for a total of 12 tuitions. Since each college would host the 12 students for only one semester the number of tuitions received would equal the cost of the one semester in which seats were actually used. All classes were in English. The TMBA, therefore, became the fourth program option.

Enrollments under the new four-option boutique approach showed the following (see Exhibit 2):

a) Full-time enrollment was 14 (Year 11), 22 (Year 12), and 28 (Year 13 estimated). Seats in all full-time classes were actually always over 25 since students from the evening program were allowed to populate the new full-time courses. Enrollments almost achieved the enrollment target of 25 by the second year.

b) PMBA enrollment for the first cohort was 22 (Year 11), 17 (Year 12), and 17 (Year 13 estimated). This option has attrition of about 20%, the cohorts overlap (classrooms have 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort students attending at the same time), and so the combined number of PMBA students at any one time is about 35. The individual cohort number which seems to be settling at about 17 is



lower than expected, since the original targeted number was 25. However, the option is financially viable if the enrollment stays above 12. The other large town in the region, Owensboro, seeks its own cohort but cannot guarantee that a class will have sufficient students. Further, MBA resources will not support staffing of classes at both a second site and on the main campus.

c) Online enrollment declined by 13 students the year the PMBA program started. Cannibalization of enrollments was expected since both options target similar working students. However, online enrollments that peaked at 62 (Year 10) dropped to 49 (Year 11), 41 (Year 12), and 43 (Year 13 estimated). Internet marketing of the online program, including Google advertising, failed to drive applications in Year 12 or Year 13.

d) Under the agreement between the three schools cooperating in the international TMBA program, each school is obligated to enroll four students. The first year there was little time to recruit and only one WKU MBA student enrolled.. WKU improved to having 3 TMBA students the next but instead of continuing to progress toward the required 4 students the next year WKU failed to enroll any TMBA students at all. This failure to enroll any TMBA students from WKU creates a significant financial loss since there are no tuition dollars to cover the tuition costs to WKU of the visiting students from Canada and Mexico.

e) MBA student credit hours show significant increases since the move to the four boutique program options. The increases in credit hours was 26% (Year 11) and 36% (Year 12) showing that MBA students are taking more courses. While the headcount (“total enrolled”) has remained relatively stable near the 5-year average of 128, the number of classes taken per student has increased 41% over the two years since the change to boutique options.

f) Degree completion is also up dramatically. The all-time peak was 59 degrees conferred a few years after the evening program was reinstated was surpassed in Year 12 at 70. The increased graduation rate was not seen in the first year after the change since the first cohort of PMBA students had yet to complete the program. However, the new rate should remain the current target on a year-to-year basis since all programs are graduating students.

Problems that need to be addressed at the second decision point include the concern for the viability of the TMBA option. The vision statement of WKU is “A leading American university with international reach.” Every WKU program needs to consider what it does in terms of meeting the vision. This year nearly \$40,000 tuition expense will be deducted from an already small MBA budget to pay the tuition costs of the visiting TMBA students from Canada and Mexico under the Trilateral MBA agreement. The MBA program cannot handle the risk that such financial losses will continue. If the TMBA relationship is discontinued based upon the lack of student interest are there structural alternatives to offer significant international study to MBA students to meet the challenge of the WKU vision statement and best practices in business education?

Sluggish online enrollments continue despite the college’s rating as “Best Buy” by rating websites that cite the comparatively low tuition charge by public institutions in Kentucky and the AACSB accreditation of its business programs. However, there are dozens of online MBA options accredited and non-accredited. Many of these have large national marketing budgets. Others, especially non-accredited MBA program with smaller marketing budgets, rotate accelerated and online programs into areas like the Bowling Green area. While some online programs are relatively expensive, almost all non-accredited programs have little or no entrance requirements.

Some design issues are being reevaluated including whether online students should be limited to only 2 classes per semester. Another benchmarked institution in the state allows online MBA students to take up to 4 classes per semester and has very strong enrollment numbers at the same time WKU is stagnant. Nine credit-hours in a semester is considered “full-time” status for

graduate students seeking financial aid and full-time students have greatly expanded financial aid opportunities.

Another issue is whether the “biterm-only” approach should be kept. Admission requirements are also higher at WKU than the other benchmarked institution and might explain some enrollment differences. A recent study of online WKU MBA students found that a huge majority liked the biterm approach and did not want it changed. However, anecdotal evidence from email and telephone calls tell a different story: that many people shopping for an MBA degree want to be able to take more than two classes. These two items are related since biterm classes are necessarily more concentrated and eliminate degrees of freedom found normally in a 15-16 week course where a student could get behind but have time to catch up. It may be hard to take two biterm classes, for instance one in finance and another in accounting, all within a 7 week term. However, if a student took one class in each biterm and a third class over 15-16 weeks the load may be more manageable.

The marketing approaches used can also be reevaluated. The MBA program spends approximately \$15,000-\$20,000 per year in marketing. This money comes entirely from fees assessed to online and PMBA students. These fees also are used to pay the faculty that teach the online and PMBA classes. A mix of advertising elements are used including billboards, local radio and local TV ads, print ads in local newspapers, brochures, information meetings at regional sites, public relations, and other marketing items.

Another approach could be to simply “right-size” the number of online course offerings to create higher enrollment numbers per class which only average about 17 per class. One dynamic in online enrollment at WKU and other programs is that only about 2/3rds of admitted online students ever take classes in any given time since convenience and flexibility are elements which attract online students.

Enrollments in the PMBA program are considered successful but are also being reevaluated. The highest enrollment for the PMBA program was 22 but the last two cohorts averaged 16 each. Since one of the elements credited with initial success of the PMBA option has been the cohort or team concept the program does not want to threaten that aspect. Students enter the program in a cross-discipline study team and remain with those members to graduation. While adding the typical university 2-way instructional television (ITV) has been rejected as inappropriate as an expansion idea for this group of managers and professionals, there is consideration of using cutting edge videoconferencing technology. Expensive “telepresence” and similar approaches which use high definition, large screen panels that show distant participants life size are being investigated as ways to include Owensboro managers and professionals in a PMBA cohort.

<b>Table 2 MBA ENROLLMENT</b>								
	TMBA	Full-time	PMBA	Online	Evening	Headcount	Credit-hours	Degrees
Year 2					72	72	537	36
Year 3					109	109	904	28
Year 4					170	170	2037	41
Year 5					168	168	2207	59
Year 6					163	163	1761	54
Year 7				26	136	162	1779	38
Year 8				44	87	131	1482	25
Year 9				54	82	136	1460	53
Year 10				62	61	123	1603	42
Year 11	1	14	22	49	40	126	2013	41
Year 12	3	22	35	41	23	124	2735	70
Year 13 (estimates)	0	28	32	43	17	120	2800	70

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