

Digital Efforts Have MBA Programs Back in Growth Mode

Top Area Schools See First Increase in 6 Years

By KATIE MURAR

The pandemic is largely in the past for business schools serving Orange County, but one trend that picked up speed during the lockdown appears to be here to stay.

Online programs helped buoy enrollment across the region's top 14 MBA schools over the past year, prompting officials to ramp up those offerings for the long term.

"We added four new programs in 2019, one of which was a completely online MBA program," said Michael Solt, dean of the College of Business Administration and professor of finance at California State University, Long Beach. "It was good timing."

That addition helped enrollment nearly double last year to 617 students.

"We thought the online MBA program would be popular, but it is far more popular than we expected," Solt said. "It's now our largest graduate program."

The pandemic itself helped stimulate enrollment increases, Solt said, as people looked for new hobbies or careers after being stuck at home in 2020.

"I think many decided to take that time to invest in their careers and themselves," he said.

The 14 business schools reported a nearly 1% enrollment increase to 2,856 students last year after an 11% drop the year prior. It's the first increase seen on the Business Journal's annual list since 2016.



California State University, Long Beach saw greatest increase in enrollment

Digital Efforts

CSULB saw the largest increase on the list, which sorts universities alphabetically.

"Our goal is to continue investing to improve the quality of our online program, so it remains a desirable option in the Southern California region," Solt said.

Azusa Pacific University is also expanding its online offerings, recently launching a new program designed for graduation in 12 months. The program offers the inclusion of "microcredentials," or internationally recognized badges or certificates, such as Formstack, Tableau, Python, Excel and Inter-cultural Competence.

The University of California, Irvine, whose Paul Merage School of Business is the largest in Orange County, has also noticed demand for its online courses.

"We shifted everything remote for the short term, but in the past year we have retooled our programs to have dual-teaching capabilities" with both remote and in-person classes, according to Burt Slusher, assistant dean of MBA and Specialty Masters Programs.

"Flexibility is the key now, and people want to have an education where it meets their needs."

The school has three MBA programs: a full-time program, one for fully-employed stu-

dents and an executive MBA. The hybrid learning program has been adopted for the school's fully-employed MBA program, or FEMBA.

Developing Leaders

UCI's MBA program ranked No. 43 among all U.S. business schools in a 2021-2022 report by Fortune Education. It's investing to continue that reputation, with a new initiative focused toward fintech, artificial intelligence, augmented reality and sustainability industries.

"Companies are now looking for experts in those four areas, so we are adding new faculty members in those subjects to meet demand," Slusher said.

California State University, Fullerton, saw its enrollment increase nearly 12% to 339 this year. The business school, the second largest in the country, is raising money to build a new Center for Leadership, which aims to provide career development training for current and prospective CSUF students.

The new center is expected to deliver within the next two and a half years, according to President Fram Virjee (see story, page 1).

Moving forward, business schools hope to maintain momentum heading into the 2023 school year.

"People who were on the fence about getting an MBA found the pandemic as an opportune time," Slusher said. "Our school has invested heavily into digital tech, which will help us continue to develop leaders for the digital-driven world." ■

THE LIST
MBA Schools
p26

THE LIST MBA SCHOOLS



DAVID SMITH
Interim Dean
Pepperdine University



ROD SMITH
Director, Graduate Programs in Business
California State University, Long Beach



SRIDHAR SUNDARAM
Dean
California State University, Fullerton



IAN WILLIAMSON
Dean
University of California, Irvine



DREW WOLF
MBA Program Director
Concordia University Irvine



GLENN WORTHINGTON
Dean
University of Massachusetts Global

THE LIST MBA SCHOOLS

▶ NEXT WEEK'S LISTS *Automakers, Auto Dealers*

LISTED ALPHABETICALLY

School •Address	School logo	Total current MBA enrollment •yearly % change	•Full-time faculty •Part-time faculty	Programs offered	-Minimum completion time (in months)* -Minimum tuition cost (completion of degree)*	Accreditation	Partial list of S. Calif. sites	Top MBA official(s) •Title •Phone/fax	
Anaheim University 1240 S. State College Blvd., Ste. 110 Anaheim 92806-5152 Website: anaheim.edu Email: ausupport@anaheim.edu		15 36%	0 11	MBA in International Business; MBA in Global Sustainable Management; Master of Entrepreneurship	18 \$16,075	DEAC	MBA programs are 100% online	Robert Robertson dean, Akio Morita School of Business (714) 772-3330/(714) 772-3331	
Azusa Pacific University 1915 W. Orangewood Ave., Ste. 100 Orange 92868-2046 Website: apu.edu Email: dlevasheff@apu.edu		9 ⁽¹⁾ -18%	6 11	MBA; Master of Business Management; Master in Professional Accountancy	12 \$27,804	IACBE, WASC, AACSB candidate	Azusa, Orange County, Inland Empire, Murrieta, Victorville	Roxanne Helm-Stevens interim dean (626) 815-3463	
Biola University 13800 Biola Ave. La Mirada 90639-0001 Website: biola.edu/mba Email: mba@biola.edu		74 0%	15 6	MBA; Master of Management, Nonprofit Organizations; Master of Professional Accountancy, M.A. in Leadership & Innovation, Graduate Certificate in Personal Financial Planning	16 \$28,500	ACBSP, WASC	La Mirada, online	Gary Lindblad dean (562) 777-4015/(562) 906-4545	
California Southern University 600 Anton Blvd. Costa Mesa 92626-7221 Website: calsouthern.edu Email: admissions@calsouthern.edu		27 -53%	0 27 ⁽²⁾	MBA with concentration (financial management, healthcare administration, human resource management, international business, management, project management, strategic leadership)	24 \$20,095	Higher Learning Commission, ACBSP	online	Steven Hess interim dean, School of Business and Management/ interim dean, School of Education (800) 477-2254 / (714) 263-7470	
California State University, Fullerton 800 N. State College Blvd. Fullerton 92831-3547 Website: business.fullerton.edu Email: businessgradprograms@fullerton.edu		339 12%	150 136	MBA; M.A. in Economics; M.S. in: Accountancy, Accounting & Finance, Taxation, Information Systems, Information Technology	24 \$40,600	AACSB, WASC	Fullerton, Irvine	Sridhar Sundaram dean (657) 278-3622	
California State University, Long Beach 1250 Bellflower Blvd., CBA 363 Long Beach 90840-8501 Website: csulb.edu/cob-graduate-programs Email: mba@csulb.edu		617 93%	44 52	MBA: Saturday MBA, Evening MBA, Online MBA, Accelerated Full-time MBA	21 \$30,000	AACSB, WASC	Long Beach	Rod Smith director, graduate programs in business (562) 985-5565/(562) 985-5590	
Chapman University 1 University Drive Orange 92866-1005 Website: chapman.edu/mba Email: mba@chapman.edu		196 NA	89 45	MBA; Juris Doctor/MBA; MBA/Master of Fine Arts; MBA/M.S. in Food Science; M.S. in Accounting; M.S. in Real Estate	21 \$95,000	AACSB, WASC	Orange	enrik Cronqvist dean, Argyros School of Business and Economics (714) 997-6684	
Concordia University Irvine 1530 Concordia W. Irvine 92612-3299 Website: cui.edu Email: mba@cui.edu		70 1%	2 12	MBA	18 \$38,000	WASC, IACBE	Irvine	Drew Wolf MBA program director (800) 229-1200/(949) 854-6864	
Hope International University 2500 E. Nutwood Ave. Fullerton 92831-3104 Website: hiu.edu Email: graduateaduladmissions@hiu.edu		34 -3%	4 22	MBA and M.S. in Management both with concentration (general management, marketing management, nonprofit management)	12 \$25,500	WASC, IACBE	Fullerton	Lydia Knopf dean, College of Business & Management (714) 879-3901/(714) 681-7450	
Pepperdine University 18111 Von Karman Ave. Irvine 92612-0109 Website: bschool.pepperdine.edu Email: pgsadm@pepperdine.edu		93 ⁽¹⁾ -15%	91 58	Multiple MBA program options: Joint MBA degrees offered- BS/MBA, BS/IMBA, BSM/ MBA, JD/MBA, MBA/MPP; M.S. Degrees: Business Analytics, Applied Finance, Global Business, Human Resources, Real Estate, Management & Leadership, Organization Development, Business	24 \$103,740	AACSB, WSCUC	Irvine, Los Angeles, Calabasas, Malibu	David Smith interim dean (310) 568-5500/(310) 568-5727	
Stanton University 9618 Garden Grove Blvd., Ste. 201 Garden Grove 92844-1563 Website: stanton.edu Email: info@stanton.edu		115 -29%	5 25	MBA	30 \$10,800	WASC	Garden Grove, Los Angeles	Louna Al Hallak chief academic officer (714) 539-6561/(714) 539-6542	
University of California, Irvine 4293 Pereira Drive Irvine 92697-3125 Website: merage.uci.edu Email: mbaprograms@uci.edu		610 -3%	64 71	Full-Time MBA; Fully-Employed MBA; Executive MBA; Master of Finance, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Professional Accountancy; M.S. in Business Analytics	21 \$111,825	AACSB, WASC	Irvine	Ian Williamson/Burt Slusher/ Yuhai Xuan dean/assistant dean, MBA & specialty masters programs/ associate dean, masters programs (949) 824-4565	
University of La Verne 2855 Michelle Drive, Ste. 250 Irvine 92606-1026 Website: laverne.edu/locations/irvine Email: occ@laverne.edu		393 -24%	55 112	MBA; MBA for experienced professionals; M.S. in: Leadership and Management, Accounting, Finance, Gerontology, Data Analytics; Master of: Public Administration, Health Administration	15 \$30,030	WASC	La Verne, Bakersfield, Burbank, Santa Clarita, Irvine, Ontario, Vandenberg, Point Mugu	Emmeline de Pillis dean, College of Business and Public Management/professor, management (714) 505-6939/(714) 505-6937	
University of Massachusetts Global 16355 Laguna Canyon Road Irvine 92618-3801 Website: umassglobal.edu Email: apply@umassglobal.edu		264 -25%	7 38	M.A. in Organizational Leadership; Master of Business Administration; Master of Public Administration; Master of Science in Human Resources	12 \$19,545	WSCUC	Antelope Valley, Irvine, Menifee, Ontario, Palm Desert, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Clarita, Santa Maria, Victorville	Glenn Worthington dean, School of Business and Professional Studies (949) 341-9800	

*For most populous program
Abbreviations: NA: not applicable;
Note: To the best of our knowledge, this information is accurate as of press time. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of the list, omissions and typographical errors sometimes occur. Unless otherwise noted, the information on this list was provided by the companies themselves. List may not be reprinted without permission of the editor. Photos show the first top official listed.

⁽¹⁾ Orange County enrollment only
⁽²⁾ Business Journal estimate