

***Eight-Year Program Review IBHE Report Summary: see attached Resources page***

## **PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT SUMMARY**

- 1. Reporting Institution:** Eastern Illinois University
- 2. Program Reviewed:** Master of Business Administration (52.0201)
- 3. Date:** February 21, 2022
- 4. Contact Person:** Dr. David J. Boggs, Coordinator of Graduate Business Studies
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## **5. OVERVIEW**

Consistent with its mission and those of Eastern Illinois University (EIU) and its Graduate School, the MBA program at EIU, accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), offers superior, accessible and AACSB-accredited graduate business education that prepares its graduates for leadership positions in industry, government and non-profit organizations. The program emphasizes communications, critical thinking, and the application of analytical tools that are appropriate for making informed business decisions in the contemporary global environment. Faculty are dedicated, qualified and possess terminal degrees and experience appropriate to their fields of expertise; they foster excellence and innovation in a challenging and culturally diverse learning environment, with a focus on experiential and applied learning and research. Ethical behavior, faculty-student scholarship, business and community engagement, and preparation for life-long discovery and professional fulfillment are promoted in four MBA program choices: (1) Accounting Concentration, (2) Applied Management Option, (3) Research Option, and (4) Geographic Information Sciences (GIS) Option. All MBA students complete a core of six three-credit courses for a total of 18 credit hours. The remaining 15 hours are completed according to the student's chosen concentration or option. The MBA program offers part-time and full-time matriculation both online (asynchronously) and on-campus in Charleston, IL. Students may complete the Applied Management and GIS options entirely online while the Accounting and Research choices require completion of some courses on campus. Hybrid delivery (online and on-campus) is available for select courses. Regardless of modality, classes are taught by the same doctoral-qualified graduate faculty. The program focuses on learning for leadership, learning for excellence and learning for life in support of a School of Business "where students are inspired and engaged to become successful business professionals." Students are provided analytical and managerial knowledge and skills with unique options for program customization through electives, internships, research projects, study abroad, and independent studies. Learning goals for the MBA program are: (1) propose and evaluate business decisions using appropriate processes, (2) use a strategic approach to make business decisions, (3) make ethical and legal decisions including evaluation of the organization's social responsibilities, and (4) demonstrate professional communication skills.

Eastern's MBA program is distinguished from its Illinois public university competitors in terms of its program offerings (e.g. Research Option), delivery flexibility (on-campus, hybrid, online), faculty

engagement, size, resources, and geographic location. Competing programs include the iMBA and other master's programs in management, business and accounting at the University of Illinois, Northern Illinois University, Illinois State University, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. According to the IBHE, Eastern MBA degrees conferred for the years 2017-2021 numbered 48, 38, 50, 36, and 43, representing about three percent of MBA graduates from public universities in the state. Eastern's MBA program and its faculty commit to part-time and full-time students online and on-campus from the time of their acceptance through degree completion and commencement. Significant achievements by and changes to the program include introduction of the online MBA program option in the summer of 2016 and dropping dual-degree programs while implementing a new Second Master's Degree Policy approved by the Council on Graduate Studies and Graduate School, and made effective in the fall of 2020. Ambitions and plans for the future include developing a Business Analytics MBA Option and determining whether to permanently suspend offering MBA classes in Champaign at Parkland College (offerings were temporarily suspended in response to Covid 19).

## **6. MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **a. Description and assessment of any major changes in the program/disciplinary context e.g., (1) in the overall discipline or field; (2) student demand; (3) societal needs; (4) institutional context for offering the degree; (5) other elements appropriate to the discipline in question; and (6) other.**

The Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC.com, 11/2021) recently reported an increase in applications to MBA programs from international students and women candidates. Fortune.com (4/24/2021) has reported trends for MBA programs that include growth in applications, rising interest in online programs, waiving or eliminating requirements for GMAT or GRE scores, flexible admission and deferral policies, virtual interviews, tours, and events, and growth in international student admissions. Other changes over the past eight years in the MBA program disciplinary context include: (1) Demographic shifts have made salient the increased need to engage a diverse set of employees, customers, and suppliers. (2) There are increased expectations for using data analytics to support decision-making as a consequence of more affordable and powerful technologies available that can be used to generate and analyze data to improve operational and strategic decisions. (3) Social media has grown in prominence and is used increasingly for messaging, branding, recruiting, hiring, and other business and organizational goals and activities. (4) Technological and cultural developments aligned with Covid have contributed to prioritization of managing, communicating, educating, training and working from a distance and using new tools to do so (e.g. Zoom, Teams, smartphones, audio/video).

Eastern's MBA program prepares students for management careers in many industries and functions (e.g. manufacturing, accounting, human resources, marketing, finance, sales, construction, medical and health, leisure and lodging, real estate, education, public relations, etc.) with median pay that is typically between \$50,000-\$150,000. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/home.htm>) reports that "the median annual wage for management occupations was \$109,760 in May 2020, which was the highest wage of all the major occupational groups." Moreover, "employment in management occupations is projected to grow 9 percent from 2020 to 2030, about as fast as the average for all occupations, and will result in about 906,800 new jobs. Employment growth is expected to be driven by the formation of new organizations and expansion of existing ones, which should require more workers to manage these operations."

The EIU Career Services 2020 Annual Report indicates a median salary for 2020 MBA graduates of \$66,500 and also reports that all MBA graduates but one are employed or enrolled in higher education (e.g. Ph.D. program). Moreover, the institutional context (i.e. internal, local,

national, and international) for offering the MBA degree continues to remain strong, with institutional program acceptance and relatively stable rules, policies and practices.

**b. Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement;**

Eastern's Graduate Learning Goals prioritize content knowledge, critical thinking, communication skills, research and creative activity, and professional responsibility, while the aligned MBA goals emphasize appropriate business decisions, a strategic approach, ethics and social responsibility, and professional communication skills. Two important data sets collected regularly to evaluate these goals are the Educational Testing Service (ETS) exam results and the Capsim Comp-XM simulation and exam results. In the most recent ETS exam result for Eastern Illinois University MBAs, measured relative to other nationwide MBA students, the average score for EIU MBA students was 50.2 percentile. This mean score suggests that in general EIU MBA students perform on par with students from other MBA programs throughout the USA. Moreover, the performances reflect an approximation of a bell curve around the mean percentile. This finding is not surprising since Eastern made a decision two years ago to admit MBA students without a GMAT or GRE score if they had a 3.0 or higher undergraduate GPA, or if they had a 2.75 or higher GPA with two or more years of professional work experience. Other evidences of learning outcomes are the high employment rate of EIU MBA graduates, strong written and spoken communication shown in written papers and recorded oral presentations, and research achievements demonstrated in scholarly conference presentations. The MBA also engages with alumni to obtain feedback about the program outcomes. This combination of direct and indirect measures provide a multi-perspective view of the program outcomes. Opportunities for program improvement include (1) mastering delivery with online tools and technologies, (2) introduction of a Data Analytics MBA Option, (3) introducing a course option that incorporates social media strategy and use of video and other tools for management and business purposes.

**c. Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes;**

Since the last IBHE review the School of Business has introduced an online offering of its MBA program with Applied Management Option. The online program has grown quickly and now represents almost 44 percent of the total number of MBA students at EIU despite having a tuition rate of \$600 per credit versus \$320 per credit for on-campus in-state graduate tuition. This online program offers courses in 8-week sessions during the fall and spring semesters and 5-6 week summer sessions. The program is designed for working professionals, most of whom take two classes per semester and finish the program in 2-3 years. Many new PhD-qualified graduate faculty members have been added to the graduate, MBA faculty, bringing new expertise to the areas of marketing, management, human resources, finance, accounting, and MIS. Also, many new course offerings have been made available to students, including new accounting, finance, management, and business analytics electives.

**d. Description of actions to be taken as a result of this review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes.**

Based upon this review the MBA program plans the following actions: (1) prepare a proposal for an MBA with Data and Analytics Option program; (2) review the resources and opportunities for

the MBA program delivered at Parkland College in Champaign and afterwards either eliminate or rebuild this program; (3) propose introduction of social media content into the current MBA elective MGT 4800 class or consider an alternative avenue to incorporate exposure to social media and related technologies. (4) Review program delivery methods (on-campus, online, and hybrid) with an aim to develop and improve them.

**Comments from the College Dean:**

**VPAA Decision:**

- Program in good standing
- Program flagged for priority review
- Program enrollment suspended

**VPAA Explanation**

The summary above gives an overview of the significant program changes that have occurred and been measured within the Master of Business Administration degree. Enrollment has remained steady in the MBA, which offers four program concentrations, with six shared core courses and five specialization electives. Within the review period, the Applied Management Option was rolled out as an online option that, while nearly twice the cost of face-to-face programs, is robustly enrolled. The jobs outlook and the median salary are strong for the program, which is currently reviewing several actions that will have measurable outcomes: propose an MBA with Data and Analytics Option, retire or rebuild the MBA program at Parkland College, increase social media content in the curriculum, and streamline different course modalities.