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The MBA Edge

09.28.2009 | Business  Enrollment is up for the University of Dayton's Masters in Business Administration program this year, bucking a national trend of dipping interest in part-time MBA programs.

According to the Graduate Management Admission Council, applications for part-time programs dropped or were unchanged for more than half of the programs they surveyed for 2009. And The Wall Street Journal reported on Sept. 16 that many part-time programs were suffering, primarily because of decreased tuition reimbursement by companies.

However, increased applications for the University's MBA part-time program resulted in a 14 percent increase in enrollment, bringing the total number of students to about 500, said program director Janice Glynn.

"When the economy and job market are bad, often enrollments will drop for part-time programs because companies cut back on their tuition support for employees," Glynn said. "While nationally many part-time and executive programs are seeing a drop, applications and enrollments are up for our MBA program."

The University of Dayton's program is enrolling more white-collar workers laid off or stalled in their job searches who are seeking what Glynn called a "re-tooling" of their skills and qualifications.

"We're getting more younger students enrolling immediately after graduation because they can't find jobs," she said. "We are seeing more people who are re-tooling their skills because they've been laid off or can't find jobs. They see the MBA degree as an investment in their future."

That's what's happened to Jason Farmer, of Centerville, Ohio, who was laid off last November from a job as a senior marketing manager. After nine months of intense searching, he couldn't find a job that matched his skills and experience and is now pursuing an MBA full-time.

"In this tight job market, the applicant pool is larger and more competitive. I think it's getting to the point where you need the MBA just to get your foot in the door," Farmer said.

He thinks with its emphasis on real-world experience and networking, the University's MBA program will give him a competitive edge in his job search.

Glynn said students are also attracted to the reputation and flexibility of the University's program, which offers a number of evening and online classes, and allows students to continue their studies – even complete their degrees – when life takes them out of the area or out of traditional classrooms.

"We've had students take online classes from the war zone in Iraq, from their jobs in China and while they're on maternity leave," Glynn said.

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