What Is a Professional MBA? Overview and Career Outcomes

March 6, 2025



While MBA programs come in various formats — part-time MBAs, full-time MBAs, online MBAs, joint MBAs — they all have the same chief aims: professional development and career advancement. However, MBA programs are not one-size-fits-all. Students may have different needs and goals based on their backgrounds.

One of the biggest hurdles college students face is time management, with many struggling to balance the demands of school life, personal life, and work life.. According to a recent survey by Kahoot, a global educational technology company, nearly half of students ranked time management as one of their top academic challenges.

These struggles can be even more pronounced for MBA students, many of whom continue to work while pursuing graduate education. For these students, part-time programs, such as the Professional MBA (PMBA) at the A. B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University, can prove highly beneficial, conferring all the typical benefits of an MBA program without making them give up their jobs or their salaries.

Prospective students with busy lives wondering whether this type of program is right for them should explore what a Professional MBA is, how it can help them achieve their goals, and the career outcomes it can lead to.

Professional MBA Overview

The Professional MBA is a part-time MBA program designed for working professionals, particularly early- to mid-career professionals who already have multiple years of experience under their belt. Because the PMBA's explicit aim is to allow students to maintain their jobs while they pursue their degree, courses typically take place outside of work hours, either in the evening or on the weekend.

Similar to that of traditional MBAs, the curriculum in a Professional MBA program covers a broad range of business concepts, including accounting, marketing, business communications, data analysis, and ethics. This allows students to develop a holistic understanding of business across various disciplines, a crucial endeavor for aspiring business leaders.

Management training and leadership development are also core features of a Professional MBA program. To this end, a PMBA curriculum provides advanced training in topics such as managerial economics, organizational behavior, and new venture planning.

PMBAs emphasize learning through experience, providing students with practical, hands-on training in small classes and group settings.

Additionally, students who are employed while enrolled in a PMBA program have the opportunity to take what they have learned in the classroom and apply it to their current roles and workplaces, helping them hone their skills even further and increase their value as employees.

Professional MBA Requirements

Admission requirements for MBA programs vary by institution and the type of program. In general, though, applications to MBA programs adhere to a standard pattern. Students seeking to enroll in Tulane's Professional MBA program need to submit the following information for their application to be considered:

- Resume
- Personal essay
- Letter of recommendation
- Undergraduate transcripts from an accredited university

Because the PMBA program is specifically designed for working professionals looking to take the next step in their careers, applicants should have at least two years of work experience.

The program consists of 46 credit hours and takes about three years to complete. Students in the program typically take general business courses in the first two years — completing two courses per semester, including summer sessions — and focus on electives in the final year of the program.

Elective courses can count toward a concentration or specialization in select fields, including analytics, energy, marketing, finance, and strategic management and innovation. Students need to complete 12 credit hours (four courses) from relevant electives to earn a concentration and nine credit hours (three courses) for a specialization.

Although not required, pursuing a specialization or concentration allows students to tailor their education to specific academic or professional goals. This can allow them to demonstrate their expertise in a particular subject matter to potential employers.

Full-Time vs. Part-Time MBA: What Are the Differences?

In many ways, full-time MBAs and part-time MBAs are quite similar. They cover many of the same topics and have very similar goals. However, clear differences exist between them, and understanding these differences can help prospective students decide whether a Professional MBA is right for them. The key differences include the following:

- **Coursework:** Although the subjects covered in each program are very similar, the course load in a part-time MBA may be somewhat lighter than that of a full-

time MBA. Tulane's PMBA program requires 46 credit hours, for example, while the full-time MBA consists of 61 credit hours.

- **Flexible Scheduling:** Students in a full-time MBA program are expected to immerse themselves in the program and prioritize their education. In contrast, most PMBA students are juggling both work and school. As a result, class schedules accommodate students' professional commitments, with courses held either in the evening or on the weekend.
- **Time Commitment:** Because courses are only held in the evening or on the weekend, part-time MBAs generally take longer to complete. Whereas most full-time MBAs take about two years, part-time MBAs can last two to four years.

Why Earn a Professional MBA?

Many of the advantages of earning a Professional MBA are identical to those of any other kind of MBA: career advancement, increased earning potential, networking opportunities. This helps explain why interest in PMBAs and other part-time MBAs is so strong.

According to the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, a majority of MBA students are enrolled in part-time programs, with 59 percent of students worldwide and nearly 65 percent in the U.S. enrolled part time. Additionally, applications to part-time MBA programs grew between 2023 and 2024, particularly in the U.S., according to a report from the Graduate Management Admission Council.

The unique profile of the Professional MBA makes it especially appealing to working students who want to advance their careers through education but do not want to give up their current jobs. For prospective students who fit this description, a PMBA may be the ideal route.

Below are some of the benefits of pursuing a professional MBA.

Schedule That Accommodates Work-Life Balance

Most PMBA programs hold classes in the evening or on the weekend, allowing students to devote time to their education outside traditional work hours. This not only allows them to balance work and school effectively but also helps them maintain a fulfilling personal life. Proper balance among work, life, and school contributes to improved mental health and focus and greater productivity.

Ability to Continue Working and Earning Money

Most part-time college students, especially MBA students, work while pursuing their degree. They may have various reasons for doing so: It helps pay for their education, they need to support their family, they want to gain valuable experience and hone their practical skills, or all three. Thanks to their part-time schedule, Professional MBAs make it much easier for enrolled students to keep a job — and the salary that comes with it.

Employer Tuition Reimbursement

Some companies offer full or partial tuition reimbursement to students pursuing higher education, as they consider it an investment — especially when it comes to MBAs. Providing educational funding to employees can help boost loyalty and reduce turnover. Companies also benefit from having a larger pool of highly skilled workers. An organization may be even more motivated to help cover the cost of its employees' education if they continue to work while enrolled.

What Can You Do With a Professional MBA?

One of the key features that defines the professional MBA is its ability to position graduates for career success. The business knowledge and management training the program provides can equip students with a versatile skill set they can use to achieve a host of positive professional outcomes, whether they are looking to get promoted within their current field or organization or transition to a different career path.

PMBA alumni can qualify for a wide range of specialized or leadership roles.

1. Human Resources Manager

Human resources (HR) managers are essential to the administrative functions of an organization, primarily focusing on employee relations as well as staff recruitment, hiring, and training. These individuals also act as liaisons between management and employees.
The key responsibilities of HR managers include the following:

- Overseeing employee payroll and benefit programs

- Advising other department heads on various issues, such as equal employment opportunity and harassment policies
- Directing the recruitment, interviewing, and hiring processes
- Managing employee relations concerns, including mediating disputes and guiding disciplinary actions
- Ensuring compliance with labor laws and regulations

HR managers also advise executives on strategic planning and talent management, helping them identify ways to maximize employee value and efficiency. They may assess productivity metrics and recommend changes to help meet budgetary goals.

The role of an HR manager can vary from company to company. At smaller organizations, they may handle every aspect of HR, while at large corporations, they may manage specific aspects of HR, such as compensation and benefits or training and development.

Human Resources Manager Salary and Job Outlook

Given their integral role in the workplace, human resources managers are generally well paid and consistently in demand. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the median annual salary for HR managers was $136,350 as of May 2023, with variations in pay based on their industry and organization.

Employment of human resources managers is expected to grow by 6% between 2023 and 2033, the BLS reports. Organizations will continue to need HR managers to help guide various strategic organizational policies.

2. Supply Chain Manager

A supply chain manager is responsible for directing and optimizing the production and distribution of an organization’s goods and services. They oversee every aspect of the supply chain, from sourcing and manufacturing to delivery.

Effective supply chain management helps minimize costs and streamline operations, facilitating numerous business goals, such as improved customer satisfaction and profitability. Managers work across countless industries, including manufacturing, energy, and wholesale trade.

Although their job description may vary from role to role, many supply chain managers share similar duties, including the following:

- Developing, implementing, and evaluating strategies to improve supply chain efficiency
- Advising executives, including the chief operations officer, on ways to reduce expenses and grow the business
- Anticipating supply chain disruptions and developing contingency plans to maintain productivity
- Establishing and maintaining relationships with supply chain partners, including manufacturers and logistics coordinators
- Recruiting, interviewing, and training supply chain employees

Supply Chain Manager Salary and Job Outlook

Supply chain managers are vital to organizational success and highly valued by employers across numerous industries, leading to strong demand and competitive pay for their expertise.

According to Paycale, the median salary for a supply chain manager was approximately $89,800 in November 2024. Several variables can affect a supply chain manager’s compensation, including the industry they work in and their particular role. For example, senior supply chain managers earned approximately $119,200 in November 2024, Payscale reports.

Although the BLS does not track occupational data for supply chain managers, it projects that employment of logisticians, a closely related role, will grow by 19 percent between 2023 and 2033, creating nearly 49,000 jobs. The continued growth of e-commerce will be a major driver of demand for supply chain professionals, with online sales accounting for more than 15 percent of all sales nationwide, according to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

3. Financial Manager

Financial managers oversee the fiscal health of organizations by managing their financial resources and guiding their investment decisions. They often spend much of their time analyzing data, including financial reports and market trends, to identify ways to cut costs and maximize profits.

While there are different kinds of financial managers with varying job descriptions, they generally share some responsibilities, including the following:

- Preparing financial documents, including financial statements, business activity reports, and forecasts
- Supervising staff involved in financial reporting and budgeting
- Identifying opportunities to drive business growth, such as investments and expansion
- Ensuring legal and regulatory compliance

Financial managers may specialize in a particular area. For example, treasurers direct budgetary activities for organizations and develop strategies to raise capital, including investments and the issuance of stocks and bonds. Risk managers, meanwhile, help organizations minimize financial uncertainty and loss.

Financial Manager Salary and Job Outlook

Because they play a crucial role in ensuring the financial stability of organizations and driving business growth, financial managers often command high salaries and enjoy strong demand for their services.

According to the BLS, financial managers earned a median annual salary of $156,100 as of May 2023. Their industry and the type of organization they work for can affect how much financial managers earn. For example, managers in the finance and insurance industry made about $159,000, while government financial managers made about $129,900.

Economic growth and an increased emphasis on risk management, among other factors, are expected to drive employment growth for financial managers over the decade. The BLS projects that employment of financial managers will climb by 17 percent between 2023 and 2033.

4. Management Consultant

Management consultants, sometimes referred to as management analysts, advise organizations on how to improve their efficiency and profitability. Similar to financial managers, consultants analyze organizational data to identify cost-cutting measures and revenue-generating opportunities. However, while financial managers typically work for a single organization, management consultants often work on a contractual

basis, advising multiple clients at a time.

In some ways, management consultants also have a broader job description than that of financial managers, looking beyond finances and seeking ways to improve organizational operations. The typical responsibilities for management consultants include the following:

- Gathering information about an organization through employee interviews and on-site observations
- Examining financial and other data, such as revenues, expenses, and employment reports
- Identifying operational issues and recommending improvements to processes or policies
- Preparing reports and delivering presentations to organizational leadership
- Conferring with department heads to ensure that improvement strategies are effective

The role of a management consultant may vary based on where they work or the particular job they were hired for. For example, many consultants specialize in specific areas, such as inventory control or corporate restructuring. Others focus on certain industries, such as health care, while government consultants specialize by type of agency.

Management Consultant Salary and Job Outlook

Organizations are always looking for ways to improve their efficiency and profitability, leading to high demand — and high salaries — for management consultants' services.

According to the BLS, the median annual salary for management consultants was $99,410 as of May 2023. Various factors can influence how much individual consultants earn, such as their industry and the type of organization they work for. Consultants who work for large consulting firms are typically paid a base salary plus a year-end bonus. Clients often pay self-employed consultants by the hour or project.

The BLS projects that employment of management consultants will grow by 11 percent between 2023 and 2033. Growth is expected to be particularly robust at smaller consulting firms that specialize in specific industries or business functions,

such as information technology or HR. Demand for management consultants' expertise is also expected to be strong in the public sector, as government agencies that spend taxpayer dollars seek ways to cut spending and maximize efficiency.

Why Choose Tulane's A. B. Freeman School of Business for Your Professional MBA?

Earning an MBA can help ambitious professionals achieve their goals, whether they are looking to get a promotion, shift to a new career track, or start their own business. Part-time MBA programs offer a flexible solution for working professionals who want to enhance their skills and fast-track their careers without leaving their current jobs.

If you want to become a business leader and take your career to the next level, consider the Professional MBA program at Tulane's business school. By offering evening classes, the program is designed to accommodate working students, allowing them to balance their jobs, studies, and personal commitments. Students can immediately apply the knowledge and skills they gain in the classroom to their current roles, making them more effective and valuable employees.

The program features five specializations that allow students to align their studies with their interests and goals:

- Analytics
- Energy
- Finance
- Marketing
- Strategic Management and Innovation

Additionally, the PMBA connects students with peers and alumni, helping them broaden their professional network and further enhance their career prospects. Discover how Tulane can help you become a versatile business leader.

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