

Association of International Graduate Admissions Consultants



Defining and promoting professional excellence in serving graduate and professional school applicants worldwide.

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NEWS

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Graham Richmond, [Clear Admit](#)

It's been several months since many of us gathered in New York City at the AIGAC Annual Conference and witnessed the handiwork of Conference organizers Anna Ivey ([Anna Ivey Consulting](#)) and Jeremy Shinewald ([MBA Mission](#)) as they took us on a whirlwind 48-hour tour of key graduate admissions issues. That event was just the beginning of an exciting time period for AIGAC, and while I'd like to use this column to focus largely on the future, I wanted to take a moment to highlight some milestones we've achieved in recent months:

1. Our NYC conference was graced by the presence of numerous AIGAC supporters, including more than 30 AIGAC members and admissions representatives from Berkeley, Yale, Michigan, INSEAD, Dartmouth, UVA, NYU and Columbia.
2. Shortly after our Conference, I represented AIGAC at the Graduate Management Admissions Council's Annual Industry Conference in Baltimore and presented the results of the AIGAC MBA Search Survey to representatives from nearly every leading MBA program. Several schools mentioned that our survey results were of par-

ticular interest to their programs, as they knew that AIGAC members' clients were typically high caliber and top-tier focused.

3. Admissions officers at leading graduate institutions are consistently reaching out to AIGAC to reach our audience and provide avenues for members to learn more about their programs. Just two weeks ago, the director of admissions at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business invited NYC-area AIGAC members to listen to remarks from Dean Robert Dolan at a Ross alumni event.
4. AIGAC members are showering the organization with this sort of praise: *"Suddenly, I am getting very friendly messages from top-drawer MBA programs, expressing interest in getting to know me and presenting their programs. These admissions officers trust AIGAC members and our ethical standards. I'm so glad I joined AIGAC!"* – Dr. Marlena Corcoran ([Athena Mentor](#))

While all of these developments are wonderful, I'd like to turn to the future and briefly outline what's in store going forward.

AIGAC Online Admissions Summit Spring, 2010

While some of you may have seen

emails about this new initiative, I'd like to take a moment to thank Linda Abraham ([Accepted.com](#)) for her efforts in organizing this unique online event for our membership. Linda has been forming a committee to get this venture off the ground and I am particularly excited by the prospect of using technology to bring our far-flung membership together for healthy debate, discussion and knowledge sharing. Stay tuned for details.

Third Annual AIGAC Conference June, 2010 in Boston

This year's Conference chairs are Anna Ivey (a returning veteran to the AIGAC conference-chair circuit) and Maxx Duffy (a long-time Board member and co-founder of AIGAC). While I don't want to divulge too much of what they've got in store for us, I have been granted the authority to reveal that the event will be in Boston during the third week of June and that we've already been invited to tour two leading MBA programs (I'll let you speculate which two!). This is the earliest we've announced the timeframe and location for our Conference, so my hope is that many of our international members can make the trip!

Membership Campaigning and Renewals

As our organization has grown to represent more and more of the

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world's most reputable and ethical consultancies, we've increasingly garnered the attention of leading graduate schools. While this growth is a good thing - as it allows us to learn from a larger group of peers in diverse markets - our priority is to uphold the high standards we have set for membership. This is why I urge members to recommend AIGAC to their peers in the space - and to trust that our Membership Committee will continue to be strict in our evaluation of new candidates for membership even as we grow.

On a similar note, the majority of you will be hearing from Kathy Snelson, our Executive Director, in the coming weeks with a reminder to renew your membership prior to year's end. Be sure to renew promptly to ensure your access to all of the events that AIGAC has planned for 2010!

That's the news from AIGAC HQ. I would like to wish all of you a wonderful holiday season and a busy finish to the calendar year!

HOW THE RECESSION IMPACTED BUSINESS

By Paul Bodine, Accepted.com

This month we decided to take a different approach and ask members how the recession has been impacting their businesses. Because this is sensitive information, we chose (after an initial misstart) an anonymous five-question survey format, reflected below. The responses are grouped by the question posed. Thanks to Scott Shrum of Veritas Prep for setting up the online survey format.

1. How is the recession impacting your business? Up or down?

- It is difficult to say what the effect has been. I wish that I could attribute any increase in demand to shrewd marketing efforts, not the recession, but we probably are not that clever. It is probably a combination of factors, including the recession.
- My business is up in terms of number of clients; it is down in terms of the volume of repeat business (multiple applications per client) I am getting.
- My consulting business started as strong as 2008 in July 2009, but has slowed in new inquiries this month. I am curious to know if this is also happening in other locations.
- Up.
- We have not really had any impact either way other than have had a couple more clients have to explain recent employment gaps in their applications than per usual.
- Slightly up, but people have started the process later in the season than normal. I think in this climate people are feeling skittish about investing in admissions consulting before they have things like their standardized test scores nailed down.
- The 2009 season started off incredibly strongly, and I was well on my way to having my best year ever. However, things slowed down considerably in December, and the year finished slowly.
- My 1st-3rd quarters 2009 are up slightly over 2008 to date.
- No negative impact at all. My business is up and I reached my core client

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DIRECTORS

President, Graham Richmond
Clear Admit, LLC
Phone: 215-568-2590
Email: g-richmond@aigac.org

Vice President, Anna Ivey
Anna Ivey Consulting, Inc.
Phone: 877-525-4839
Email: anna@annaivey.com

Treasurer, Linda Abraham
Accepted.com, LLC
Phone: 310-815-9553 x101
Email: l-abraham@aigac.org

Secretary, Irene (Maxx) Duffy
Maxx Associates
Phone: 626-256-6225
Email: mduffy@aigac.org

Ricardo Betti
MBA Empresarial
Phone: (5511) 5051-9684
Email: rbetti@aigac.org

Stacy Blackman
Stacy Blackman Consulting
Phone: 323-934-3936
Email: stacy@stacyblackman.com

Jeremy Shinewald
mba Mission
Phone: 646-485-8844
Email: Jeremy@mbamission.com

Executive Director, Kathy Snelson
Phone: 916-446-3670
Email: ksnelson@aigac.org

maximum back in July. In 2008, I reached that maximum in September. In terms of my blog, readership is up this year.

- Since I have only been in business since 2008 I cannot comment on if or how the recession is affecting business. I also don't have enough "seasons" of applications to tell how this has

affected clients attitudes, etc.

- We have seen an uptick in the volume of applicants we are working with. Inquiries have gone up as well as the actual number of clients we are working with. Compared to last year, we have seen nearly a 40% increase in client volume.
2. Why do you think it's having this impact? (e.g., clients want to sit out the recession in grad school or aren't going because they want to hold on to their current job)
- If anything, the number of applicants has increased here in Japan as many companies are using sponsorship to keep talent during the downturn. Keep in mind that the financial sector here in Japan is healthy. My second biggest market is the US and that business is up from last year. I have certainly had a few more clients who were out of work due to the recession.
 - I suspect clients who are interested in either changing their careers or investing in themselves are choosing not to "sit out" the recession and are opting to apply now.
 - I think the crisis is creating an even greater division between excellent candidates and good candidates. Excellent candidates are the ones still applying and the ones that still have jobs, while the good ones are the ones that are applying in lesser numbers because they are more risk averse if they have not lost their jobs yet. I think this is the reason new inquiries in October have gone down as compared to other years, as I may have already seen most of the stream of excellent candidates in this year's crop and the good candidates, who usually knock at my door later in the cycle, are not doing so in the same numbers as before. I have not had any jobless candidates yet.
 - More people applying, more competition.
 - Interestingly, I haven't had any people who are going to grad school because they've lost their jobs. They're all still employed.
 - I think that the recession has created more applicants. The situation after tech boom, where dozens of high-flying firms disappeared altogether, was a bit different. Hundreds of pets.coms just disappeared and so did their stock options. Now, most of the banks are still around and bonuses at Goldman have stayed eye-popping, so the post-MBA dream of riches is still alive. This is keeping interest strong and people are willing to make the investment necessary to get in to a top-program. I am not sure the same value proposition was as clear in 2001/2002 or so, when the economy last really bottomed out.
 - All my clients are pre-health; the competition is still fierce; I will find out if the applicant pool has increased much at the AAMC meeting in Boston first week November; but my observation is that pharmacy, dentistry and osteopathic medicine has more applicants this year than last-- don't know by how much...will find that out at the NAAHP meeting in June 2010 --my "guess" is that health care careers are more recession proof than those in business or teaching or...
 - Clients are definitely more cost conscious. I have been selling a lot more "entry-level" services and selling consulting one or two hours at a time. This was not the case a year or two ago.
 - The recession is making clients super cost conscious. Some are laid off from their jobs; others are getting little to no raises; still others are not getting bonuses.
3. How has the recession affected the way clients or potential clients interact with you? (e.g., more stressed, applying to more schools, haggling more?)
- Hmm...I have a few more who choose to use hourly advising, I think, rather than my annual advising package; most clients use the package to get full service advising.
 - I am not sure that the recession has been a factor in changing attitudes. We are seeing a new wave of Gen Y applicants who are growing up with a very different understanding of rules and ethics. It seems that the anonymity inherent in growing up online has created a certain detachment from reality and personal responsibility. A sliver of our clients are becoming far more demanding – they seem to have less ability to take responsibility for flaws in their profilers and yet they still have expecta-

tions that they will go to the elite programs. And, they are completely unashamed to ask for services that we deem to be unethical. (“Can you just write my essays?” “Can I pay you more to write my recommendations?”) We are starting to verbally review our contract with our clients to make sure that they know and acknowledge all of the rules. Again, it is a small number, but we are trying to be proactive to avoid problems.

- Definitely more anxious.
- Some want to negotiate a fixed number of hours, rather than work on an hourly basis. This has not happened in the past. I have not accepted to work on a prefixed number of hours to complete applications.
- Nothing except it impacts their stories. Some try to haggle, but since I don't need to do that, they are by definition not my clients.
- Hmm, interesting question. I think clients are on average a little bit more stressed going through the application. I have also noticed more of them expanding their list of schools. So two to three years ago it wasn't unusual to see a handful of clients only applying to one or two schools, now we are seeing clients going as far as up to seven schools.
- Certainly more haggling and buying smaller lower priced services.
- They seem more conscientious about the name brand of the schools they are applying to. They are always brand conscious, but when they see graduates from

even top schools struggling to find employment, it makes them even more skeptical about the other schools.

- More stressed, more anxious.
4. Has the recession affected the mix of your clients in any way, i.e., fewer international clients, etc.
- We still have as many international clients as we did before.
 - Not really. We are still seeing similar volume internationally. Career switchers are also holding steady.
 - Since my blog is read worldwide, my client mix has changed somewhat as I have a more even split between Japanese and non-Japanese clients. I don't believe the recession has any clear connection to this as it is clearly linked to the popularity of my blog.
 - A lot of people who are in precarious job situations.
 - All my clients are non American. They are Mexicans, Central Americans and Spanish candidates. This has not changed.
 - I tend to get the students who really know they need advising, i.e. diagnosed or undiagnosed learning disabled, ADHD, and many 1st and 2nd generation immigrants, and about 1/3 straight arrows; not many international students. I do not believe the mix has changed. What has changed is there are more pre-dental and pre-pharmacy applicants perhaps due to lifestyle considerations.

- I have seen an increase in candidates who hold non-business bachelor degrees. My international clientele is holding steady.
- Not noticeable difference.
- Impossible to say – no comment on this one!

5. Now that the 2009-10 admissions season is underway, have you noticed any new trends? How do you feel this season will be compared to the 2008-9 season?
- The 2008-2009 season was incredibly strong. In comparison, I suspect that this season will be less than that, but it ain't over yet!
 - I expect that this new season will look like how the last one ended (slower than average), although I am still hopeful for a big Round 2.
 - Similar.
 - People are more anxious and more focused on job prospects.

MEMBER PROFILE:
LUVY GONZALEZ de WILSON, THE MBA IMAGE
 By Amy Ulrich, [Stacy Blackman Consulting](#)

As Luvy González de Wilson of The MBA Image looks back at her 15 years in MBA education, she recalls her many roles within the business education industry: from faculty to business school administration in admissions and placement services; from independent consultant to MBA fair provider; from free lance instructor for various local universities to guest editorialist for her local newspaper El Norte and even guest Board Member for the MBA Tour.

For almost a decade Wilson has assisted clients in Latin America achieve their MBA admissions goals. After 10 years outside Mexico attending High School, earning a BA and an MBA in Europe and the United States, Wilson took a faculty position at ITESM in Monterrey, Mexico. The educational curriculum at ITESM at the time consisted of constant testing, using multiple choice and true false questions, which was leading to an epidemic of cheating. To address the issues and ensure her students were learning the material, Wilson introduced open book, essay tests.

To prepare her students for the new testing system, Wilson began introducing an essay composition training session for each of her classes. As time went by and her students graduated, Wilson began receiving a stream of alums, now working professionals, who asked her to review their MBA application essays. She started small, but as more and more students graduated her office hours were spent tutoring her former students, and not working with current students. Wilson decided to provide services for a fee at home, and the Professional Written Image was born.

Meanwhile, Luvy Wilson made a career switch to DUXX, serving as the Marketing and Career Management Director. In her position at DUXX, Wilson improved placement for the MBA students, creating a career management department and driving placement for students internationally. She was also successful in attracting female and international students into the program.

After three years at DUXX, Luvy Wilson started working full time at her admissions consulting business, and changed the name to

The MBA Image to reflect her largely MBA clientele. Along with helping clients through the admissions process, Wilson also conducts an MBA Admissions Workshop with admissions officers in Monterrey, Mexico.

Wilson observes that her clients are typically well prepared for the MBA application process, due to extensive experience abroad, typically hailing from multinational firms, consulting companies or financial institutions. Often the biggest challenge is helping clients with the self-awareness needed in the MBA applications process, a process that all AIGAC members can relate to.

INTERNATIONAL MBA PROGRAMS

By Tanis Kmetyk, Accepted.com

Anyone following the MBA rankings race can't help but notice the strong emergence of programs outside of the United States in recent years. Regardless of the ranking organization and its methodologies, international schools are steadily climbing onto and up the "top-MBA" lists. Some, like LBS and Insead, are longtime regulars, but others are barely known outside of their home country.

To wit: In the latest full-time international MBA rankings from the Economist, Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School is ranked 10th in the world --and Europe's 4th-- bypassing better known brands like Cambridge University's Judge Business School, Instituto Empresa in Madrid and even NYU's Stern School of Business. In the same rankings, the first US school was 3rd-ranked Haas (after IESE and IMD).

As record application levels to the US schools shut out many worthy international and domestic applicants, non-US business schools may represent an attractive alternative for a business education that may meet or surpass the known brands, at least by the Economist's standards. They can also be a wonderful opportunity for American students looking for international exposure. And during this market lethargy, their lower tuition fees or shorter span represent a bargain.

According to the 2009 Financial Times rankings, only 51 of the world's top-100 MBA programs are in the US. Simultaneously, international applicants who once flocked to the US schools are now applying to non-US schools in droves and US applicants are starting to follow. According to GMAC, the number of American students attending European programs rose from about 2,100 in 2000 to 3,550 in 2005. In 2008, the American population at Barcelona's IESE increased by 60%.

Clearly, the need for globally educated management is accelerating and the schools must remain ahead of the game. Every top US school now offers internationally focused classes and initiatives. However, the European schools have been doing this longer and more aggressively, probably a main reason behind their popularity in a globalized world. Some have built entire campuses abroad, like INSEAD in Singapore, or smaller centers, like EUR Erasmus's new center in Beijing. Yet others have offshored, like Canada's Sauder School of Business, who exported its international MBA program to China.

For the moment, rather than investing in building new campuses, American schools are partnering

with existing institutions. For example, the brand new “Global Entrepreneurship Program,” a partnership between Babson College (USA), EMLYON (France) and Zhejiang University (China), students will study at each of the 3 campuses and earn an MSc in Entrepreneurship. For its new dual-degree program, MIT Sloan is collaborating with 3 foreign business schools. After doing their first year MBA studies at Tsinghua University in Beijing, Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul or HEC in Paris, students will spend their second year at Sloan.

In EMBA news –where international cooperation has been happening for several years already-- Columbia University and London Business School have expanded their joint-EMBA program to Hong Kong and Shanghai. Known as EMBA-Global Asia, participants will receive a joint MBA from the three schools.

Other US schools are taking smaller steps like offering courses that incorporate travel to a foreign country or region to meet with business leaders and government officials, similar to Stanford’s “Global Immersion Program” option. But, no matter what the form, the trend to globalize business education isn’t about to subside. In December, 31 American Universities will visit India to attend an Indo-American Education summit, in a bid to offer their courses to Indian institutions.