

# STAND OUT

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# WORLD OF MBAS



STEPHANIE LAKE/CANADIAN PRESS

Professor Kelly Parke at York University is "awesome," says Jason Pottinger, a Toronto Argos and student. "He definitely knew how to orchestrate the class so that it was very interactive."

## Igniting creative sparks

What makes a superb teacher? Three engaging instructors who fire up their 'dragons'

LISON DUNFIELD  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Kelly Parke's dragons are poised and ready to pounce. It's the last day of class at his innovation through technology and design course at the Schulich School of Business, and the game is on.

There's a lot at stake: his students are competing for \$1 million in "Schulich bucks" from the investors. The winning

presentation will get a chunk of (fake) investment money, bragging rights and a half-point bump to their final mark, Parke tells an MBA student, and this is worth a lot.

Projects up for judging range from a smartphone application that would allow commuters to pay TTC fares by

passing through a sensor gate rather than with tokens, to Instacare, a "virtual medical consult at your fingertips" through FaceTime on an iPhone.

You can tell from the ripples of laughter and the enthusiasm on the faces of the presenters that this is not a typical MBA class. And you can tell from Parke's sheer joy when he talks about the students' ingenuity that he gets a lot out of teaching this course.

What makes a great MBA professor? According to a 2012 article based on a

survey of the best MBA teachers in Bloomberg Businessweek, students "almost universally praise" qualities such as a "compelling classroom presence," thorough knowledge of subject matter, research proficiency and availability.

Many MBA students have high standards. They've already spent time in the workplace, possibly in a leadership role, and they are often funding their own education.

MBA continued on M2



### Q&A: Diversity brings a global outlook to classroom

JACLYN TERSIGNI  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Peter Todd, dean, Desautels faculty of management, McGill University

Q. What helps prospective MBA students stand out in their application?

A. We're looking very carefully at work experience. I think we're looking as well at motivation and what people are after. We look at references. But beyond that, we also ask each student the question: "What do you bring to the learning experience of others?" Each student has to bring something that helps other students to learn as well.

Q. What unique specializations are available for Desautels students?

A. One is global strategy and leadership. . . (Students) all either do a formal internship, a field project inside a company, or an international exchange which gives them more of the global flavour we like to have at McGill. . . students now will do an international trip together.

Q. More than 85 per cent of faculty come

from countries aside from Canada. How does that influence learning?

A. I think having professors that come from all around the world means you get a richer diversity of perspectives in the classroom. I think you get different points of view about how business is done in different places in the world — how different cultures work and so on, and I think the professors help drive that conversation in the classroom.

Q. What separates Desautels from other business schools and MBAs?

A. Our hallmark is our integrated management focus. Rather than starting an MBA and having students study a little bit of finance, marketing, accounting, technology and putting it all together in second year — if they manage to put it together — we start with the big picture.

Q. What is the world market like for Desautels graduates?  
A. The last three years, we've had the best placement years for our MBA grads . . . We've had the highest placement rates and highest salaries we've seen.

"Our hallmark is our integrated management focus"

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## » WORLD OF MBAS

# Trading an almanac for an MBA



ROBIN ANDREW/UNPOSED PHOTOGRAPHY

Shelley McPhail completed a masters in business administration in agriculture at the University of Guelph. It opened her eyes to the challenges she and other farmers face daily.

As global agriculture pressures rise, the modern farmer looks to school for the big picture

**FIONA ELLIS**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

An MBA is not just for the boardroom. Graduates of prestigious MBA programs are not just applying what they've learned in highrise urban offices; many are putting essential business skills to the test in Canada's milking parlours and fields.

The agriculture industry is a lot like any other industry, says MBA graduate Steven Koeckhoven.

The 29-year-old from Saskatchewan graduated last year from Western's Richard Ivey School of Business. He helps run his family farm and also works for an agribusiness start-up.

"A lot of the stereotypes around agriculture is that it is just family farms, when it's a whole lot more than that. It's much more complex," he says.

Agriculture is a huge contributor to Canada's economy. A report released last year by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada showed the agriculture and agri-food sector, in 2010, directly provided one in eight jobs, employing two million people and accounting for 8.1 per cent of total gross domestic product.

Shelley McPhail was born and raised on a 165-acre farm near Almonte, Ont., in the Ottawa Valley where she now lives and manages with her husband, Harold, in addition to another 300 acres they rent. They grow spring wheat, winter wheat, malting barley, oats, soybeans, canola and hay. They also provide custom planting and spraying services and have a small trucking company.

In 2005 she enrolled in the University of Guelph's Masters in business administration in agriculture, a mostly online course with some short residency requirements.

"When I started the MBA program, we had already been farming full-time on our own for 22 years, and we were doing an excellent job," she says.

"I felt if the farm grew and the industry became more challenging I needed more management experience, and I needed it to

be at a level that I could be confident with the decisions I made."

The business of agriculture is global, highly competitive and rapidly changing, says David Sparling, professor, operations management and chair of agri0-food innovation, Richard Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario.

That is why learning business skills is not just important but essential, he says.

"You can't just go out and do what you've always done," he says.

"You have to think about what is coming next in terms of trends. How are the markets changing and how is the competition changing? It's like any competitive global business, management is important, leadership is important. We're now getting farmers that do more."

Getting an MBA opened McPhail's eyes to the challenges she and other farmers face daily.

"To take courses at an MBA level, you're thinking outside of the box. You're thinking of the whole global market, how it impacts you, the opportunity it presents but also the threats it presents, and it inspired me to use what I knew to help me inspire others."

McPhail now works for non-profit organization Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association as a program representative and workshop leader. She helps educate farmers on their ever expanding businesses.

"It's all about helping farmers to decide what it is they need to do to move forward, how to make a plan and make those tough decisions. These are multimillion-dollar operations now; they need to be managed like big operations."

Farmers are becoming more astute as business people, says Sylvain Charlebois, associate dean at the University of Guelph.

"There is more and more appetite out there to learn more about food systems and agriculture. I've met farmers with a PhD," he says. "It's not necessarily about getting the credentials, it's about the knowledge."

"I'm living proof that anyone can do an MBA," says McPhail.

"We can all farm, we love to farm, but we're not all natural managers, and management is what is going to make this sustainable, and make us successful into the future."

## Creativity is a muscle that can be developed

MBA from M1

Hugh Munro, director of MBA programs at Laurier School of Business and Economics in Waterloo, adds that MBA scholars, especially those who are continuing to work while studying, are often more demanding. "The quest and appreciation for knowledge is richer."

Parke's students say they enjoy his teaching because he encourages them to come up with creative solutions to problems and to imagine technology that might not yet exist.

"He asks us questions which really make us think. Is this making a difference? Is this making an impact?" says Kiran Kumar Chadaram, who took Parke's course last term and was part of the TTC app team.

The best MBA instructors encourage class participation, say students, and keep classes engaging. "Professor Kelly was awesome. He definitely knew how to orchestrate the class so that it was very interactive... it was never a dull class," says Jason Pottinger, another student in last fall's technology and innovation course and a Toronto Argonauts linebacker.

He also appreciated Parke's use of technology during Grey Cup week. Since Parke filmed all of his lectures and posted them online, Pottinger was able to watch classes he missed during training.

Parke, who spent years as a technical producer with numerous television networks, developed the course in 2009 with Peter Zak, a design consultant. Confident that creativity is a muscle that can be developed, they collaborated to "teach creativity to people." They felt creativity was lacking in Ontario MBA graduates.

At University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, Joseph Martin is sought after because he enriches his students' learning experiences via his depth of knowledge and life experience. Martin, a graduate of Harvard's advanced management program, was a longtime management consultant before he developed the university's unique Canadian business history program. He had heard from colleagues that those coming out of MBA programs were intelligent, but missing key context from the country's business past.

The course generates buzz because of Martin's personable style, his willingness to engage with students and his high-profile guest speaker list — from Canadian business superstars Red Wilson and Dick Currie to former prime minister Brian Mulroney. His

class is structured so that students are able to look to the Canadian business past to glean clues about how it might behave in the future. Speakers, mentors and Martin himself pepper the class with anecdotes.

"One of the things I really liked about the class was hearing his stories," says second-year MBA student Sam Newman-Bremang.

Newman-Bremang also touched on something that makes Martin and other professors so well-liked — he's an approachable person who cares about his students, whether to hand out career advice or talk baseball after class.

At the University of Western Ontario's Richard Ivey School of Business, Prof. Mary Crossan pushes students to be open and vulnerable — they seem to love it.

Rather than a study of other great leaders, her transformational leadership class is an inward-looking program; students are required to think deeply about their own characteristics.

**"This course is about understanding your values and character strength and how to make decisions."**

**JACLYN WHINCUP**  
MBA STUDENT

"Mary really gets you to be vulnerable and get outside your comfort zone... This course is about understanding your values and character strength and how to make decisions," says current student Jaclyn Whincup.

Crossan's pupils discuss and reflect on readings that challenge their thinking.

Students come to the first class bringing a symbol of something meaningful to them and discuss how that has shaped who they are.

As part of the final mark, they are required to do a workshop on a major leadership characteristic, such as humility or integrity.

Other unique elements are her "near death-visualization exercise," in which pupils must imagine themselves with a year to live and what they would do with that time.

"This definitely pushed me in ways I didn't know I could... this course can be emotionally exhausting," says Whincup.

Teaching MBA courses "is not a get-rich profession in a monetary sense, but it certainly is a rewarding one in terms of experience" and meeting interesting people, says Laurier's Munro.

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TORONTO STAR



# » WORLD OF MBAS

## STRATEGY

# Warrior training for case challenges

Bonding, dealing with the unexpected, all part of exciting competition

**BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Some teachers coach football after school, others help struggling students with their class work. Not many spend 12 straight hours on Skype helping MBA students, scattered across four countries, try to win a gruelling case competition.

About a year ago, Joe Fayt, a marketing professor at York's Schulich School of Business and the coach of the university's MBA case competition team, was online from 11:30 p.m. on a Friday night until 11:30 a.m. Saturday morning helping his students prepare for the prestigious Hult Global Case Challenge.

The competition was taking place in Shanghai, London, Boston and San Francisco. Because of the time differences, he was able to coach all of his teams — Fayt sent four groups of five students to each location — before they had to present. "I sat at my desk for 12 solid hours," he says. "One team woke up when the other went to bed and I was able to help them all out."

If that seems a bit extreme, it's because case competitions — a contest that tests how well MBA students from different schools can present a business case — have become a big priority for schools.

Peter O'Brien, chairman of the board for Concordia University's John Molson MBA International Case Competition, the world's longest-running, says that at the first competition in 1981 they only had four teams. In 2012 they had 46 teams apply, up from 42 in 2011. They only take 36 teams, but, says O'Brien, more teams clamour for a



Marketing instructor Joe Fayt is a coach extraordinaire at how to win a case study.

STEPHANIE LAKE/CANADIAN PRESS

spot every year.

Part of the reason why more schools are fielding teams is that having a winning group can help boost university rankings.

These competitions, at least anecdotally, can also help students find better jobs. "I've spoken to recruiters who tell me that they look for people who've had this type of training," he says. "Students have also told me they've gotten a better job because they were part of a case competition team."

Case competitions are not for everyone, though. While some competitions do offer winners money — the John Molson competition hands out \$10,000 to the top team — it's all volunteer work and a lot of time is spent in preparation.

Beth Nuniam, a Schulich MBA student, is the captain of the team that went to the MBA Games, a

Canadian-school-only contest that focuses on business cases (there's also a sports and spirit component to the contest) in early January. She says her 40-person team spent 100 hours over two months preparing.

That's just one contest that Schulich is a part of; it plans to attend seven competitions by the end of the current school year.

Many schools receive sponsorships to help pay for travel costs — RBC gives financial and educational support to the Schulich team. But people usually have to fork out some money to get to the different events located around the world.

Nuniam says all the costs and work are worth it. Students learn how to work in a group and under pressure — they get just three hours to solve a business problem and prepare a case — they enhance their speaking skills and they have to deal

with the unexpected. "It helps with my planning and management skills a lot," she says. "You get a lot of real life experiences."

Team members network with students from other schools and meet with business owners and experts who judge the case studies. And winning? Nuniam's team came in first at the most recent MBA Games at McMaster.

For this year's Hult Global Case Challenge, Fayt is skipping the all-nighter and travelling with a team of five to San Francisco instead. There will be other teams in Boston and Dubai, and he will coach them online, but he doesn't plan to be up until dawn.

"This time I'm flying with the team. I need to be there," he says. "I just love this event — and all the case competitions. It's always really exciting."

## WHAT A CASE COMPETITION LOOKS LIKE

At the annual MBA Games, teams tackle case studies in four areas: finance, marketing, crisis management and strategy. The finance case study at the recent games was Joe Fayt's favourite, in large part because the team came in first.

The team was "representing" company A, which wanted to increase its stake in company B. They had to figure out whether the current market value of company B reflected its true potential, to ensure a good return on their investment. The team had to evaluate the takeover business, put a valuation on it and then make a recommendation as to whether their "client" should buy it or not. They had to outline what the impact of the purchase would be on share price and market positions.

The reason they did so well was that Fayt decided, in practice, to focus on merger and acquisitions issues. He had seen that M&A activity was picking up. It's also an area that covers a lot of different issues. He and his team got lucky; it just happened that that was the finance case that came up. "We could have picked other topics in the finance area," he says, "but it seemed to me that M&A was a wise focus of attention."

### MORE ONLINE

For additional online coverage on how to work the room and the QS World Tour, go to . . .

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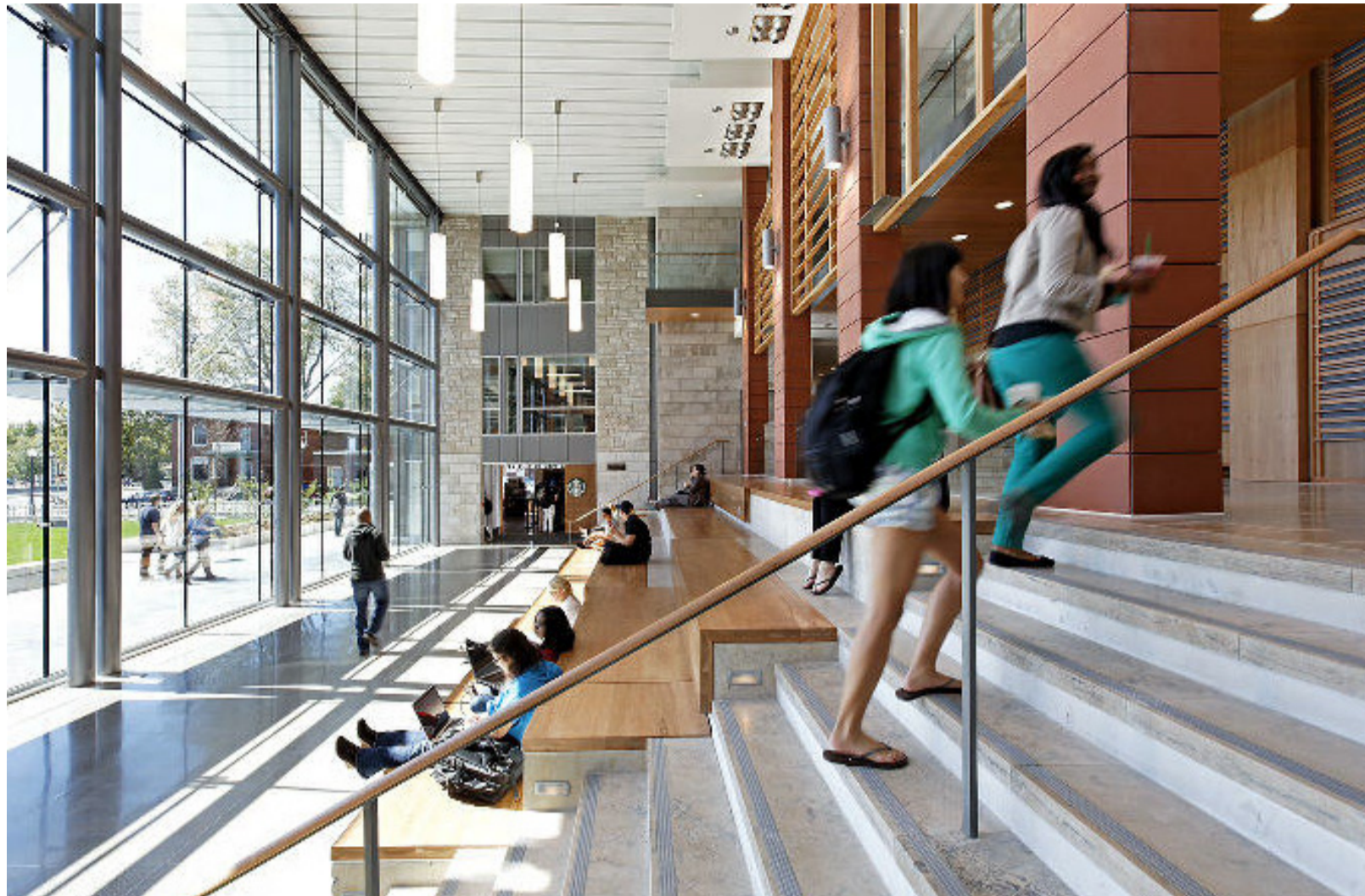




## » WORLD OF MBAS

# HISTORIC FACILITY GETS THE LEED TREATMENT

Victorian-style Goodes Hall gains 75,000 square feet of sustainable space



DAVID WHITTAKER PHOTO

Queen's School of Business in Kingston, Ont., recently completed a \$40-million, state-of-the-art expansion of its historic Victorian-style Goodes Hall facility, adding 75,000 square feet of sustainable LEED-certified space. Peter Berton was the principal architect, along with fellow architects Nicole Crabtree and Chris Hall, all from Toronto-based Ventin Group (+VG Architects). Continuing in innovation, Queen's will be launching a 10-month master of management analytics program in June as part of a suite of masters programs offered at QSB's Toronto facility at Simcoe Place.

# Apps help boost productivity and connectivity

Students share favourite smart tools for school

**FIONA ELLIS**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Textbooks, pen and paper don't cut it as educational tools. And smartphones mean high-tech mini-computers are at your fingertips 24/7. While *Angry Birds* may be a distraction, smartphone apps can make student life more productive.

Rajat Opal, CEO and president of Gazoo Mobile, launched the Ivey MBA app in 2010, which allows University of Western students and applicants to receive updates from Ivey's social media channels, news feeds and blogs, and register for events. He says students use apps to stay "current on news and events, and as tools to aid in learning."

Kimberly A. Bates, director of Ryerson University's MBA in the management of technology and innovation, agrees. "Students are interested in things that make their lives easier, that help them get information into a project. "In particular, part-time MBA stu-

dents need to be able to collaborate and communicate around their individual contributions to group projects, especially if they live on opposite sides of the city."

Three tech-savvy students completing the MTI MBA at Ryerson give the inside scoop on app use.

**Christina Diadamo, 24, Maple.**

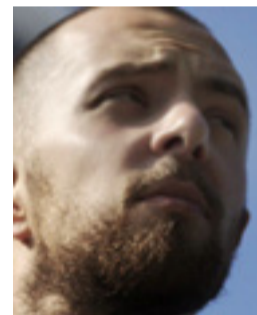
**Top three apps:**

1. Google Drive
2. iBooks for reading PDFs on iOS
3. Kobo/Kindle

"The apps I use most are apps that allow me to do things on the go. When I'm not at home, I use the iBooks and Kobo apps for reading, especially because electronic books have become much more cost-efficient for students.

I also use the Dropbox and/or Google Drive app to quickly transfer large PDF files from my computer and access required readings or group reports from my mobile devices.

"These apps don't necessarily save time in the traditional way, but they do allow me to use my travel time more efficiently because I can read and review documents while on the



Christina Diadamo, 24, Ryan May, 28, and David Glazer, 27, are all completing the MTI MBA at Ryerson University. They credit some of their success to their regular use of student apps.

TTC. I actively started using Google Drive shortly after starting the MBA program. My group and I immediately realized the benefits of being able to easily share files."

**Ryan May, 28, Toronto**

**Top three apps:**

1. GMAT Club iPad app
2. Blackboard mobile app
3. Google Drive

"The average student has at least two Internet-enabled devices on them. I have seen a growing number of students using tablets, and choosing to use e-versions of any available textbook. Fewer students are bringing physical textbooks or

printing out class notes or writing them by hand each year. Students are typically looking for apps to keep them organized, and on track. School, like in business, requires a lot of organization.

"Groups, deadlines and meetings must be kept track of, so any app that can help with that is a plus. Collaboration is huge. As a part-time student, it is amazing to be inside Google Drive with three group mates on the weekend at our respective homes and truly work together to create a report without having to pass a single file around from person to person."

**David Glazer, 27, Toronto**

**Top three apps:**

1. Gmail
2. Google Drive
3. Voice recorders

"Primarily, apps help me keep all my information in one place, my phone. It's hard to say if they are time savers; they can be effort savers though. For instance, I use my Samsung Galaxy Note's stock camera application to take pictures of class slides instead of taking notes, so I can focus my attention on what the professor is saying as opposed to feverishly writing as fast as possible. I also use the Easy Voice Recorder app to record entire lectures/guest speaker events. This makes it easy to go back and reflect, especially if you're required to produce something later.

"I think at this point, people are mainly interested in using apps for email integration. I'm not sure if apps are more distracting than productive. There are fun apps like Instagram that you may find yourself using if you're bored, but there are productive apps, voice recorders, etc. The jury is still out."

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# » WORLD OF MBAS

## STRATEGY

# Acing the GMAT means playing to strengths

Practice, practice and more practice is the key to mastering this test

**FIONA ELLIS**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Future MBA students face stiff competition to get into the business school of their dreams.

A 2012 report released by the Graduate Management Admission Council — which administers the GMAT, or Graduate Management Admission Test — showed the number of Canadians taking the exam rose almost seven per cent to 7,820 between 2007 and 2012.

It's an important part of the admissions process for more than 2,000 schools worldwide, and students tremble at its power to make or break a career. But what is the experience like?

Aaron Barnes, an MBA student at University of Toronto, Rotman School of Management, took the GMAT in September 2010. He spent weeks preparing, working

with a guide.

Barnes can't stress practice enough: "There is no substitute for doing mountains of practice questions. The more you do, the more confident you'll be on test day."

Play to your strengths, he advises. "As you study, you'll notice that some questions come a lot easier to you than others. Spend less time on these and focus on weak spots."

Many students consider taking a GMAT preparation course. But you might not need to fork over hundreds of dollars for something you can do yourself.

Greg Yantz, director, MBA Recruiting and Admissions at Richard Ivey School of Business, likens paying for GMAT prep to hiring a personal fitness trainer.

"If you have the discipline to take the practice tests (workout) and develop a study plan (eat right), then a prep class (personal trainer) might not be necessary."

The GMAT consists of four sections: analytical writing assessment (one topic), quantitative (37 questions), verbal (41 questions), and in-



**MBA student Aaron Barnes:** "It's a neat test in that it adapts to how you answer the questions."

tegrated reasoning (12 questions), a new feature added in June 2012.

"This recently introduced section measures your ability to analyze and synthesize data presented in new formats and from multiple sources," says Teresa Pires, assistant director, recruitment and admissions, Queen's MBA, School of Business.

"There are four question formats, many of which require multiple re-

sponses. In total there are 12 questions, and you have 30 minutes to complete this portion (integrated reasoning) of the exam," says Pires.

Aim for a balanced score over the whole exam since schools want to see well-rounded skills, says Yantz.

Students are given three-and-a-half hours, but should plan for four hours to include optional breaks. Barnes, now 27, says, "It's a neat test in that it adapts to how you answer the questions."

"For example, if you get a question right, the next one will be more difficult, while if you get one wrong, the next one will be a bit easier."

A bad exam is not the end of the world. "Relax a bit. It's not ideal, but you can rewrite the test if you really feel you've done poorly," he says.

**The business school interview**  
"The business school interview may be one of the most challenging interviews in your career," says Ivey's Greg Yantz. "Come prepared. Be yourself, but understand why you are choosing a particular school and an MBA in general to meet your goals."

Pires says key questions are: Why did they choose to do an MBA? What are their post MBA plans? What are their short- and long-term goals? And what makes them a good fit for the school?

"An interview is a way to determine not only fit, but also drive for success," she says.

It's important to have a good answer for: "Why do you want to do an MBA?" says Barnes.

"This does not mean that you have to have a 10-year career plan mapped out, or even know what industry you think you'll be entering after graduation.

"What it means is that you need to be able to thoughtfully articulate how you see the MBA fitting into your career."

### MORE ONLINE

For a Q & A with Dalhousie's director of MBA programs, Scott Comber, go to . . .

[thestar.com/life/worldofmbas](http://thestar.com/life/worldofmbas)



**Dr. Leonard Waverman**

## Q&A: Paid work, study co-op enhances MBA

**JACLYN TERSIGNI**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

**Dr. Leonard Waverman, dean, DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University**

**Q.** What helps prospective MBA students stand out in their applications?

**A.** Good grades, good GMAT (scores). For full-time students, we look at only one year of work experience. For our co-op MBA, it's an interview. So it's about interview skills, communication skills, presence — that's important here.

**Q.** How do DeGroote MBA pro-

grams prepare students for a career?

**A.** The co-op is a wonderful program. Students earn their MBA in 28 months while they complete a full year of paid work experience. They come in and do a term of academics, then they go out and we find them the jobs.

They work for a term, come back for a term. . . . The combination of working and doing your MBA is very effective preparation.

**Q.** What unique specializations are available for MBA students at DeGroote?

**A.** One of the major specializations is

health services management — both with health sciences and core business courses. We have specialization in strategic business valuation, which blends finance, economics and accounting. We have a management of innovation and new technology stream, which prepares students in terms of thinking of how to take a technology and commercialize it and lead change within a corporate culture.

**Q.** What separates DeGroote from other business schools and MBA programs?

**A.** I think it's our focus on experiential

learning. Our co-op MBA is certainly based on that. We have a full-time MBA, an accelerated MBA — if you already have an undergraduate business degree you can do an MBA in eight months — and a part-time MBA.

**Q.** What is the world market like for DeGroote grads?

**A.** It's good. The co-op has a (job) placement rate of over 90 per cent. We put a lot of effort into our career management, preparing people for careers. We have a 12-person team in career advancement that works with the students from day one.

**James Malliaros, MBA**  
Senior Vice President, TCC Global Canada  
Husband, Dad, Guitar Hero, Go-To Guy

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

I wanted to advance at work and in life. When I enrolled in my MBA, I had to balance school with family, a demanding career and a passion for playing music and sports. Thanks to AU's flexible online format, I made the transition from senior sales guy to senior vice president; more importantly, I did it without putting the rest of my life on hold.



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## STRATEGY

# Mobilize MBA edge and get hired

Ten tips you need for campus meet-and-greets

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

An employer information session can be an MBA student's ticket to a career — depending on how you play it.

Usually small, catered affairs featuring time to network with executives, sessions take place on campus several times a year and feature a large employer, usually from finance, management consulting, technology, health care or law, presenting their business activities and job openings.

"These sessions are very much the first step in the recruiting process, so students should treat them with the same level of importance and care as they would a job interview," says Erin Miller, associate director of career coaching and education at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management.

Research employers beforehand, dress appropriately and follow up — but MBA students can use specific strategies to gain an edge:

### BEFORE THE EVENT

**Tip 1:** Use your career centre, Miller says. The Rotman Career Centre provides seminars on networking, job interviewing and creating a resumé and cover letter, organizes alumni panel discussions and offers one-on-one coaching.

Career centre training helped MBA graduate James Larsen, who recalls participating in mock job interviews with alumni working in the field.

"I met people from different firms and asked a lot of questions. You get a good sense of what the companies are all about and what's required in job interviews," says Larsen, who



James Larsen took part in mock job interviews and was hired by a global management consulting firm.

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graduated from the Richard Ivey School of Business at Western University in 2011.

Talking with alumni can generate useful insights about companies participating in information sessions, Miller says.

**Tip 2:** Professors can often provide insider information on companies' workplace culture, employees and unadvertised job opportunities, says Maurice Mazerolle, associate professor of human resources management at Ryerson University's Ted Rogers School of Management.

"Professors know many people and companies, so we encourage students to tell us which companies they're interested in finding out about, and we'll make introductions," he says.

**Tip 3:** Maximize your LinkedIn pro-

file, since hiring managers from these companies will review you online. Include details about case competition wins, scholarships, awards, internships and research projects, and other noteworthy aspects of your MBA experience, says Jennifer McCleary, MBA director at DeGroote's Centre for Business Career Development.

"Are you participating in clubs? Are you mentoring a junior MBA student? Are you a tutorial assistant for a course or professor's research assistant? All those experiences demonstrate your skills to an employer," McCleary says.

### DURING THE EVENT

**Tip 4:** Connect the dots. When talking with company executives, use what you've learned in your re-

search to make connections between your MBA knowledge and experiences and the organization's current activities and labour needs, Miller says.

"Highlight what your value proposition is to the employer. What do you have that the employer needs?" Miller says.

**Tip 5:** Don't overlook junior associates. McCleary says students tend to network primarily with senior executives — but it's usually more junior associates who can provide the most useful insights.

**Tip 6:** Network broadly. This was a priority for Larsen, who attended many of these events while at Ivey, including one held by his target firm, global management consulting firm Bain & Company.

"I spoke with partners, managers

and consultants. The more people you talk to, the better understanding of a firm you get," says Larsen, who brought business cards provided by his school featuring Ivey's logo on it.

**Tip 7:** Professors and career centre staff often attend these events, so if you have a question or need some advice, approach them for help, McCleary says. The career team may also be able help you meet the dress code, which is usually business casual or business formal. Where students fall short, McCleary's team can sometimes provide a tie, suit jacket, even shoes.

### AFTER THE EVENT

**Tip 8:** Following up with a thank-you note to a recruiter is a given. Personalize yours by referencing your conversation or something you learned at the presentation, McCleary says.

**Tip 9:** Mind deadlines: some organizations remove job ads at midnight the day of the event, so you may have just hours afterwards to create a customized cover letter and submit it with your resumé.

**Tip 10:** Check emails or voicemails, Miller says, in case the employer or the school contacts you about a formal job interview after the event. You may want to return to your career centre for interviewing tips, she adds.

Ultimately, Larsen says, succeeding means taking each step in this process seriously — and he should know. After the Bain event, he was invited for a job interview at the company's Toronto office, and was hired as a consultant.

"Information sessions are just one aspect of the recruitment process and don't necessarily get you a job," he says.

"But if you do it right, it puts you in a good position."



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