

The Continuing and Professional Education Learning Collaborative Assists New Jersey City University in Examining Feasibility of Proposed MBA Program

Challenge:

New Jersey City University (NJCU) was considering the launch of an MBA program at its Harborside facility. To build on research previously conducted internally, NJCU wanted to better understand the competitive landscape and potential market demand for the program.

Solution:

The Continuing and Professional Education Learning Collaborative (CPE-LC) research team examined the potential market through several methodologies:

- Interviews with select potential regional employers of graduates
- Review of regional population, educational attainment and employment trends
- Examination of potential competitors
- Survey of current NJCU undergraduate juniors and seniors pursuing business-related bachelor's degrees

Results:

Based on the results of this research and its other work, NJCU decided to launch the MBA program with classes starting in the Fall of 2009.

About New Jersey City University:

Location: Jersey City, NJ

Carnegie Classification: Masters

Ownership: Public Institution

Size: 6,300 Undergraduate Students and 2,200 Graduate Students (2007)

About the Continuing and Professional Education Learning Collaborative:

CPE-LC helps universities and colleges identify new revenue and growth opportunities, improve organizational operational performance, and stay abreast of leading management practices within the continuing and professional education community.

A Program Under Consideration

Starting in the fall of 2007, a faculty taskforce at New Jersey City University (NJCU) began examining the idea of launching a new MBA program, something that had been under consideration for several years. The school had a longstanding and successful undergraduate business program – and Masters degrees in both accounting and finance – but it had never offered a full MBA program. However, after fielding many student requests for such a program, the school was seriously analyzing the idea of launching an MBA program to be offered at its new Harborside facility located near Jersey City's expanding waterfront business community.

The faculty taskforce knew that there had recently been a lot of corporate investment in the Jersey City area, and that this may indicate possible demand for an MBA program. In addition, preliminary research indicated that demographic trends were positive and conversations with students and alumni provided further evidence of strong student interest and demand. However, the taskforce knew that additional research was needed before it could recommend launching the program and the input of an independent third party would be valuable in making the final decision. Therefore, to help them with this analysis they turned to the Continuing and Professional Education Learning Collaborative (CPE-LC) for assistance.

Examining the Potential Market

To provide insight into the feasibility of the proposed MBA program, the CPE-LC research team conducted research in several areas. First, data was collected on trends in regional population, educational attainment and employment from secondary sources such as the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Next, qualitative interviews were conducted with human resources staff at select regional employers and industry experts to assess trends in demand for professional development and graduate programs among working professionals near the Harborside facility.

Potential competitors were then examined to provide insight into the landscape of existing MBA programs in the greater Jersey City region. Finally, a survey was conducted of NJCU juniors and seniors pursuing business-related bachelor's degrees, to determine the potential market demand for an MBA program among current NJCU undergraduates.

Data and Insight to Inform Decision-Making

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Michael Cole
Faculty Member
New Jersey City University

Overall, the research was very positive as the demographics, competitive landscape and potential student demand pointed towards the success of an MBA program. According to Professor Michael Cole, who was a member of the NJCU faculty taskforce, among the most significant findings that came out of the research was the fuller picture of all the corporate growth that had recently occurred in the Jersey City area. In addition, the research demonstrated that while there were many other institutions offering MBA programs in the greater New York City area, very few were easily accessible to working professionals in Jersey City; a clear market opportunity for NJCU. Finally, the positive response by the human

resources staff at the companies interviewed was also very encouraging. Said Professor Cole, “Based on our previous research our instincts were that an opportunity existed for an MBA program but the research by the Learning Collaborative staff helped crystallize our thinking as it gave us greater insight into the breadth and size of companies located here as well as input from HR managers who would actually be hiring our graduates.”

Fueling the Decision to Launch the Program

After seeing the results of the research, combined with the additional research they had previously conducted, the taskforce decided to recommend NJCU offer the MBA program. After discussions with the faculty senate, the Vice President of Academic Affairs and a state review board, final approval was given in October of 2008 and NJCU will begin offering the program in September of 2009. Development of the program has begun, and driven by insight gained from the research, NJCU is planning to use a blended teaching format for some of the classes with part of the courses being taught online to better appeal to prospective students. Marketing for the program is now underway and the initial response from potential students has been very positive as NJCU has already received considerable interest from students interested in graduate business studies.

According to Cole, the past experience brought by CPE-LC staff in researching and recommending the feasibility of proposed programs, combined with its status as an independent third party, was very helpful in acquiring final approval to launch the program. Said Cole, “The CPE-LC research was instrumental in shaping our thinking as we developed the MBA proposal and plan, and in that respect was very valuable. The study helped anchor our market view and gave us reinforcement that going forward with this program at this time was the right next step for our business department. We were quite pleased with the insight the information from the project provided us.”

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