

UMUC Business and Executive Programs Podcasts

Executive MBA Education in a Global World

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Glenn: Welcome to Executive MBA Education in the Global World, a weekly podcast that features an overview and highlights of the Executive MBA program and discussion of how the program prepares executives for today's global business environment. I'm Nancy Gentry Glenn, Director of Administration, Business and Executive Programs—your host for this segment.

Our guest today is Dr. Mary Ann Spilman, Executive Director of Executive Programs. The topic for today's show is "Why Executive MBA?" It focuses on how the Executive MBA is unique, who should consider enrolling in the program, and the value of the program's international study trip toward development of global leadership competencies. Dr. Spilman, would you take a moment to introduce our listeners to UMUC and to Executive Programs before we address the Executive MBA program specifically?

Spilman: Thank you, Nancy, I'd be very happy to do that. UMUC is one of 11 universities of the University of Maryland System and is strictly focused on working adults. We have more than 90,000 students as a university—around the world in 28 countries—and we have 160 onsite locations. We are one of the largest developers and implementers of online education in the world, with about 3,500 faculty worldwide. We are also the largest business school in this region and we've received many awards as a recognized leader in online business education. We've been ranked, for example, in the top 20 cyber universities by *Forbes* magazine. We've won awards from Peterson's for innovative distance education, and we've been selected by the U.S. Department of Education's distance—the U.S. Department of Education as a distance education demonstration program. Our graduates and our current participants are in major corporations around the globe. That is a little background on the University of Maryland University College.

Executive Programs, as you know, is in the Business and Executive department, and we have two programs. We have the CIO Certificate, which is jointly awarded with the U.S. General Services Administration, and then we have our Executive MBA. Executive Programs are small, selective programs and we bring in only about 50 students a year. We are able then to provide very personalized service, much more so than you would expect in a large university. So I do have to say that we pamper our executives in this selective program.

Glenn: Well thank you very much, Dr. Spilman. For whom is the Executive MBA program designed?

Spilman: It's designed primarily for leaders—leaders in business, government, and industry. These can be people who currently are or are seeking to become CEOs, COOs, owners of their own businesses...just generally senior management. The requirement to get into the program is 5 years of management experience, but on average, our participants have about 14 years of business experience, and many come to us with already graduate degrees outside of business—doctors, PhDs, Masters of Science, for example.

Glenn: And can you tell us how the Executive MBA program is different from the regular MBA program?

Spilman: Well, it's different in many ways. First of all, of course, is the experience of the participants in the program. They have to have a certain level of experience and decision making authority to get into the program. It is an accelerated program, so they move a little faster through this program than they do through a regular MBA program. Some of the features that are quite different are the leadership development and executive coaching that we offer to our executive participants, our international trip which you've already mentioned, and we also have the International Market Entry Business Plan that is actually done for a sponsoring organization. So we have a team of executives in the last two seminars of their program assigned to a sponsoring organization, and they develop a business plan for getting that company or organization into a new international environment. And that business plan is then presented to the corporate sponsors and to the wider business development communities on the very last day of the program. It reflects our philosophy in Executive Programs that our emphasis is on what graduates can do for business—not just what they know, but what they can do for business. That applied approach is reflected throughout the assignments in the program as well, through all of the seminars, where the assignments focus on solving business problems, leading teams, and setting strategic direction. All of that comes together in the final capstone project in this business plan for corporate sponsors.

Glenn: So Dr. Spilman, as you've mentioned, one of the key differentiating factors of the Executive MBA program is the international study trip. Tell us why the trip is so important.

Spilman: Well, the trip is reflective of the global focus of the entire Executive MBA curriculum. We are interested in developing global leaders—business people who can represent the United States in other countries. We know that business people abroad affect our status in the world and our perception. We want to show that we are respectful, and we hopefully are respected guests in other countries. What we hope for in these international trips is that we will reflect an open-minded and cultural sensitivity to the business environments and the cultural environments in other countries. The emphasis in the international trip is on international trade agreements and how international trade affects business and industry in both Europe and China, because those two continents have been the areas that we have spent the most time with in our international trips.

Glenn: And finally, would you give us a more detailed idea of what happens on the study trips and share a few highlights from past trips?

Spilman: Oh, we have a lot of fun on these trips. What we do is we visit government trade organizations, because of course, the emphasis is on trade agreements. So we actually visit with the European Commission, with trade organizations in Beijing and Shanghai. We also then visit global businesses in different industries across these continents. For example, we visit KPMG in the finance industry, whether we're in Brussels or whether we're in Slovakia. We actually try to get a KPMG view on finances, regardless of the country. We just visited Dell Computers, for example, in Bratislava, Slovakia, and we'll be going to see them in Shanghai as well. So we get an opportunity to see the various challenges that companies have in managing their businesses across different industries.

We also, of course, spend a lot of time with cultural sites and museums. We wouldn't want to slight the cultural aspect by focusing too much just on the business. We do visit the Great Wall and Tiananmen Square when we're in Beijing. We visit the Diamond District when we're in Antwerp, and of course, we see the Grand Place, that beautiful Grand Place when we're in Brussels. And in Belgium, we also visit the historic cities of Ghent and Brugge. We've also done a home visit in Beijing, where we were able to see how several homes are organized around a

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central courtyard that even may share a common kitchen area. So seeing how the people live, seeing their history...so business, politics, culture—all of those things are very important in the international trip and really what makes it so interesting and exciting. And of course, in the evenings there are dance clubs, karaoke bars, and just dining and shopping, which makes this a wonderful experience in these countries.

What we come away with, we hope, is that we see where we have common bonds and common values with other countries. And we hope that we also experience and can break down some of the negative stereotypes in reactions to Americans, because we do come across negative stereotypes as well as positive stereotypes. And we hope that we, when we go on these international trips with our executive students, are very important in reinforcing those positive perceptions of Americans.

Glenn: This is Nancy Gentry Glenn and I'd like to thank Dr. Mary Ann Spilman for helping us to understand the Executive MBA program and why it is the right choice for managers and executives seeking to strengthen their global leadership effectiveness. Thank you, listeners, for joining Executive MBA Education in the Global World.

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