

# 2020/2021

MBA CSEA

Monthly Quick Survey

*Summary Report*



**MBA Career Services  
& Employer Alliance**

More than an association. A community.

# Impact of COVID-19 on MBA/Masters Career Services & Recruiting

Since March 2020, the MBA CSEA Research and Trends Committee has been taking the pulse of the school and employer members through the monthly quick surveys. Themes have emerged from these mini surveys and have included trends in the job market, strategies for higher education and career services during COVID, adjustments and structural changes in career offices, and employer reactions and planning during a time of unprecedented change. The job market and state of our industry have been volatile throughout the pandemic, and these surveys have helped the organization analyze, understand, and share with members and the general public the changing state of our graduate business career services industry, as well as individual state of mind over the last year.

## Trends in the Job Market | March and April 2020

Trends in the job market for students were sudden and abrupt. In the month of March 2020 when COVID started spreading on a global scale, interviewing slowed and, in many cases, stopped for MBA roles. In fact, in some industries there were rescinded offers, delayed full-time start dates and cancelled internships. Companies moved from in-person to virtual recruiting and hiring.

These changes required a shift in strategies for career services. This shift included a rise in virtual formats for events, programming, and coaching sessions. There were additional workshops offered to students to provide more in-depth training for the shift to virtual recruiting. Virtual coaching became a focus and coaches increased their availability and appointment frequency. Schools focused on hot jobs and industries and started to think outside of the box about how to approach this new environment.

Federal guidelines and state regulations notwithstanding, nearly half (49%) of respondent schools increased programming, and 33% predicted some type of change to program modality or modified delivery formats. Sixty-six percent of respondents expected enrollment to increase while 16% expected no changes in program format or modality. It is important to note that four schools indicated there would be an increase in face to face programming, and that hybrid modalities for career fairs and some alumni events were likely to continue.

[March 2020 Survey results](#)

[April 2020 Survey results](#)

## Recruiter Response During COVID & Full Time Recruitment Observations | May 2020

From an employer perspective for full time recruiting in 2020, most companies had a virtual onboarding and recruitment process and delayed start dates for new employees. Employers focused on dealing with change and ambiguity with full-time hires.

Although it varied by employer, schools saw a mix of hiring freezes, delayed start dates, and a decrease in postings. Ultimately, they observed employers being both cautious and conservative in their process. As for fall recruiting plans, schools were uncertain about their fall recruiting plans, but most expected a hybrid at minimum.

[May 2020 Survey results](#)

## Career Services and Higher Education Strategies During Covid | July 2020

During the summer months employers and schools were struggling to plan a Fall recruiting season like no other they had seen in the past. Employers chose to engage with candidates virtually through recruitment and interviews. Candidate engagement would be primarily virtual one on one followed by group interviews and new/additional technologies. Employers believed the volume of campus recruitment would largely remain the same.

Schools planned for primarily a hybrid approach to classes followed by 100% virtual. Most career services planned to be 100% virtual, with 15% of schools having a hybrid model. One-third of schools said career services would remain in their current format through the end of 2020 and most of 2021, with the rest waiting to make decisions depending on the school administration. Schools believed the role of Career Services was changing, with increased service expansion and becoming more central to the university mission.

[July 2020 Survey results](#)

## Restructure Plans & Activities | August 2020

COVID-19 reshaped the circumstances under which many employers and universities operate and prompted many organizations to explore ways to maximize resources, assets, and capital in the COVID environment. The August 2020 survey asked organizations about restructuring activities. Overall, respondents indicated that for both employer organizations and universities, any restructuring activities sat on a continuum. At one end of the spectrum, more than half (57%) of employer respondents and 44% of universities reported a “wait and see” approach, with respondent firms and school leaders assuring stakeholders that no major restructure plans on the horizon. On the other hand, 42% of employer respondents and 6% of school respondents indicated that indeed, major reorganization was underway or had been completed at their respective institutions.

The survey revealed a positive trend regarding business school career services and employer departments who oversee MBA recruiting. Most employer respondents reported no plans to restructure, or that restructure was unlikely. On the career services side, school respondents (53%) reported that open positions in their respective departments were also “pending.”

With rare, but notable exceptions, all respondents noted budget impact as a result of the global pandemic. However, despite this and enterprise-wide hiring freezes experienced by employers and schools, the August 2020 findings underscore the importance of career services and MBA/MS talent acquisition as enterprise-wide, high value functions.

[August 2020 Survey results](#)

## Overall Engagement | September 2020

As a result of the quick transition to virtual there, was a shift in types and levels of engagement of students and employers. 60% of schools saw an increase in student attendance at virtual events and 50% saw an increase in employer interactions. Some schools saw a decrease at virtual events; 30% of schools said their students were attending fewer events.

[September 2020 Survey results](#)

## Full Time Observations and Hiring | October 2020

As we moved into Fall 2020, employers saw an overall decrease in hiring plans as compared with Fall 2019. Half of employers said they were expecting internship conversation to be on par with 2019, and half believed it would be lower than 2019. Overall, there was a positive feeling from the employer community regarding interacting with MBA and Masters students virtually.

A small minority (8%) of schools expected to see an increase in internship conversions. 35% expected to see a decrease while, similarly, 38% expected no change. It was typical among school respondents to not only coach students on how to engage employers virtually, but also on how to improve their virtual presence during the recruiting process.

[October 2020 Survey results](#)

## Career Academic Calendars, Internship & Post MBA Recruitment Timelines December 2020

The December survey focused on the impact of rapidly changing market conditions on academic schedules, recruiting timelines for internship and full-time employment, and the overall virtual recruiting environment.

Most schools (60%) indicated that they either extended holiday closures, delayed the start of the Spring '21 semester, cancelled the traditional spring break and/or revised graduation dates for the current and upcoming year.

Most employer respondents (78%) expected no change in their recruiting calendar for 2021-22; however, the remaining planned to go fully virtual, with tighter timelines and greater control over interview schedules than ever before. Employers also emphasized the growing importance of virtual networking, case interviews, and the high impact of candidate energy, including verbal and vocal fluency and non-verbal communication, in the virtual environment.

66% of school respondents estimated that with COVID and the rise of virtual interviews, some employers anywhere from (21% to 90% of organizations) bypassed the career center to schedule candidate interviews.

[December 2020 Survey results](#)

## Enrollment Trends and Program Delivery Pivots | March 2021

March 2021 marked the one-year anniversary of (some form of) mandated quarantine on global scale, social and physical distancing, and virtual-only webinars, advising, coaching, interviews, and meetings. The March quick survey asked member schools about current and future enrollment as well as future expectations for program delivery formats.

Prospects seemed far from grim for 68% of school respondents who indicated that enrollment of academic year 2020 to 2021 was either flat (24%) or had increased (44%), with only 27% of respondents indicating that enrollment had decreased. Similar trends were reported for part-time MBA programs with 70% of respondents indicating that enrollment increased in 2021 (51%) or remained stable (19%). Respondents for Specialty Master's programs responded in kind, with 58% reporting increases in enrollment (43%) or flat (15%) and 21% of respondents indicating that MS program enrollment decreased from 2020 to AY 2021.

### [March 2021 Survey results](#)

## **Slow Return to "Normalcy" | April 2021**

As the pandemic conditions continue to improve in most countries, the April 2021 survey indicated a slow shift towards returning to work in-person with 42% of respondents indicating a partial to even full return (4%). Partial return included a portion of staff working in the office as well as hybrid schedules for individuals. In comparison, 73% of respondents indicated that students have returned to at least some model of in-person learning during the spring period.

Looking forward, the survey inquired about travel restrictions on the career services staff for the upcoming Fall of 2021. A majority (68%) indicated that no decisions had been made at the time of the survey, but 25% of respondents will have some or all restrictions lifted.

### [April 2021 Survey results](#)

## **Overall Findings**

At the summary level, the monthly survey findings indicate a year of uncertainty and fluctuation across all aspects of career services and recruiting – from interview structures, to events, to staffing. Members remained focused and resilient, utilizing tools and resources to learn and adapt.

As we look toward the next normal, we may continue to see uncertainty in the short term. While we are seeing a gradual shift back to in-person learning and career services, virtual connections are here to stay. Many schools and companies are planning virtual or hybrid recruiting activities in the near term. We continue to utilize lessons learned from the past year to maintain the necessary focus and positive outlook.