

**Top Ten** *Questions*

Prospective Students Ask about the  
Technology Management MBA Program

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The following is the transcript from an interview with **Tracy Gojdics**, Director of the Technology Management MBA Program and **Dan Turner**, Associate Dean and Faculty Director.



# 1

*What is the Technology Management MBA Program, and will the technology aspect of the program limit my growth potential?*

**Tracy:** This is an MBA program in every regard. When you graduate, you get a Foster MBA from the TMMBA Program. What makes this program different is that it's designed for people who are passionate about technology and entrepreneurship; the program offers a comprehensive business management curriculum which an emphasis on innovation and leadership. For instance, the topics, cases and class discussions focus on technology companies, services and products. But you need not be fluent in the language of technology—we have many alumni and students who are outside of the tech-sector. Bottom line: you will gain the business skills and frameworks, the business language and the strategic insights and perspectives to create value for any organization.

**Dan:** Tracy pretty much summed it up. Fundamentally, this is an MBA program and you do get exposure to all those topic domains that you would expect in any MBA program. But the example used when we talk about strategy, marketing or accounting is often an application in a technology environment.

MBA

# 2

## *How is it possible to get an MBA in 18 months?*

**Dan:** Consecutive quarters of 10 credit hours per quarter make it possible to deliver a robust MBA curriculum in 18 months. We cover all the core topics you'll find in most MBA programs—financial accounting, managerial accounting, corporate finance, marketing, economics, operations management and organizational management. We've also selected courses on topics we think students in this program really need, including leadership, negotiations, strategy, entrepreneurship and global management.

**Tracy:** Traditional full-time MBA programs and some evening MBA programs are longer because they are designed with required core classes plus electives. The TMMBA Program is lock-step; we don't offer electives. And, our program staff provide support and services that make a student's life a little easier. We handle registration and meals and provide books and materials—all which save time and reduce stress for our students.

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*What is the difference between the Technology Management MBA and a “traditional” full-time program?*

**Tracy:** They offer different experiences. A full-time program allows for greater immersion in elective areas of study. But there’s an opportunity cost for quitting your job and going back to school, and everyone weighs that cost differently. Stepping out of the work force for two years may make sense if you’re relatively new to your career or uncertain of your end goal. But if you have a good job, you’re well-positioned for advancement, or you have other obligations, then pursuing your degree while you continue working may be a better fit.

**Dan:** In terms of the learning experience, the content of the two programs is similar, but there are a variety of topics that are addressed in the Technology Management course that are particularly relevant for technology professionals. You get much more exposure to these topics, in greater depth, in this program than you would in a traditional MBA program—things like how to market innovation, for example. Not all technology projects are innovations, but just about all innovations are technology products, and we spend more time discussing that in the TMMBA Program than we would in a traditional marketing class.

**Tracy:** There are also advantages to being in the classroom with people who are down in the trenches every day. Students in this program have from 3 to 25-plus years of work

experience when they come in the front door. We want people who are working full time so they can speak to what's happening at their companies and, more importantly, apply what they're learning in the classroom back on the job the next day.

## 4

*Who is a good fit for this program?*

**Dan:** I would say we're looking for three things: 1) people who have the raw horsepower, who can compete successfully in any kind of organization; 2) people who have leadership potential; and, 3) people who have a passion for technology, for whom this is more than a job.

**Tracy:** Someone who is an ideal fit for this program is somebody who has at least 3 years of work experience—the average is 11 years—and who wants more than the “M-B-A” credentials after their name. We are looking for students who seek a challenge and who want to be in an active learning environment. Additionally, we want strong contributors to the conversations in class and willingness to share experiences as they apply to the course work.

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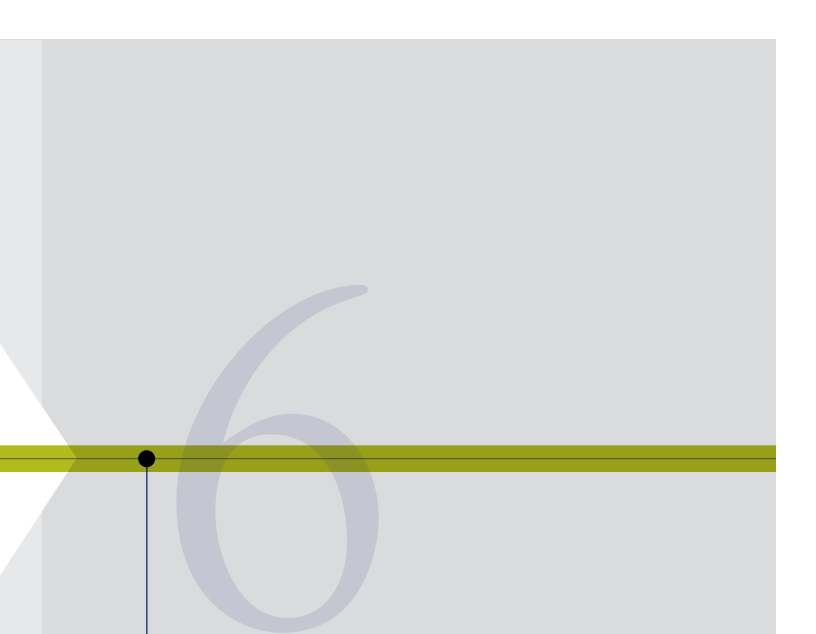
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*Can this program give me what I need to move out of my tech-centric position into a strategic business position?*

**Dan:** Yes, in fact, eighty percent of recent graduates surveyed reported they had taken on a more strategic role since graduation. The program builds knowledge and skills that help students deconstruct functional barriers and view organizations as the integrative enterprises that they truly are. You'll get exposure to fundamental solution concepts, theories, frameworks, and skills in strategy, accounting, marketing, finance and quantitative methods.

**Tracy:** Our program is known for taking subject matter experts, whether they are developers, architects, entrepreneurs or even functional specialists on the business side, and enabling them to understand the language of business in a completely different way. Because they can do that, they're able to contribute to different kinds of conversations than they have in the past, and step up—or over—a level or two.





*I want to start my own business.  
How will this program help me?*

**Tracy:** One of the top three reasons people decide to enroll in TMMBA is because they are looking to start their own business—to be their own boss. As a result, we have a strong entrepreneurial network. Basically, if you want to start your own business, you need to understand innovation, entrepreneurship and management, as well as have a strong grasp of the competitive landscape, customer profiles, and supply chains that can make or break your success.

**Dan:** Great ideas can take organizations only so far. Many businesses don't do well even if they have great ideas because the execution of the business plan is missing. Of course we have an entrepreneurship class, of course we have strategy classes, but many people will say that the reason they come to our program is that they need to understand the full range of business issues and be able to deal with them, in addition to having the great business idea or great technology.

## *How has the Technology Management MBA helped advance the careers of students and alumni?*

**Tracy:** Our students typically have one of three goals: move up in what they are doing, move out of what they are doing—change functions—or start their own business. I tell them that the critical things they learn in the TMMBA Program are only one part of the equation in advancing their careers. The other part is being able to put the things they learn into practice and be deliberate about contributing at a higher level, communicating more effectively and enduring set-backs.

How many of our students and alumni have advanced their careers? We've done surveys to help us determine this, but I find my LinkedIn network offers a nice illustration. Approximately 75% have changed positions and 65% have changed companies. I'm finding many are in senior-level and even C-level roles and that those who had been in more specialized technical positions have moved to general management, marketing or product management roles. It is also great to see the number of entrepreneurs we have in the alumni network.

**Dan:** As an instructor and faculty director I stay in touch with quite a few of our students and am constantly impressed with how they have advanced in their careers. I firmly believe that the TMMBA Program is something that opens doors rather than something that gets your ticket punched. In and of itself, no degree is

going to be sufficient for promotion, but a great MBA program will expose you to a range of perspectives on fundamental management lessons that you wouldn't otherwise see on the job.

## *How do students typically finance the TMMBA Program?*

**Tracy:** Students finance the program in a variety of ways, including company tuition subsidies or reimbursement programs, securing loans and paying out-of-pocket. Although many companies have cut or significantly reduced their tuition benefits, we still have a fair amount of students who are able to secure funding via company benefits. Students have also been successful in creating proposals for their upper management that outline the benefits of subsidizing their education and what it will mean for the company. Many students apply for financial aid and receive assistance via the Stafford Loan Program.

# ROI

## 9

### *What can I expect in terms of Return on Investment?*

**Tracy:** It depends. Students and alumni look at ROI from many angles. Of course, most people want to make more money, and according to alumni surveys they do—with an average compensation increase of 30% after two years. However, I find that people are really starting to evaluate ROI from a job/life satisfaction perspective. Students come into the program wanting to make a career change, to have more options and to make a larger impact at their organizations. I've already talked about how folks are changing their careers, but what we haven't discussed is that students, as they go through the program, begin to see that they have lots of options. It may sound lofty, but being equipped with options brings a satisfaction and kind of happiness that they didn't have before, and that return is something that cannot be measured.

**Dan:** I agree with Tracy that students are looking at things other than more money; although, usually that comes in time. As I mentioned earlier, I stay in touch with several former students and it seems that the ROI with regard to compensation and job advancement has been significant. I attribute a lot of this to the fact that students in the Technology Management MBA Program are working while earning their MBA and are applying, in real-time, what they are learning.

# 10

## *How can I find out if the Technology Management MBA Program is right for me?*

**Tracy:** My top answer, without a doubt, is to visit a class. When someone visits a class they get a sense of what is expected of them and what the commitment will really be. They get to be part of the classroom, to talk to students, to talk to study groups, to see if this is the kind of environment they want to be a part of for 18 months. Of course, we can also get you in touch with alumni, because they can talk about the experience and how it has changed their lives, but I would absolutely encourage people to experience what goes on in the classroom.

**Dan:** I'd echo that. Fundamentally, we're in the business of providing transformational educational experiences. While I'd encourage any prospective student to do his or her due diligence, to look at the descriptive statistics of the program and success rates, Graduate Management Admission Test scores and the diversity of the student body, this is at its core a service-based, experiential business and you have to experience it to truly appreciate it. It's a significant investment to dedicate three hours to come to a classroom and experience what the students go through, at least in some small fashion, but it's an investment that I think generates a return that is more than worth it in terms of helping you assess whether or not the program is right for you.

# BONUS

# QUESTION!

*How does the UW Foster School's Technology Management MBA (TMMBA) Program differ from UW Bothell Business School's Technology MBA (TMBA) Program?*

Two programs with similar names can be confusing. Both offer a business management curriculum and both hold classes on the Eastside, but differ in many respects including schedule, duration, faculty, cost, courses and alumni networks.

One key distinction is that TMMBA is part of the UW **Foster School** of Business and the UW Bothell TMBA program is not. Additionally, the faculty are different. TMMBA faculty come from the Foster School, which consistently ranks among the top business schools in the nation and faculty are world-renowned and recognized for their prominent research and excellence in their respective fields.

Another TMMBA difference is student support and services provided, including registration, meals, books and course materials, and free parking. These services offer convenience for busy working professionals. Additionally, TMMBA career services include unlimited one-on-one coaching, numerous workshops, webinars, and networking events. Plus, TMMBA has a network of over 800 technology professionals!

Although the names may be similar, TMMBA and TMBA each offer different experiences and educational opportunities. Consider what is important to you in terms of faculty, network, student services, and program reputation. Visit a class in both to know which is right for you.



**TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT MBA**

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