

IS A MARKETING BBA REALLY BS?

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ABSTRACT

Research has demonstrated that marketing students are among the most poorly prepared entering the university among all business disciplines, on a wide range of measures (Aggarwal, Vaidyanathan, and Rochford 2006). We attempted to further assess this dismal result by examining the output side – how do these same students perform once they graduate? Has the marketing major educational experience mitigated the initially poor performance of these students? To assess this, we examined a number of measures of quality. We started with a longitudinal analysis of GMAT® scores by major to identify marketing major performance on this standardized test over time. This helped us identify, on one measure, whether the issue of marketing major performance is new or has been around for a while.

Given that a basic tenet of marketing education is that it needs to be a philosophy underlying the entire organization, a successful marketing education should propel the best marketing students to leadership positions within organizations. To test this, we examined whether marketing majors had been successful reaching the upper echelons of organizations by analyzing the undergraduate majors of CEOs at the S&P 500 firms.

Finally, we looked at salary surveys to examine the “value placed by the marketplace” on marketing majors. While it is clear that there is still a demand for marketing majors, an economic view of the value of the education would suggest that average starting

salaries of marketing majors relative to other business majors would be one (admittedly imperfect) measure of the value of the skill set they bring to their initial position.

The disturbing result of this entire analysis is the relative consistency of the findings across a widely disparate set of analyses. Marketing majors are among the worst performers on the GMAT®, have among the lowest representation of business majors in the CEO ranks, and have the lowest starting salaries of all business majors. Multiple assessments on multiple dimensions of achievement show marketing majors failing to make a significant intellectual impact on business.

We discuss the implications and point to future research directions that follow from these findings.

REFERENCE

- Aggarwal, Praveen, Rajiv Vaidyanathan, and Linda Rochford. 2006. The wretched refuse of a teaming shore: A critical examination of the quality of marketing students. *Building bridges between knowledge and practice in marketing education: Proceedings of the 30th annual Marketing Educators' Association conference*, eds. Brian K. Jorgensen and Richard S. Lapidus, 74