

## **Study: Getting that MBA may not help much**

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An MBA degree may not provide much of a boost in getting to the top, according to a recent study.

The study, conducted at Pace University's Lubin School of Business, indicated that top business executives with an MBA are not necessarily more successful than their colleagues with only an undergraduate degree.

Pace professors Aron Gottesman and Matthew Morey put together a list of companies in the New York Stock Exchange and reviewed their CEOs' academic background. Gottesman and Morey analyzed the companies' performance over two years and found no significant difference in success rates between CEOs with graduate degrees and CEOs without.

And while those who have graduated from the Wharton School's undergraduate program earn almost as much money as MBA alumni, Wharton administrators still say that comparing the two programs is like comparing apples and oranges.

"An MBA can be invaluable to a student who wants to improve his [or] her business knowledge, [but] lots of Wharton undergraduate alumni do just fine without ever going on for an MBA," said Barbara Hewitt, Wharton's associate director of Career Services.

Hewitt has compiled data that seems to coincide with the Pace study's results. In her most recent survey, conducted in 1996 and 1997, she found that the average salary of a Wharton undergraduate alumnus was \$93,609 per year. For a graduate with an MBA, it was \$95,132.

In addition, while 30.6 percent of undergraduate alumni went on to earn an MBA, 55.8 percent pursued careers with only a bachelor's degree, Hewitt found.

And Wharton undergraduates are offering explanations for the relatively small salary gap.

"Wharton seniors are not competing in the same job market as MBAs for the most part," Wharton and Engineering junior Daniel Panzer said. "Undergraduates go for analyst positions and they get on one track of advancement [while] MBAs go for associate positions," he added.

Still, Gottesman and Morey acknowledge that the real variable in determining success is raw business acumen and the amount of natural talent an individual possesses.

Although having an MBA may not be the last word on success in business -- or even be a consideration for an undergraduate seeking a job -- Wharton officials still place a high worth on the school's MBA program.

"I really believe that an MBA adds value above and beyond," said Thomas Caleel, director of MBA Admissions and Financial Aid. "It's important to realize that nobody is saying that getting an MBA is going to make you successful. It's what you do with your MBA that makes you successful."