

An executive MBA allows you to complete business school while working full time. Here are 8 of the best programs out there.

Robin Madell Dec 13, 2019, 2:38 PM





SMU Cox School of Business' Executive MBA building. SMU

- **While many seek a traditional full-time MBA program to master the business basics, those who are already in a leadership role may opt to build their management skills through a different type of graduate program: an executive MBA, or EMBA.**

- **The main reasons people pursue an EMBA include "the ability to stay employed while earning a degree and the opportunity to gain new perspectives on the business enterprise," Michael Desiderio, executive director of the Executive MBA Council (EMBAC), said.**

- **Business Insider compiled the best programs out there based on their curriculum, prestige, and overall experience and tapped 11 former EMBA students and staffers for their input on what makes these programs so great.**

- **The list includes Cornell Executive MBA Americas, NYU Stern's Executive MBA Programs, Kellogg's Executive MBA program, and**

The Texas McComb's Executive MBA Program, among others.

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If you're considering getting an MBA, it's important to understand your options. While many seek a traditional full-time MBA program to master the business basics as an entryway to a management career, those who are already in a leadership role may opt to build their management skills through a different type of graduate program: an executive MBA, or EMBA.

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Michael Desiderio, executive director of the [Executive MBA Council \(EMBA Council\)](#) which represents more than 300 EMBA schools, told

(EMBA), which represents more than 600 EMBA schools, told

Business Insider that the growth of EMBA programs throughout several decades serves as a "testament to their value" in meeting the organizational thirst for leadership development.

"There are a number of reasons why someone would pursue a degree through an EMBA program, but the main reasons include the desire to increase professional growth and specialized skills, the drive to enhance career



Michael Desiderio. Michael Desiderio

development, the ability to stay employed while earning a degree, and the opportunity to gain new perspectives on the business enterprise," Desiderio said.

The EMBA website highlights four main differences between [MBA and EMBA](#) programs: format, cohort, services, and opportunities, highlighting that EMBA programs are specifically designed to "address the needs of busy professionals" by facilitating business leaders' ability to earn a degree in two years or less while still working full time.

If an EMBA sounds right up your alley, your next decision is choosing the program that's right for you out of hundreds of schools. Business Insider asked graduates from and staff at EMBA programs to weigh in on what makes their school stand out. Here are eight

executive MBA programs that they flagged as among the best.

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1. Cornell Executive MBA Americas at Cornell University's Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management

Cornell Executive MBA Americas is ranked No. 11 on US News and World Report's 2019 list of the "[Best Executive MBA Programs](#)."

An international classroom and network allows students to connect with their classmates in North and South America via live video

conferencing while attending in-person classes in their own city with local peers. Offered in partnership with the Smith School of Business at Queen's University, this EMBA program allows students to complete their coursework in 17 months to earn two MBAs: one from Cornell and one from Queen's.

During their time in the Cornell Executive MBA Americas program, students complete two major projects that allow them to explore new venture management, consulting, and global business opportunities. In addition to Executive MBA Americas, Cornell Johnson offers other EMBA programs, including [Executive MBA Metro NY](#) and the [Executive MBA/MS in Healthcare Leadership](#).

"While in the Cornell Executive MBA Americas program, students live, work, and attend classes in over 20 major cities across the US, Canada, Mexico, Peru, and Chile," said Verne Thalheimer, the executive director at Cornell Executive MBA Americas. "This



Verne Thalheimer. Verne Thalheimer

geographic diversity leads to strong industry diversity across the cohort, with no single industry representing more than 20% of the cohort in any given class year. This diversity greatly enhances the learning experience in the program, as classmates share their

expertise during in-class discussions and team projects. Our students form deep, meaningful relationships which continue years after the program experience concludes."

2. NYU Stern's Executive MBA Programs at New York University's Leonard N. Stern School of Business

"The NYU Stern Executive MBA program ... brings together a rigorous academic curriculum, expert Stern faculty, and a highly experienced cohort of executives from a wide range of industries including financial



Neha Singhal. Neha Singhal

services, healthcare, technology, nonprofit, and more. Students in our program, most of whom are senior executives with an average of 12 years of experience, not only gain skills that help them further advance their careers to the tops of their organizations, but also develop a lifelong professional network that enables them to connect with Stern students — past and present — who are leaders in their respective fields," said Neha Singhal, the assistant dean of executive degree programs admissions and marketing at NYU Stern.

NYU Stern's executive MBA programs, ranked No. 9 by US News and World Report, are offered in both New York City ([EMBA NY](#)) and Washington, DC ([EMBA DC](#)), and come with a Global Study Tour — a required one-week international residency that takes place in the first year of the program. Stern also offers a joint global EMBA with the London School of Economics and HEC Paris called [TRIUM](#).

"For me, being surrounded by folks from multiple industries and backgrounds all looking to learn from each other and challenge each other to go further in every aspect of their career is what separates the NYU Stern [executive MBA] experience and makes it unique," said Irina Kodes, a principal at EY and 2017 graduate of



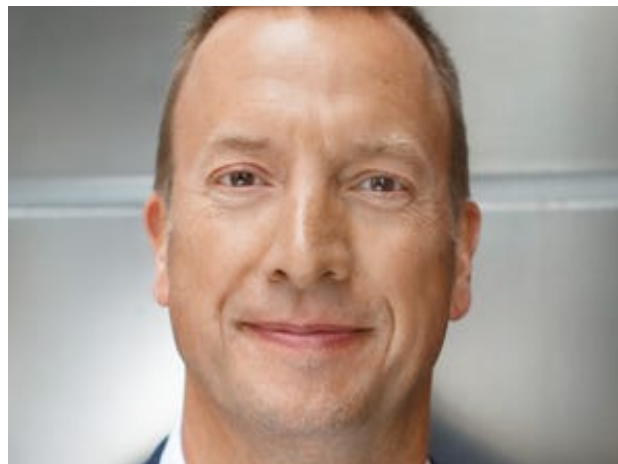
Irina Kodes. Irina Kodes

NYU Stern's Executive MBA program.

3. Kellogg's Executive MBA program at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management

Ranked No. 2 nationally by US News and World Report and No. 9 globally by [The Economist](#), Kellogg's Executive MBA program offers students multiple paths to earn a top MBA in a format that aligns with their work schedule. Whether they choose Kellogg's Evanston or Miami campus, EMBA students benefit from Kellogg's 65,000-strong alumni network, as well as the same curriculum and notable faculty that define the traditional Kellogg MBA experience.

"I'm fortunate to have the opportunity to teach in Kellogg's Executive MBA Program, working with some of the smartest students in the world," said Craig Wortmann, a clinical professor of innovation and entrepreneurship in the Kellogg Innovation and Entrepreneurship Initiative, and founder and CEO of Sales Engine, Inc. "An entrepreneurship course that I coteach with a top Kellogg professor is the best definition of collaboration — the course is in



Craig Wortmann. Craig Wortmann

professor is the best definition of collaboration — the course is in itself a prototype and it has an incredible energy. We're essentially modeling the behavior students see in the real world."

Kellogg EMBA students have access to targeted sessions with leadership coaches and unlimited access to expert one-on-one career coaching.

4. The **Robinson Executive MBA Program** at Georgia State University's J. Mack Robinson College of Business

The 17-month EMBA creates executive leaders who can respond to the complex issues facing businesses, develop the



critical thinking and problem-solving skills to recognize and pursue business opportunities,



Kelvin Coles. Kelvin Coles

build effective teams and integrate functions, and cultivate and apply global competencies during an international residency. Students at Robinson College of Business, ranked **No. 18 among US-based programs** in the Financial Times' 2019 "**Executive MBA Ranking**," work with a personal leadership coach to identify their current leadership attributes, determine skills needed to reach their goals, and develop a plan to realize their potential.

"In Georgia and around the world, the Robinson College of Business name is synonymous with business. The faculty who teach in the Robinson Executive MBA program at GSU are seasoned business practitioners who bring a wealth of real-world experience into the classroom. The Robinson program created an environment that felt like a family. In fact, four years after graduating from the program, I am still in contact with my professors," said Kelvin Coles, a manager of business development at Americold and 2017 graduate of GSU Robinson's EMBA program.

Kate Warner, a founder and consultant at Hilltop Consulting and 2015 graduate, added that she chose the EMBA at Robinson "because of its

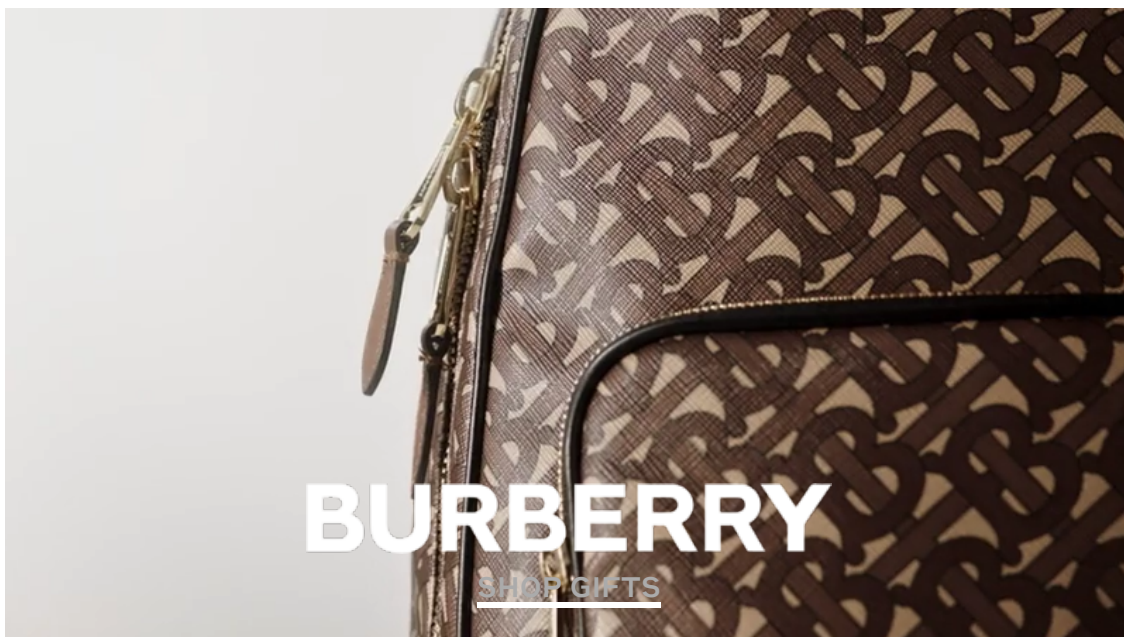


diversity, because of the high percentage of international students, and because of the number of talented women in the program. I wanted a place that was going to transform me and how I lead."



Kate Warner. Alli Royce Soble

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5. The **Cox Executive MBA Program** at Southern Methodist University's Cox School of Business

Ranked No. 18 on US News and World Report, The Cox Executive MBA Program is a 21-month EMBA program that is structured to build on attendees' management experience, covered in five

build on attendees' management experience, covered in five semesters for about two weekends per month on Fridays and Saturdays, with some half days. This program incorporates a global study trip in the second year where students visit two international cities. First-year coursework is designed to build students' general business knowledge and skills, while the second year focuses on policy aspects of finance, organizational behavior, and marketing.

"I joined the program as a doctor with a medical degree ... with hopes of creating a new company," said Katie Jarvis, the CEO and founder at Bed Beacon, LLC and a 2018 graduate. "A year after graduation, I started a company [and] asked my negotiations



Katie Jarvis. Katie Jarvis

professor [to become] my angel investor ... I left the program with a lifelong network of friends, collaborators, mentors, future employees, and a future business. SMU's Executive MBA program catapulted me to a totally different stratosphere."

6. The **Texas McComb's Executive MBA Program** at The University of Texas at Austin's McCombs School of Business

The Texas McComb's Executive MBA is a two-year program that

THE TEXAS MCCOMBS EXECUTIVE MBA IS a two-year program that takes place on alternating weekends (all day Friday and Saturday on campus in Austin, Texas) and is targeted at professionals seeking career advancement and/or change without interruption from working full time. The program features a cohort-focused curriculum as well as elective classes and emphasizes broad business management knowledge and skills. It's ranked No. 8 on Poets and Quants' 2019 ranking of "[US Executive MBA programs](#)."

"I elected to earn an Executive MBA from the University of Texas in 2012, and it was one of the best career decisions that I have made," said Gerald J. Wilmink, the chief business officer of CarePredict and a 2014 graduate. "Our EMBA class consisted of seasoned CEOs, CMOs, sales directors, CFOs, physicians, and attorneys. The students in our class came from various different business sectors and this diversity made for highly meaningful, educational, and entertaining and lively classroom discussions."



Gerald J. Wilmink. Gerald J. Wilmink

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He added, "I also wanted to sharpen the pencil on my knowledge and skills in the area of finance, accounting, and entrepreneurship. UT Austin's professors are top notch and I learned the fundamentals and the skills to launch my first health technology company during the first year of my EMBA."

7. London Business School's Executive MBAs

London Business School (LBS), ranked No. 8 globally by the Financial Times for EMBA programs in 2019, offers several executive MBA programs, including [Executive MBA London](#), [Executive MBA Dubai](#), [EMBA- Global Americas & Europe](#), and [EMBA-Global Asia](#). The school's website notes that there are more than [20 nationalities](#) in the current London EMBA class. The program takes 20 months to complete and features a mix of group work through pre-assigned

study groups, as well as private study and assessment that includes individual projects, exams, and class presentations.

"The two-year program is rich with various academic and working experience[s], and most importantly full of networking opportunities and industry event engagements," said Hiba Beydoun, a founder and consultant at Bey Consulting and 2015 graduate



Hiba Beydoun. Hiba Beydoun

of London Business School's EMBA program. "One of the reasons that LBS was my No. 1 choice is the international reach of the program, from cohort selection [and] professors to international assignments and global elective courses. I personally did my international assignment stint in Cape Town working alongside students from across the world, where we consulted on a real-life issue for a national company in South Africa — indeed an amazing experience."

8. The **ESADE Executive MBA** at Ramon Llull University's **ESADE Business School**

ESADE's Executive MBA program ranked No. 17 globally by the QS

ESADE'S EXECUTIVE MBA PROGRAM, RANKED NO. 17 GLOBALLY BY THE QS "World University Rankings," identifies its learning model as a differentiating factor, which features a range of teaching tools, from real-life case studies and simulations to speed meeting and executive forums. The EMBA program is based on a partnership between ESADE and Aalto University Executive Education, which the school's website describes as combining "Barcelona's entrepreneurial spirit plus the Finnish passion for innovation and design thinking." The program offers eight weeks of intensive face-to-face sessions in which students collaborate with peers and faculty in various locations.

"Without a doubt, the EMBA program has empowered me to break the infamous glass ceiling while staying true to the pledge I made when I entered the school: Be good. Do better. ESADE is one of the top schools when it comes to fostering innovation, creativity, engagement, collaboration, entrepreneurship, and high performance when training us, its leaders, for doing business in a global environment, and I can attest to that," said Aurora Martinez, the chief operating officer and managing director at Gamelearn and a 2018 graduate of ESADE.



Aurora Martinez. Aurora Martinez

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