

# **How Can Brand Journalism Foster Affinity Between Part-Time MBA Students and the Carlson School of Management?**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bridget Aymar is the senior writer for the communications team at the Carlson School of Management, the business school within the University of Minnesota. She earned a BA in strategic communication in 2009, and is pursuing an MA in strategic communication, both from the University of Minnesota. Prior to joining the Carlson School, she worked in public relations at the Office of the Vice President for Research at the University of Minnesota, and contributed to the planning and execution of the Uptown Art Fair for non-profit Uptown Association.

In her role at the Carlson School, Aymar conceives, writes, and edits much of the content for the School's communication vehicles across an array of channels. She's charged with conveying the strategic priorities of the school to a variety of audiences including prospective and current students, alumni, donors, businesses, and more. The communications team is made up of 12 employees with specialties in design, public relations, project management, and more. This internal communications agency serves the School's various departments, programs, and centers and is led by director Johnny Thompson, who reports directly to Dean Sri Zaheer.

A substantial portion of Aymar's role consists of telling the School's story through timely news content. Although the definition of brand journalism continues to evolve, much of this news could be fairly defined as such -- stories told and shared by brands to connect with a target audience. This content typically takes the shape of feature stories that highlight compelling students or alumni. Much of this journalistic content is conceived, produced, and written by Aymar.

In 2014, the communications team will approach several opportunities that could shape

the School's overarching communications strategy. Within the year, the school will implement a new wordmark, launch a new website, receive a new strategic vision from School leadership, and make changes to the way it shares news and other content. Given these changes, it is an opportune time for the communications team to evaluate the School's storytelling strategy.

To best implement a brand journalism strategy, the communications team needs to address some key questions about how its target audiences consume news, how news impacts those audiences, and how storytelling can support the strategic goals of the school.

## INTRODUCTION

Higher education is becoming increasingly diverse, complex, and segmented in response to student demand for a school that delivers more value in exchange for the rising cost of tuition (Ivy, 2008). Now more than ever, it's essential for institutions of higher education to communicate the value that defines the benefits graduates can expect from their education. Prospective students are concerned not only with the curriculum, faculty, facilities, student services, but with the weight their degree carries (Durkin, McKenna and Cummins, 2012).

Colleges and universities which harness the power of alumni could better convey their differential value and consequently boost recruitment. Because of the high degree of investment inherent in choosing a school, persuading a prospective student is complex (Ivy, 2008). Studies show that this audience is heavily influenced by recommendations from alumni, perceived reputation of the school within their chosen career field, and official rankings (Durkin, McKenna and Cummins, 2012).

Because these factors are at least partially driven by word of mouth from an institution's alumni, it's important to foster a lasting relationship between the school and current students, as well as strengthen ties throughout the student community. Business school alumni with high sentimentality about their student experience are more likely to make charitable contributions to their alma mater and to recommend the school to others (Okunade and Berl, 1997).

Forging a lasting connecting with students is a special challenge, and requires establishing a common connection to a set of shared values. By utilizing an emotional appeal, an institution could heighten a student's understanding of its values and spark a desire to be affiliated with the brand (Durkin, McKenna and Cummins, 2012). By telling a compelling story,

organizations can convey important information while arousing the audience's emotions and forging a connection with their values (Woodside, 2010).

Brand journalism is a practice utilized by organizations to deliver value to a given audience by imparting relevant, timely, useful content. Because this editorial-like content is seen as more "pure" than advertising, readers perceive it as more credible. Brand journalism content is appropriate for targeting audiences with useful content while promoting a brand's values, and has been shown effective at positively impacting attitudes toward a brand (Cole and Greer, 2013). In the sector of higher education, brand journalism can take the shape of feature stories, photos, videos, and other media that describe the experiences of students, faculty, and alumni.

The Carlson School of Management is the business school within the University of Minnesota. It offers an array of undergraduate, graduate, and PhD programs in select business fields. The School's strategic priorities lie in international business education, experiential learning, and access to cutting-edge business research. Although it serves a wider mission, the most critical component of the School's wellbeing is the health and vitality of its degree programs (Carlson Ventures Enterprise).

The Carlson School of Management Part-Time MBA is ranked No. 11 of 2014 Best Business Schools in the United States by U.S. News and World Reports. The flexible curriculum is tailored to working professionals with 3-6 years' experience in the business world who are looking to advance in their fields or change careers. Classes are held on evenings and weekends, students complete their degree in about 3-7 years, and there are approximately 1,200 individuals currently enrolled (In-depth Interviews).

The Part-Time MBA program may someday face a challenge in maintaining its reputation

among key constituencies (prospective students, corporate partners, etc.). While current Part-Time MBA students are generally satisfied with the curriculum, they are not as engaged with the Carlson School as they could be (as indicated by their lower propensity to attend events, join student groups, etc.) compared to their full-time counterparts. Program administrators are concerned this lack of engagement with the Carlson School will someday hinder the program's national rankings, which could harm recruitment. Their concerns emerge on the heels of a stinging incident: the Carlson Full-Time MBA dropped ten places in the rankings in 2013, due in part to alumni submitting unfavorable reviews of the program to ranking facilitators. The incident sparked MBA staff to examine student satisfaction and affinity among all its three programs, to safeguard against a similar event with one of its other MBA programs.

To understand the implications of this phenomenon and the effects communications have on the problem, the following research was carried out:

- Academic sources on the potential of brand journalism to forge identification with a brand/organization, and the importance of brand affinity among student populations were analyzed
- In-depth interviews were conducted with Carlson School MBA administrators to examine the identification problem among Part-Time MBA students and its implications for the program
- Focus groups made up of current Part-Time MBA students were held to examine the identification problem and elicit insights about potential opportunities to apply principles of brand journalism to foster affinity with the Carlson School and among the student community itself
- A content analysis of the Carlson School's electronic communications was conducted to identify to what extent the organization was implementing principles of brand journalism

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Upon review of existing literature, many conclusions can be drawn about the nature of brand journalism and its applications for building relationships with/among audiences. As

evidenced by existing research, the following insights can be derived about the nature of brand journalism.

1. Storytelling is a powerful communications tool
2. Brand journalism harnesses the power of stories to connect with audiences
3. Identification with students is instrumental for MBA program success
4. Brand journalism promotes organizational identification

### *Storytelling is a Powerful Communications Tool*

In promoting a message to drive identification or action in a given audience, a human approach works best. Human beings make sense of the world around them by constructing, sharing, and internalizing stories. Stories tend to rouse the emotions. The act of exchanging stories is participatory: it requires audiences to be “active” listeners who insert their own perspectives and ideas into the story (Conrad & Pool, 2012).

Organizations which harness the power of stories to impart information lend credibility to the message and the organization itself -- audiences view editorial-like stories as more “pure” than advertising (Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, and Smit, 2010). They tend to transfer their trust of the story’s content onto the source of the message, fostering trust in that source. And whether the recipient has a high or low level of involvement or familiarity with the source, stories give a measurable lift to the source’s credibility (Cole & Greer, 2012).

Stories are a persuasive means of connecting with an audience. By telling a compelling story, the communicator can weave information with emotion. If sufficiently compelling, an idea that’s contained in a story can make a lasting impact on the audience (Woodside, 2010).

Storytelling is an interactive process in which the teller presents his or her version of the story, usually leaving out many details, while others jump in and challenge, reinterpret,

and revise the storyteller's version. The process allows each of the storytellers to link his or her own experiences to the experiences and interpretations of other storytellers. It's through this process of mutual interpretation (audiences) may learn to better understand the beliefs, biases, values, bonds and experiences of others. By listening to stories, members of organizations learn the values that bind the culture together and discover what they must say and do if they are to become accepted members of that culture (Conrad & Pool, 2012, p. 168).

### *Brand Journalism Harnesses the Power of Stories to Connect with Audiences*

Brand journalism describes content that's produced and promoted by organizations and designed to engage a target audience while subtly promoting the brand's values, products, and offerings (Cole & Greer, 2013). Content can take the form of feature stories, lists, polls, photos, interviews with experts, surveys, videos, and more. Organizations practicing brand journalism are increasingly employing online tools (blogs, social media, websites, wikis, etc.) to convey timely stories directly to a given audience (Solomon, 2013). Brand journalism derives its power from offering valuable information that the audience is passionate about (Business Sense, 2013).

Content that follows the principles of brand journalism tells stories to build trust, goodwill, and identification between an organization and its target audiences, and has proven more effective at impacting attitudes than competing forms of promotion (Cole & Greer, 2013). As audiences become increasingly desensitized to traditional advertising, organizations are exploring brand journalism as a means to earn their customers' attention. In doing so, communicators adapt to behave like journalists with the goal of connecting with and/or



generating a desired behavior from customers/prospects/stakeholders (Pulizzi).

For a media company, content is created in order to make money directly of the creation of content through paid content sales (direct purchase of content) or advertising sales (someone sponsors the content that is created, like we see in newspapers and magazines). For a non-media company, content is created, not to profit directly from the content, but indirectly by attracting and retaining customers. (Pulizzi, 2012, p. 117)

To earn the attention and trust of the target audience, the organization must offer value while minimizing overt attempts to sell (Pulizzi, 2012). And in an era when consumers demand value in exchange for attention, quality storytelling is the key to implementing a successful brand journalism strategy (Vaynerchuk, 2013). Furthermore, the content must be carefully tailored to remain relevant to the audience's interest, behavior, media consumption habits, demographics, motivations, and attitudes (Misloski, 2005). If executed properly, brand journalism can affect an audience's perception of message credibility as well as boost positive attitudes toward a brand (Cole & Greer, 2012).

### *Identification with Students is Instrumental for MBA Program Success*

Although business schools are themselves brands, MBA programs have found little success in approaching students as "customers" of their higher education experience in the way consumer brands tend to. Put simply, prospective MBAs aren't looking to "buy a degree," but rather invest in an opportunity for enrichment. Students don't evaluate the cost of an MBA in

terms of the utility of the degree itself, but instead consider the value the degree brings for employment, status, and lifestyle. It's essential for prospective students to understand not just how their MBA coursework will prepare them for their career of choice, but also the differential value the School's brand lends to its graduates (Durkin McKenna & Cummins, 2012).

The best messengers of the differential value of a given MBA program are its alumni (Perin, Sampaio, Simoes, and De Polvora, 2012). Alumni strengthen their alma maters in four ways: First, alumni feedback helps determine national rankings like those performed by *U.S. News and World Report*. Second, the reputation of an institution's alumni among the business community helps the school connect to recruiters who have had a positive experience with graduates of the program, and place more students/alumni at in-demand companies. Third, alumni fortify the program by giving back through mentorships, guest lectures, and other avenues of involvement. Fourth, alumni make financial contributions to support scholarships, enable the school to hire and retain the best faculty, and to fund state of the art facilities (Mael and Ashforth, 1994). These four dimensions are key factors prospective students consider when selecting a school. The likelihood that alumni will drive success along these four dimensions is determined largely by their identification with their alma mater (Perin, Sampaio, Simoes, and De Polvora, 2012).

Organizations encourage members to identify with the institution and to one another to better serve their missions in an array of ways. Successful identification occurs when the individual perceives his/her continued connection to the organization as an important component of who they are as people (Conrad & Poole, 2012). Especially for students, sentimentality toward their experience with the institution is an important predictor of their

likelihood to remain connected to the school and act as ambassadors for its mission (Perin, Sampaio, Simoes, and De Polvora, 2012).

### *Brand Journalism Promotes Organizational Identification*

Due to its ability to harness the power of storytelling to connect with audiences, the practice of brand journalism has been shown to create emotional ties between organizations and audiences (Ivy, 2008). Furthermore, it's with audiences that have an already high investment with an organization whose attitudes are most heavily influenced by brand journalism content (Cole & Greer, 2013).

Early research findings over the past two years indicate that aiming to influence a decision in the mind of the potential young customer can be helped through the use of a branding/marketing strategy which uses emotion as a way of bridging the gap between institutional awareness, understanding and desire for affiliation. (Durkin McKenna Cummins, 2012, p. 156)

Be they conveyed through publications, websites, or other channels, identification messages have been shown to encourage recipients to identify with their organizations (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). The message recipients begin to feel close ties to people who appear in these stories, and in turn, form positive feelings about the organization that cares for these members and about their peers in the community (Cheney, 1983).

Additionally, brand journalism leverages audiences' desire to attribute human characteristics to brands to engage in relationships with organizations. By thinking about brands as characters, audiences align with organizations to construct their own sense of identity. By

understanding and shaping the “persona” of the brand, brand journalism can reinforce the brand’s persona and encourage audiences to internalize the organization’s values (Schembri & Merrilees, 2010).

Whether you are dealing with product brands or company brands, storytelling is essential to successful branding, since your brand is the sum of all your corporate behaviors and communications that inform your customers’ experiences with your product or company. In particular, persona-focused storytelling is essential to branding. When it comes to creating a powerful brand narrative, the persona – the articulated form of the brand’s character and personality – comes first, and all other elements unfold from there. A compelling brand starts with a strong, well-drawn, and quickly recognized persona – the essential connection between what a company says and what it does. This brand persona creates a long-lasting emotional bond with the audience because it is instantly recognizable and memorable, it is something that people can relate to, and it is consistent (Crystal, 2010, p. 23).

### *Literature Review Discussion*

Research suggests the practice of brand journalism uses storytelling, a powerful communications tool, to promote identification between a message recipient and an organization that’s grounded in emotion. Given the numerous benefits of forging a meaningful connection with current students who will someday become alumni, fostering identification is an essential component of building community and ensuring the continued wellbeing of the Carlson School MBA program. The literature suggests that brand journalism could be a viable

means for increasing identification among a key population and an organization.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Upon examining existing research about the nature of brand journalism and the drivers of an individual's identification with an organization, it's evident a communications strategy that relies on brand journalism could be potentially effective at forging affinity between Part-Time MBA students and the Carlson School. But there are several factors that require further investigation before the communications team can approach a brand journalism strategy for the School.

**RQ1:** How does organizational affinity affect the continued vitality of the Carlson School?

**RQ2:** Why don't Part-Time MBA students forge a strong connection with the Carlson School?

**RQ3:** How could the Carlson School offer resources and information that could fortify students' identification with the School?

## **METHOD**

### **In-depth Interviews**

The first step in addressing questions about identification between Part-Time MBA students and the Carlson School was to obtain a more thorough understanding of the problem. In-depth interviews were the most appropriate method for eliciting insights about identification among students: the interview method helped establish an environment conducive to eliciting

in-depth feedback that was free from the social pressures that may prevent sources from expressing frank criticisms about the students or the School. The sources who provided their perspective are all Carlson MBA program employees who work in student affairs and admissions. Taken together, they offer a holistic view of the Part-Time and Full-Time student populations.

The interviews took place in March and April of 2014, and were conducted at the School. Fellow researcher Emily Stickler participated in the interviews and asked questions she had independently developed for a separate project, and shared the transcripts, with prior approval from the Strategic Communication Program Director Steve Wehrenberg. The discussions lasted approximately one hour each and were recorded for later transcription (Appendix A). See Results section for further analysis.

- Source 1 is associate director of student affairs
- Source 2 is director of student affairs
- Source 3 is assistant director of admissions and recruiting
- Source 4 is director of admissions and recruiting

### **Focus Groups**

The next step in obtaining an understanding of the Part-Time MBA population, gauging their identification to the Carlson School, and identifying their communication needs was to convene focus groups to hold a discussion with students. The goals of the focus groups were to confirm assumptions about the student identification problem held by the School's student affairs staff (previously gathered from in-depth interviews), as well as to explore whether this audience could be receptive to brand journalism messages.

Two focus groups were held: one made up of Part-Time MBA students, and another featuring Full-Time MBA students, both recruited with the help of Carlson School MBA staff,

using a convenience sample. The purpose of examining the two audiences separately was to identify differences in experiences/perceptions between Part-Time and Full-Time students that could contextualize the unique challenges for Part-Time student identification -- according to in-depth interviews, more Full-Time students identify strongly with the Carlson School than their Part-Time counterparts.

During initial discussions about recruiting students for the focus groups, MBA staff cautioned that Part-Time MBA students most likely to volunteer for the focus group would likely be “deep divers:” those students that view the MBA experience as an extension of their lives that are willing to carve out time to get involved outside the classroom. MBA staff predicted it was less likely focus group volunteers would be “ticket punchers:” students that view their education as an extension of the workday and are less inclined to engage with the School outside the classroom. Based on this prediction, the researcher included questions designed to suss out which population subset the participants belonged to, and structured the questions to accommodate both groups simultaneously, but assumed the focus group would be made up of primarily “deep divers.”

Discussion questions were developed to examine the students’ perception of the School and program experience, gauge their identification with the School, and determine opportunities for implementing brand journalism. Following are the questions used, and the rationale for each question:

- Determine which participants are “deep divers” and which are “ticket punchers” by probing how they prioritize their participation in the MBA program within their lives
  - What led you to pursue your MBA?
  - How did the Carlson School stand out from other programs?
- Examine opportunities for implementing a brand journalism strategy: is this audience receptive to communication efforts?

- What opportunities or resources could the School provide that would enrich your experience?
- What is your sense of the School's communication with part-time students? Too much, too little?
- How would you like to receive information from the school?
- Generate discussion about students' perceptions of the School's persona and that of competing schools
  - If the Carlson School was a person, who would it be at a barbecue? Your mother in law? Your creepy neighbor? Your close friend?
  - At that barbecue, how would Carlson spend his/her time? Talking with a lot with people? Keeping to his or herself?
  - Who are the other b-schools at the barbeque, and who would they be? Mother in law? Creepy neighbor, etc.?

The focus groups were held in April 2014 at the Carlson School. Focus Group 1 was made up of six Full-Time MBA students, spanning various concentrations, all of whom had completed at least one year of the program. Focus Group 2 was made up of four Part-Time MBA students, and all appeared to be "deep divers." The researchers encountered difficulty recruiting Part-Time students, and moved forward with four participants, despite their goal of engaging more students. One participant in the Part-Time MBA focus group was also an employee of the Carlson School. Fellow researcher Emily Stickler participated in the focus groups and shared the transcripts for application to a separate project, with prior approval from the Strategic Communication Program Director Steve Wehrenberg. All responses were transcribed for later analysis (See Appendix B).

### **Content Analysis**

In order to identify opportunities for the Carlson School to implement a brand journalism strategy to foster affinity among Part-Time MBA students, a content analysis of electronic communications aimed at this audience was conducted. The goal of the content analysis was to determine the scope of brand journalism messages in place throughout the



School's communications and identify gaps where a brand journalism strategy could increase organizational affinity.

Unfortunately, existing scholarly literature did not include detailed parameters to describe brand journalism content, which makes codifying particular messages as representative of brand journalism impossible. Thus, to properly analyze the scope of affinity-inducing messages throughout the School's communications, the content analysis draws upon a 1983 study on rhetoric and identification messages.

In "the rhetoric of identification and the study of organizational communication," George Cheney identified six messaging tactics organizations can employ to most effectively facilitate identification with employees. In this study, Cheney analyzed periodicals designed to establish a set of shared values among employees that were produced and distributed by organizations. Although the term had not yet been coined, the content he analyzed, the tactics he described, and the objectives the sponsoring organizations addressed through these communication vehicles bear a striking resemblance to those of brand journalism.

For this content analysis, the researcher coded Carlson School electronic communications according to whether each piece of content employed one or more of Cheney's six "tactics of identification." For the purpose of this analysis, the tactics were framed as they applied to students, as opposed to employees, as this is the audience for which organizational identification is a concern.

1. Expression of concern for the individual: Content features the role of students in the organization
2. Recognition of individual contributions: Content recognizes individuals for their contributions to the organization
3. Espousal of shared values: Content states explicitly that "we" have the same interests as "you"
4. Advocacy of benefits and activities: Content advocates organization-sponsored benefits

and activities

5. Praise by outsiders: Content promotes positive views of the organization held by outsiders
6. Testimonials by students: Content that includes quotations by students expressing dedication, commitment, or affection with regard to the organization

The content analysis coded all known communications delivered electronically by the Carlson School to current Part-Time MBA students between Jan. 21, 2014 through April 14, 2014 (one academic semester). These included emails and posts on the Carlson School MBA Facebook page. Each piece of content (story) was analyzed individually. A total of 203 pieces of content/messages were examined. The content analysis was completed in May of 2014 (See Appendix C).

## **RESULTS**

### **In-depth Interviews**

In-depth interviews with MBA staff (See Appendix A) confirmed some assumptions drawn from existing literature, but challenged others. These discussions yielded a number of salient insights.

Most directly related to the research question was testimony regarding:

1. The role of student affinity with Part-Time MBA program success
2. The unique communication challenges presented by the Part-Time MBA student population
3. The varying degree of student engagement across the Part-Time student population
4. The potential for offering relevant information through a new communications channel

### *Positive Word of Mouth Most Important Outcome of Student Affinity*

Although all the interviewees indicated that student affinity is important to MBA program success, they cited reasons not previously reflected by existing literature: students

who identify with the Carlson School generate positive word of mouth, act as brand ambassadors, grow the School's renown throughout the state, and drive student success in the program. While national rankings are still relevant to key Carlson School constituents, they are less important than other factors (Sources 1, 2 & 4).

"Every [MBA] program wants to be different, even though they aren't very different. We all offer similar resources and programs ... So affinity helps distinguish us, it gives us this distinctiveness between programs. You realize affinity when you discover the special nature of an MBA program," (Source 2).

Findings from existing literature suggested that affinity is key in driving national rankings, forging connections with the business community, supporting alumni involvement, and making financial contributions to the School (Mael and Ashforth). However, the Part-Time MBA staff interviewees cited positive word of mouth as the most impactful outcome of student affinity (Sources 1, 2 & 3). When questioning interviewees about the Carlson School Part-Time MBA program's strongest selling point, most interviewees agreed word of mouth was the most salient factor of the program's growth and sustained success (Sources 1, 2 & 4). According to one source, most students who enroll in the program reported they spoke with at least one alumnus of the Carlson School, most commonly a colleague, before applying to the Part-Time MBA program (Source 1).

Carlson School alumni who have strong affinity to their alma mater also promote the renown of the MBA program throughout the state of Minnesota (Source 2). "Part-Time students ... indicate that we are the best program in the state, that seems to carry some brand value in a sense. We interpret that as when part-time students tell their employer they're going

to Carlson, they're being recognized as high-achieving people," (Source 2).

A new insight reflected by the interviews was that student affinity to the program and/or the Carlson School could also be correlated to the student's success in the classroom:

"Students perform better in programs and have better outcomes if they feel that it is a part of their identity in some ways, other than just something they're just tacking onto what they're doing ... we're going to have more engaged alumni, the students are going to be more successful academically, they're going to be happier, all these benefits result from students engaging with the program and with each other," (Source 1).

The interviewees reported that program rankings, while still relevant to the Carlson School's success, were less important to the Carlson School's ability to recruit top talent than word of mouth, quality of faculty, and flexibility of curriculum, and other factors (Sources 1 & 2). Although *alumni* keep an eye on rankings and perceive them as an ongoing measure of the value of their degree, prospective students are typically convinced the Carlson MBA is a top program independent of rankings (Source 2). This is largely due to a high level of institutional awareness of the Carlson School and University of Minnesota within the state of Minnesota, and unlike the Full-Time MBA program, students rarely relocate to Minnesota to complete the Part-Time program (Source 1), and are thus likely already aware of the School's reputation at the outset of considering an MBA.

#### *Part-Time MBA students Present Unique Communication Challenges*

The interviewees identified the following communication challenges unique to the Part-Time student population: First, the size and diversity of the student body (they vary widely

in age, professional experience, personal commitments, and more) make message personalization difficult (Source 1). “The part-time population is interesting and challenging because it’s huge and diverse. That’s the biggest challenge with it,” (Source 1). Second, contrary to their Full-Time counterparts, Part-Time students shoulder the grueling MBA curriculum in addition to their careers and families, and have less time and attention to spare for communication with the School (Sources 1 & 3). Third, Part-Time MBA students attend classes at various times throughout the day and week, which makes logging face-to-face time with program administrators a challenge (Sources 2 & 3).

MBA administrators have approached several tactics for communicating with students. They’ve found email to be the least effective – Part-Time MBA students report they receive too much email and the open rates of the program’s weekly e-newsletter are dismal at best (Sources 1 & 2). Part-Time students have applauded recent efforts to host more opportunities for in-person communication among students and MBA staff: the interviewees claim their efforts to restructure the orientation process, offer mentorship programs for prospective and current students, and hold more networking events have been somewhat successful in generating conversations among the students, but MBA staff have a long way to go in building effective networking/communication channels (Sources 1 & 2). “Short of putting a ferris wheel up in the atrium, there’s no way I can conceive to better get a message out there,” Source 2).

### *Program Aims to Serve Both “Ticket Punchers” and “Deep Divers”*

Unlike the Full-Time MBA program, the majority of Part-Time students are uninterested in becoming involved with the Carlson School outside their classes: they enroll in the program

with the transactional goal of earning an MBA degree, often so they can win a promotion or salary increase at work (Sources 1 & 4). “[We] have a large population of these ‘ticket punchers’ that just want to get their degree and get out. They ... have massive commitments outside of this program and they fit us into their life as they want to,” (Source 2).

Inversely, there are Part-Time students that seek the deep, enriching, immersive experience the Carlson School offers Full-Time students (Source 1), but this segment of the Part-Time population is less prevalent. These “deep diver” students value the curriculum and the degree, but also recognize the benefits of networking with their peers, becoming involved in students groups, studying abroad, and maintaining a two-way dialog with the Carlson School about problems/opportunities within the Part-Time MBA program. “[In] Part-Time, you have a group that are the ‘deep divers’ and are similar to the full-timers. They want to contribute and add value and create community,” (Source 2). ‘Ticket punchers’ and ‘deep divers’ tend to clash in the classroom, causing frustration for both groups,” (Source 1).

The interviewees say catering to each of these audiences can be difficult, but hope to offer a student experience to meet both their needs. “I think there’s a large number of students who come here, get the degree, check the box, and go. They don’t want to be the leader of the marketing club, which is fine. Because there’s about 1,200 [Part-Time MBA] students. But if I have even ten percent invested, we’d be making big strides in the affinity space,” (Source 2).

### *Moodle Offers New Opportunities for Connecting With Students*

The Carlson School has begun experimenting with Moodle, a web-based course

interface, to communicate with MBA students (Source 1). The platform allows program administrators to distribute information to tailored audiences according to their courses, year in the program, and more, as well as track which content students engage with (Source 2). It also enables students to communicate with one another (Source 1). “Moodle is a good place for the Part-Time community to communicate with one another and the administration. Moodle has been successful in controlling content that allows us to customize the format according to their student accounts,” (Source 2).

Still in its initial implementation stages (the platform has been in place for two incoming populations of students for the past year), MBA program administrators have utilized Moodle primarily to convey curriculum-related information regarding policies and procedures (Source 1). The interviewees indicated Moodle has been more successful than mass email at communicating with students.

### **Focus Groups**

Focus group participants shared their thoughts, attitudes, and perceptions related to several dimensions of the MBA experience. By comparing the Part-Time and Full-Time students’ responses, several distinctions emerge that could explain the differences between the two populations’ identification with the School and help generate potential avenues for applying brand journalism to grow affinity:

1. While Full-Time students demand an MBA experience as immersive and transformational, Part-Time students are looking for tangible takeaways from the program that will help them advance their careers
2. Word of mouth and reputation of the School are influential for both Part-and-Full-time students
3. Part-Time students are unsatisfied with the frequency and content of communications from the Carlson School

4. Both MBA student populations recognize the power of connecting with their classmates, but Part-Time students want more flexible opportunities to do so

### *Two Programs Offer Distinct Experiences*

As reported by MBA staff during earlier in-depth interviews, students reinforced the stark differences between the Part-Time and Full-Time student experience. While Full-Time students talked about their transformative journey through their MBA coursework and view their role as an MBA student as an essential part of their identity, Part-Time students appear to be motivated by mastering the skills the program imparts to advance their careers.

Full-Time students have high expectations for their two years at the Carlson School: not only do they expect to obtain the knowledge and skills an MBA typically offers, they also expect to strengthen their personal weaknesses, forge lifelong bonds with classmates, connect to the business community, and more. The majority of the focus group participants cited the transformational nature of the MBA program as a driver of their positive attitudes toward the School.

“I realized something about the School when I got here ... this school actually is transformational.” -Full-Time MBA student

“I’ve progressed in leadership, project management, confidence, and the relationships I’ve developed. It sounds corny, but I’m completely different in my abilities and as a person from the beginning to the end. Carlson is honestly the best decision I could have made for my career and my future.” -Full-Time MBA student

All Part-Time student participants reported a desire to advance their careers as the primary driver for their pursuit of an MBA. In stark contrast to Full-Time students, this



population most values the skills they develop in the program and how they can apply their takeaways from the classroom to their current and future careers. Additionally, all Part-Time focus group participants reported tuition reimbursement programs as influencing their decision to pursue a graduate degree.

“I’m just looking to be a more well-rounded business professional ... I think the program has been hugely beneficial. I’ve seen things I’ve learned in the program apply to my everyday job within the first two semesters.” -Part-Time MBA student

“I felt like the MBA would provide better experience for where I wanted to go in my career as opposed to a communications degree ... Communication and presentation skills are important.” -Part-Time MBA student

“The people I knew that graduated from this program were of a different caliber and were doing things I’d like to be doing with my life.” -Part-Time MBA student

“All of my undergrad friends went to the Carlson program, and I’ve seen how they’ve been successful in their careers and what they’ve been able to achieve.” -Part-Time MBA student and Carlson School staff member

### *Student’s Choice of School Guided by Word of Mouth*

Findings from the focus groups further emphasized the importance of word of mouth for the continued success the MBA program has experienced in recruiting high-quality students: both for Part-Time and Full-Time students. Virtually all the participants in both groups reported an interaction with a Carlson School alumnus, staff, or faculty member as a key determinant of their choice to enroll in the Carlson MBA program.

“For me, what sold me was all personal. I was on Carlson’s website a couple times, but it was all one to one interaction that sold me on the school. It really had nothing to do with a crafted marketing message.” -Full-Time MBA student

Although all the students reported recommendations from employees and alumni of the school as important to their choice, each group’s frame of reference varied: Full-Time MBA students examined the Carlson School’s renown compared to competing institutions nationally, while Part-Time students were most concerned with the School’s reputation in the local business community and were largely unaware of competing schools’ offerings/reputations.

“My wife went to Harvard, and they have 900 students per class, and they’re doing amazing things at that school, but it’s a factory: they push people out and it’s very impersonal on a school level. But when I came here, it was personal, small, intimate, and the director of admissions gives you hugs. It was a better fit for me.” -Full-Time MBA student

“Aside from employment, reputation is a big deal. I have a lot of friends who had heard of the reputation and the ties that [Carlson] had with the community. With the Part-Time program, so many of the companies around here have individuals from those companies that come here.” -Part-Time MBA student

### *Part-Time Students Crave Communication*

Despite impressions shared by MBA staff during in-depth interviews, Part-Time MBA focus group participants demonstrated a strong desire for *more* communication from the School, especially compared to Full-Time students.

The majority of Full-Time student participants reported they hadn't seen many communications from the Carlson School, and that they seldom visit School websites or read emails from the MBA office. When probed about why they discount information shared through formal communication channels, the participants expressed they preferred to stay plugged in to happenings in the School by talking with their classmates.

"I get emails from the graduate office at the U. But I don't consume a lot, because I'm here. But when I'm an alum I think I will sign up for a newsletter or sign up on Facebook." -Full-Time MBA student

Conversely, Part-Time MBA students rely on communications from the Carlson School to stay connected to the program: they use Carlson School communication channels to stay informed of important changes, plan their coursework, learn about networking opportunities, and more. This population grapples with increased time constraints compared to their Full-Time counterparts, and thus craves timely, relevant, succinct communication about the School delivered in an easy-to-read format. All of the Part-Time student focus group participants reported reading the weekly e-newsletter distributed by the MBA office, and all expressed frustration that the staff didn't communicate swiftly or often enough to meet their needs.

"I read that newsletter every week. It is good, and I guess if there's anything I need to know about the program, I'm hoping it's all there. If it isn't, then I don't do additional research to seek it out." -Part-Time MBA student

"I don't think the communication is enough. I get a lot of information just being on the staff side and I then turn around and tell the MBA office to put in the newsletter. They probably don't track how many people do read that. When I was first in the program, I

was looking for friends too. They put a small blurb about the tailgating the sports club did, and it was probably more full-time focused but open to everybody. And I went with my boyfriend and we had a great time, I was wondering why there weren't more part-timers there. I don't think they highlight some of those fun events, you don't have to always be on your networking game. The weekly newsletter is good, but I don't know if I've heard much more outside of that." -Part-Time MBA student and Carlson School staff member

"I think a bit more transparency in terms of big changes that might affect us is needed."

-Part-Time MBA student

"In general, information sharing is important. I think it's important for students to get the most important information in an accessible form. Students are going to the intranet and Moodle and all these websites where there's information for students, and I don't think it's always very clear where students should go. I think they're trying to figure out how to find very basic information. I would say that I would go to the website probably a lot more as a student if it was easier to know where there was information that was relevant to a student on there." -Part-Time MBA student

Furthermore, it's not just information these students seek, but a connection to the School. Without being prompted, focus group participants shared some ideas for content they would be interested in reading including stories of fellow Part-Time students, pieces that tell the story of the Carlson School, information on how to choose classes, and tips from their classmates about how to balance work, academics, and family.

"If there were stories of people who have done it well, that could be helpful so see how

other have balanced this with life. Some people have kids and spouses, and people are all over the spectrum.” -Part-Time MBA student

“There is an underground professor blog that gets shared from student to student, it’s like a master Google doc that is very helpful when you’re trying to figure out which classes to take because there are so many to choose from because it’s kind of a create-your-own schedule.” -Part-Time MBA student and Carlson School staff member

### *Networking Remains a Priority*

Although Part-Time student focus group participants spoke at greatest length about the importance of increasing their business acumen through their MBA studies, they also mentioned a desire to build a meaningful network with their fellow students. But compared to the Full-Time participants (whose program is made up of just over 100 students) who reported feeling a tight bond with their classmates, the Part-Time students felt they weren’t receiving the networking opportunities they needed to build that community.

“As far as networking, one of the things I really hoped to gain from the program was building relationships with classmates that would then translate to being able to call them up to talk about a business problem we’re both having but from different perspectives. Someone in a totally different industry struggling with the same problem I am, and being able to meet for coffee. Building a community like that in the Twin Cities is also really appealing.” -Part-Time MBA student

“The networking is hard: it’s a catch 22 with the relationships you build as a part-timer since you do have a job and then you have class and some people have kids, so that’s

always a struggle.” -Part-Time MBA student

“I haven’t done very many of the events that the part-time program holds. And I don’t know if it’s just because I’m not interested in all of them or if the timing just hasn’t worked out ... I would like to see the event side of it or the planned networking piece grow a little bit, but I don’t know how that looks ... But I’m still curious what that looks like, for part-timers to be involved in a manageable commitment.” -Part-Time MBA student

### **Content Analysis**

By coding and categorizing the content of messages sent electronically to current MBA students throughout a full academic semester, the content analysis quantified types of messaging most commonly employed throughout the School’s communications and revealed gaps where a brand journalism strategy could supplement existing tactics (See Discussion).

To determine the scope of identification messages employed by MBA communication channels, 203 messages/pieces of content were coded according to which of Cheney’s six “tactics of identification” was present, if any. For the purpose of this analysis, the tactics were framed as they applied to students, as this is the audience for which organizational identification is a concern. Each piece of content was coded to account for all tactics of identification, and consequently some pieces of content contained more than one tactic (Percent of overall content will exceed 100 percent).

<b>Tactic of Identification</b>	<b>Instances</b>	<b>% of content</b>
<b>Expression of concern for the individual:</b> Content features the role of students in the organization	1	0.5%
<b>Recognition of individual contributions:</b> Content recognizes individuals for their contributions to the organization	7	3.5%
<b>Espousal of shared values:</b> Content states explicitly that “we” have the same interests as “you”	13	6.4%
<b>Advocacy of benefits and activities:</b> Content advocates organization-sponsored benefits and activities	115	56.7%
<b>Praise by outsiders:</b> Content promotes positive views of the organization held by outsiders	5	2.5%
<b>Testimonials by students:</b> Content that includes quotations by students expressing dedication, commitment, or affection with regard to the organization	7	3.4%
<b>No tactic of identification employed</b>	62	30.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>103.5%</b>

Some trends in the content delivered via email and Facebook become evident. First, the overwhelming majority of messages employed Cheney’s tactic “advocacy of benefits and activities.” That is, more than half the content promoted events, job/volunteer opportunities, and student services endorsed by the MBA office. Second, 30.5 percent of content did not employ any tactic of identification: many of these messages drove audiences to third-party content that was merely tenuously related to business or life in Minneapolis. Third, the 16 percent of messages that utilized any of the remaining five Cheney identification tactics were rare and haphazard -- most promoted the implicit values of the School through “our” and “we” statements offered from MBA office leadership, and others reported students’ achievements in

case competitions or raising money for charitable causes. Fourth, there were almost no messages that described or featured first-hand perspectives from Part-Time MBA students. Finally, it wasn't uncommon for a piece of content to appear upwards of four times across both channels. For example, an event would be promoted in the e-newsletter three times, then appear on Facebook twice.

Overall, the majority of messages Part-Time MBA students receive electronically do not fit the principles of brand journalism. The content analysis confirmed feedback from students gathered during focus groups that the School communicates frequently about events, but misses opportunities to offer messages more relevant to students' experiences -- the most important component of brand journalism being it offers useful information while subtly promoting the organization's values, from which the audience can derive value. Furthermore, the content seldom applied storytelling techniques (a participatory process instrumental for forging identification) to impart information.

### **SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

*RQ1: How does organizational affinity affect the continued vitality of the Carlson School?*

Throughout the research process, several arguments in favor of the value of organizational affinity among MBA students have emerged: The literature indicates business school alumni with strong ties to their alma mater boost rankings, make financial contributions, and more. In-depth interviews suggest students with high affinity to the school perform better in the classroom and grow the renown of the Carlson School. MBA student focus group participants further proved organizational affinity supports the positive word of mouth about



the Carlson School that ensures the institution can continue to attract high quality students: focus group participants attested the recommendations from School staff and alumni guided their decision to enroll and provided a real-life view of the program.

Organizational affinity manifests in numerous ways to benefit the MBA program. Students with strong affinity appear to be more likely to thrive and engage in the curriculum to reap maximum benefits. These students who are consequently more satisfied with their student experience are more likely to share their perspective with colleagues and contribute to the positive reputation of the Carlson School.

*RQ2: Why don't Part-Time MBA students forge a strong connection with the Carlson School?*

Given the importance of affinity, Part-Time MBA students' lack of identification with the Carlson School is potentially problematic for the program's continued position as the top MBA program in the region. According to in-depth interviews, this lack of affinity stems from the transactional nature of the Part-Time MBA program: students enroll in the program with the tangible goal of earning an MBA degree, often so they can win a promotion or salary increase at work. Focus group responses confirmed these "ticket puncher" students are stretched too thin among the commitments of work, school, and family, and don't have the capacity to become involved in the Carlson School beyond performing the bare minimum work to earn the degree. This mindset closes these students off from the School's efforts to connect in a meaningful way.

However, this transactional mentality doesn't hold true for all Part-Time MBA students: the research results suggest some students seek the deep, enriching, holistic experience that is

more common among Full-Time MBA students. Although this population of Part-Time “deep divers” are less prevalent than “ticket punchers,” they could be receptive to efforts to forge affinity with the School. However, further quantitative research is needed to confirm the scale of this segment of the student population.

*RQ3: How could the Carlson School offer resources and information that could fortify students’ identification with the School?*

The communication between Part-Time students and the School that is most likely to get the gears of identification turning is stymied by several messaging challenges: The Carlson School has not yet leveraged a communication channel that is conducive to personalizing information to appeal to the wide and diverse Part-Time audience, nor have they invested in crafting concise, relevant messages to this audience. Furthermore, communication efforts by the School have gone mostly ignored by students who have been long frustrated by the difficulty of locating basic information or being informed of important news in a timely fashion.

Two conflicting findings suggest varying degrees of communication utility in email messages, in particular. While in-depth interviews with MBA program staff suggested Part-Time students don’t pay attention to emails (either for lack of time, or interest), focus groups with students revealed the opposite. Students claimed they regularly read the MBA e-newsletter and craved more communication from the School. Engagement data on email communications shows the e-newsletter has an average open rate of 20 percent -- an-above average level of engagement for e-mail communications. A more thorough survey of Part-Time students is needed to confirm whether this audience is unsatisfied with communications, as a whole.

A content analysis confirmed the researcher's assumptions that content promoted through electronic communications with Part-Time students was not utilizing principles of brand journalism that are likely to address some concerns from students and objectives of MBA staff: the majority of content promoted events and opportunities for students, with conflicted with findings from interviews that MBA staff are aware Part-Time students are less inclined to attend events. A substantial portion of content was curatorial, and irrelevant to the MBA program. Content that followed the principles of brand journalism (relevant, useful, employed storytelling) was largely absent from electronic communications.

The research suggests that constraints on MBA students' time make effective delivery of succinct and relevant messages essential if the School is to strengthen communication with this diverse audience. Both in-depth interviews and focus groups suggest that Part-Time students require continuous and thorough information sharing with MBA program staff if they are to succeed in the curriculum. While MBA staff grow frustrated that Part-Time students appear disinterested in forming a meaningful bond with the School and seemingly ignore important announcements, the Part-Time MBA students claim they aren't communicated with often enough or offered the information they need to succeed.

Furthermore, communication cannot accomplish substantial shifts in affinity without additional efforts to connect with students. While focus group participants offered suggestions like structuring student clubs and organizations to be more accessible to Part-Time students with limited free time, and holding more events and opportunities for students to socialize outside of class, more research is needed to devise action strategies that shape the Part-Time program into a more immersive experience for students seeking more of a transformational

program.

## **DISCUSSION**

This paper aimed to investigate the potential of a brand journalism strategy to foster organizational identification and sought to identify opportunities for applying its principles to strengthen affinity among Part-Time MBA students and the Carlson School of Management. By consulting existing research on brand journalism, organizational identification, and higher education communication strategies; interviewing key leaders in the Carlson MBA office; holding discussions with Part-Time and Full-Time MBA students; and examining a segment of communications aimed at the audience in question, the researcher makes the following recommendations if the Carlson School Part-Time MBA administrators are to revamp communications to increase affinity.

### *Place Part-Time students front and center*

To craft communications that resonate with the Part-Time MBA audience, program administrators should include perspectives, stories, expertise, testimonials, and more from the students themselves. Communicating stories and featuring figures with which the audience can relate increases organizational affinity through the power of storytelling -- a cornerstone of brand journalism.

The need to feature Part-Time students more prominently throughout MBA communications surfaced across nearly all stages of research. The literature review repeatedly indicated audiences connect best with messages from/about peers in their organization.

Interviews with MBA staff indicated that efforts to help students better get to know one another in new formats have been well received. Focus groups revealed Part-Time students are interested in learning more about their fellow students, and some participants specifically requested more stories about Part-Time students who excel in the program while managing other responsibilities. The content analysis indicated electronic communications to students seldom highlight student perspectives.

A key element of telling these students' stories will be the images the content employs. Photos of Part-Time students should accompany as much content as possible. Images should be high quality: if possible, art direction should be introduced to ensure the subjects appear genuine.

By tapping Part-Time MBA students, administrators can incorporate the audience's voice to craft relevant, timely, engaging stories with which Part-Time students can relate -- identification messages that feature peers encourage an audience to feel close ties to people who appear in the stories, and in turn, form positive feelings about the organization that cares for these members and about their peers in the community.

#### *Develop rigorous editorial guidelines*

MBA administrators must be diligent in screening and packaging communications to Part-Time MBA students, and should develop a set of principles for which content is sent to this audience. These guidelines should be grounded in the School's values, objectives, and differentiators, and help administrators identify the content that will be most relevant for the Part-Time audience.

This tactic accomplishes three key communications objectives. First, editorial guidelines ensure all curatorial content is targeted to Part-Time MBA students, which could alleviate some complaints that surfaced during focus groups about the frequency of irrelevant information via email communications. Second, setting strategic communication objectives will lead to more balanced content across a range of topics, formats, organizational values, etc. The content analysis revealed much of the content sent electronically revolved around promoting events. Thus, placing an increased emphasis on the School's values could help administrators surface fresh content while screening out event-specific messages. Third, editorial guidelines will reduce the probability of audience fatigue by limiting the number of times MBA administrators promote the same message/event/piece of content across all channels.

As part of these guidelines, MBA administrators should also conceive methods to craft concise content that stretches beyond text on a page. Brand journalism strategies often include video, photos, lists, profiles, Q&As, polls, graphics, and more. These are all formats that could lend themselves to connecting with the Part-Time MBA audience, who are pressed for time and demand relevant information in a quick and digestible format.

#### *Consider new communication channels*

MBA administrators should investigate the utility of fresh communication channels. Although the open rate of the weekly MBA e-newsletter exceeds industry averages, some Part-Time MBAs have abandoned mass email while others prefer to receive information in other ways. While engagement data were not available for the MBA Facebook page, this channel may be better suited to communicate with the Part-Time MBA audience.

Whichever channels MBA considers, the ability for the audience to interact with the message should be a core requirement. Other considerations for a communications channel include the ability to target messages to specific audiences based on their year in the program and other factors; the ability to track clicks and views for individual pieces of content; the customizability of the channel to convey numerous different types of content (photo, video, lists, etc.); a feature that enables the audience to make comments or include feedback; and whether the channel is proper fit for the tools this audience uses.

MBA could also seek opportunities to reach Part-Time MBA students through existing Carlson School communication efforts that are more generally targeted at students. Platforms like the School's alumni magazine, its School-wide social media channels, and its media relations efforts would likely welcome content that speaks to Part-Time MBA students. Placing increased prominence on Part-Time students across communications channels augments the School's wider mission of promoting its educational programs, while better representing its student population to audiences internally and externally.

#### *Define success early, measure often*

Affinity is a complicated outcome that results from a number of factors, and any efforts aimed at increasing this sentimentality among Part-Time MBA students will likely be difficult to measure. But administrators should select markers to gauge affinity among the target audience, gather data to set a benchmark, then measure changes after initial efforts to implement the brand journalism strategy. This monitoring should continue periodically. Results should inform the ongoing development of brand journalism content, communication channels, and message

themes. Potential markers that indicate affinity among Part-Time MBA students:

- likelihood students would recommend the Carlson School to a friend
  - likelihood students would make charitable contributions to the School
  - likelihood students would attend an event or opt in to receive messages from the School as alumni
  - frequency students consume content sent by the School
  - manner in which students would describe their experience in the Part-Time MBA program
- MBA administrators should also factor anecdotal feedback from students about new

communications tactics, and engagement data (e.g. open/click rates, shares, comments, etc.)

to identify patterns in the types of content the audience best responds to.

### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Several limitations to the preceding research necessitate further examination if this problem is to be more thoroughly understood. First, the convenience sample used for the focus group sessions likely did not reflect the entire population of the Full-Time or Part-Time MBA audience. Time and resources limited the researcher's ability to recruit participants for the focus group, and it's likely the students who volunteered to participate are the students with the highest affinity to the Carlson School. Because the research questions address affinity throughout the MBA student population, it would be beneficial to examine this population in more depth.

Second, the insights gleaned from focus group sessions suggested a particular sentiment toward communication conveyed from the Carlson School, but quantitative research is needed to confirm the scope of these beliefs and attitudes. While the focus group participants expressed a desire for more communication, as stated above, these respondents likely represented only a small portion of the Part-Time MBA population. Furthermore, due to



lack of volunteers, the researcher included a Carlson School employee in the Part-Time MBA focus group, potentially skewing the affinity results. A more comprehensive research method is required to determine whether a substantial segment of students share this sentiment.

Third, the content analysis could not properly measure whether communications to Part-Time MBA students followed principles of brand journalism, because explicit guidelines for the practice do not yet exist. If a definition of brand journalism is ever developed, a new content analysis should be conducted to more accurately understand whether existing communications qualify.

Lastly, the likelihood of researcher bias is strong in this case, as the author is closely associated with the subject matter.

Future research should include a comprehensive, quantitative analysis of the Part-Time MBA population. This study should examine whether the attitudes reflected in focus groups and predicted by in-depth interviewees apply to the wider student community. The results could help determine whether a brand journalism strategy could be an effective means of engaging students. Furthermore, research could guide the development of explicit guidelines for brand journalism which communicators could draw upon to advance and refine the practice.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Part-Time MBA program could achieve increased affinity among students by introducing a brand journalism strategy to connect with audiences. MBA administrators should take action to surface and promote Part-Time MBA students' stories, develop a set of editorial guidelines to guide content creation, consider new channels for telling stories, and define

success for communication efforts then measure often. With the help of the School's communications team, implementation of a brand journalism strategy could someday stretch beyond the MBA office and elevate the quality of communications across the Carlson School.

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**SOURCE 1**

**Interview with Hans Peterson, associate director of student affairs**

**March 19, 2014**

**What role do you have in the Part-Time MBA program?**

My role with the students on both full-time and part-time is essentially support for anything they do in the program that's non-academic. So student organizations, which in the full-time program tends to be 20-ish, part-time tends to be 2-4. Also any larger milestone things they do, like orientation. Larger events like the charity auction, golf events, things like that. Also, commencement and any speaker events. I also handle behavior issues and policy questions.

**How do part-time students differ from their full-time MBA counterparts?**

The part-time population is interesting and challenging because it's huge and diverse. That's the biggest challenge with it.

If you contrast it with the full-time population, the full-time program is growing and the part-time program is shrinking. Not by design, that reflects a national trend. I'm working on a larger program looking at a part-time experience and marketing sizing project. Nobody knows, but I can speculate why part-time is shrinking. Decreased interest in companies supporting MBAs, more people that have challenges straight out of undergrad and getting jobs they don't want to leave. For full-time students, they are very smart students who did something a little atypical and are using the MBA to focus themselves more into the traditional business track. Or they work for a small company and want to go bigger. There's a bigger return on investment with full-time programs now than with part-time. You can clearly see people entering the program making this amount, then they finish the program and make more. The part-time people are a little fuzzier.

Part-time people enter the program making a little bit more money. They're just very different. A big chunk of them work at 10 giant fortune 500 companies that regularly send between 10-70 students in a given year, Target being the high end. The U of M is one of the top 10 employers sending students here, people getting an MBA to supplement their work here or people who ultimately plan to leave once they get their MBA. So there's a real mix there.

**About how many students make up each part-time MBA graduating class?**

Full-time is about 110 students per class

We have about 1200 part-time students right now (not an exact figure)

**Why is affinity to the School important for the Part-Time MBA program?**

Students perform better in programs and have better outcomes if they feel that it is a part of their identity in some ways, other than just something they're just tacking onto what they're doing. And it's really hard to do that. If they don't have that, this program is tough. These people are super busy, a big chunk have families. We've started doing exit interviews and we get feedback that it's very hard on their marriages and families. Part of the goal at the front end, we really try to get spouses and significant

## Appendix A

others involved too. For a lot of students, it's expensive: fewer are getting support from employers than they used to. For some, it's really clear what the benefit will be at the end, others not as much. And there's varying levels of engagement among the students. It's a heavy group oriented program, and you get some people that this is really something they want to do, and want to learn it. They might have goals that they really want to learn. We have others that are just checking off a box, and it's a big means to an end, "if I get this, I know exactly what my title will change to and I'll get paid more." It's really hard when you have an unknown segment of the population that view this as a purely financial decision. You really do have these four groups. You have the people that view it as a life-affirming experience, and then you have a group that says my company is paying for half of it and I have to check a box. And when you put those people together in a group, it's challenging. You can't force people to do it, but as much as you can connect those people that do want that immersive experience. For the people that are trying to check off the box, fine, you can't force them to do anything, so how can we make the program as flexible as possible. For the students that are more traditional that are looking for an immersive, networking, community building, career changing experience, how do we make sure to connect those students to each other? It's hard for them to feel connected to the program, it's hard for them to figure out which students have the same goals they do. So you try to build them together by creating optional stuff, like events, student governments, and other opportunities to make them feel apart of something more than this "check-box" population. That's of the most importance to me is to be sure those students are getting the network experience and the connections and opportunities and sense of affiliation that they're looking for. We have to make sure they have a mechanism to meet each other. We really don't want those students to come to the part-time program, and they learn what the full-time students are getting then feel like second-class citizens. Are we just checkbooks to fund the full-time program?

### **What effect do alumni have on the program rankings?**

Rankings in particular are prominent in the mind of full-time students. They care more. They looked at a wider number of schools before coming here. They are a little bit more invested in the perceived quality of their degree as they're applying for jobs because they're going to be doing it immediately after they finish. So it's a little less of a checkbox requirement. It depends on which rankings you look at but with U.S. News it doesn't matter so much, aside from employment rates, doesn't matter what they do after, it's more of a ranking of what they look like when they enter, what's the quality of the students you're able to get in the door? Businessweek is very heavily related to perception and largely weighted on how the students in the program rank you. So that one will be heavily dependent on the quality of what the students themselves survey when they exit the program and they do that on a bi-annual basis. That has a very big impact on both what we hear from alumni who see those rankings every year and want their degree to be highly valued. The current students are very invested in that. Last year, the Businessweek rankings dropped and they were very interested in what they could do to change it, because it was important to them. It also, of course, matters to prospective students.

Part-Time we're ranked higher because there's fewer people competing and our metropolitan setting gives us a huge advantage. Carlson is a bit different, we're the opposite for what you'll see for an MBA program. The full-time program is a flagship and is mostly what they care about. They'll have big full-time programs and tiny part-time programs. Relatively speaking, Carlson has a tiny part-time program. Part of the marketing we do for full-time is that we're way smaller, and it allows us to do the Enterprises. Our part-time ranking is very high, I think it was 9 last year. Those students care a little less, those students

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are weighing cost/benefit analysis because we are the expensive option. The question they will constantly ask is, "I'm paying more than St. Thomas, is it worth it?" Once they enroll, they continue to weigh whether they're getting what they paid for, their satisfaction will be largely based on whether they made the right decision to pay more to come here.

### **From what you've observed, what have been some barriers to Part-Time MBA students becoming connected to the school?**

Part-time student communication is a struggle. Challenges with communicating to those populations are that we are really limited. They are here almost exclusively in the evenings. Also, there's no cohort, they do it at their own pace, they don't do it at a consistent pace, they take the classes in different order, and so there's no built-in way to communicate with them. We have our office open until 7 p.m., but there's usually only one academic advisor and one admissions person plus a front desk person on staff those nights. So they're not doing large amounts of programming on those nights. We occasionally do, but then we have to do it five nights to reach everybody. The full-time students do the program on a sort of cohort system, so we know when they're in the building. For part-time students, we do Welcome Week the first week of classes when we offer dinner and a speaker, but you have to do it five nights, so it's expensive, it's intensive, it requires a lot of effort, it means you hit some of them five times, and you miss some because people take terms off. We have a part-time newsletter that's our primary mechanism of communication that we send out every Monday, letting them know anything they need to know about advising, registration, events and speakers on campus, seminars or conferences, but that is super passive. It's emailed to 1200 people, so it's not particularly focused in terms of messaging. The one factor we can target is that the recipient is a part-time MBA student here, but we can't divide the list any more than that. And it's email to a population of people who may or may not check that email (CAN GET NUMBERS). We track opens. We don't know how much of that information is actually getting through. That's the primary mechanism we have and it's really limited.

We've had the same student affairs team in place for a couple of years now, we're getting more savvy as students enter the program. We can't do much with the larger student body (takes students an average of 3.5 years to complete the program) because they've been here forever, some are here 2.5 years and others are here for 7. Now with incoming students, we've switched to Moodle. We've now had a fall and spring entering class that we've brought into Moodle immediately, and it's better because it's easier to track more specifically what they're accessing. So we get a little better metrics about what those students are accessing. It allows us to take a different approach to orientation, which for part-time students is a big deal because we don't have them all in one place together very often. When I started here, orientation was one intensive day that we spent talking at them. They usually enter with 100 other students who will take different classes than them, so it's really hard to keep those connections. We moved it to a weekend, do dinner on a Friday and it's networking focused, then the Saturday we do a lot of team building stuff, and a handful of policy, then move a lot of the training pieces onto Moodle so they have access in advance. Our sense is that they're using Moodle, but we still have these 4-5 years' worth of students that we decided not to bring into Moodle because we didn't want to retroactively implement something.

### **What resources and information do Part-Time MBA students seek most often?**

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The academic advising: the part-time students get far more attention from academic advising than full-time. The full-time students monopolize career services and extracurricular opportunities. But the part-time people are all doing the program differently, and are all concerned about getting courses waived and making the program work for them. They use the advising more heavily.

They'll contact us if they want speakers, involvement opportunities, support for conferences, or daily life stuff. The student organizations deal with issues like when they want something changed, like access to food on campus.

A handful use the career services, but a lot don't use it. More should, probably. It's not that the students wouldn't benefit from it, I just don't think they understand how it's relevant to them.

### **Are there any programs or tactics the school has implemented recently to forge a stronger connection with these students? How did it work out?**

So for example, one other thing we've tried is they do tend their first semester to take MBA 6300, so one thing we've tried is getting a faculty member to agree to put in a slide about upcoming events and things like that. We didn't maintain it just because it was a pain, because some students come in last minute. You also only reach new students, which isn't all bad because those are usually the ones we have the best chance of connecting with. There's not really any way to measure how it worked, so we didn't continue it, because it wasn't a good cost benefit. Moodle has been the most successful change we've had.

We're really on the lookout for some new ways to communicate with students. Because right now we're just doing a weekly email, and we know that it's imperfect. Another challenge is how many emails students get as a default. They get so many emails that they do not care about, because they're lumped in with graduate students who are writing their dissertations and doing research. They are not the target audience, they do not care. They don't want to go to academic conferences. They're professional students, they're not here for an academic career.

### **What are some opportunities Part-Time students have for connecting with the school?**

The orientation restructuring is the biggest one. We used to have them all in a room one time and we used 90 percent of that time to talk at them and tell them how to do stuff. We have tried to move that onto Moodle so they can do it online so they don't have to sit for eight hours and listen. We've turned that opportunity into a combination of speed networking stuff and team activities. We want every students to leave that orientation having five to ten students that for the rest of the program they know and recognize. And it seems juvenile, but they do leave knowing those students. We've tried to be a little more versatile and flexible and low commitment. We have to be realistic, we're not going to get students that want to join a club that meets once a week on top of everything else they're doing. We try to build things that are interesting to them and family friendly: we do the MBA picnic so they can bring their families and aren't choosing between doing something social for a program or spending time with their families. Casual Fridays (do 4-5 events per year) have really taken off too, where we get local entrepreneurs to come in on a Friday, give them free food, let them bring their spouses, and they hear Kieran from Kieran's Irish Pub talk about launching new products, etc. We're trying to stop using the full-time model. We're looking for something that will fit into their life and give them a chance to connect to other students.



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### **I've heard the international experience is particularly special to Part-Time students? Is that true? If so, why is it valuable for them?**

Some of the part-time students do international opportunities to do learning abroad stuff. More heavily engaged students in particular are using the Carlson Global Institute for global enrichment programs.

### **How are prospective Part-Time MBA students currently information searching on programming?**

For a lot of students, it's about company word of mouth. This is qualitative, but from the past few orientations, I've mingled with people and I ask everybody if they know people at their company that are doing the program. And most of them say yes. They talk to people in their company that are doing the program before signing up. That is almost the most common that their company already has a program established and they have coworkers or supervisors who do the same thing.

A lot of it is reputation. Part of the project I'm working on is to think about expanding the types of people we want to bring in. Because there are a lot of people to whom an MBA might be a good choice who don't think of it that way. How do we get more non-traditional people? Roughly 80-85 percent of the people in the Twin Cities area that take the GMAT send their scores to Carlson. That doesn't mean it's their top choice or that they end up coming here, just that they send their scores here. So the majority of the people who consider a business school, consider Carlson. That's pretty early in the process, so you have to assume a lot of that is just word of mouth knowledge. We're the default in the Twin Cities area, we're on people's radar. Maybe as they proceed through that process they look at online, or Hamline, or fly to Chicago to do those programs. We have to be aware that in a competitive marketplace, some go outside the region.

We don't do a lot of the billboard things for advertising. Is that good or bad? That's a hard decision to make. There are connotations that come with having your higher ed institution on a billboard. Do you get too close to University of Phoenix when you do that. Or is it different with a business degree? You're not going to find the top undergrad institutions putting up billboards. But in MBA is it OK to do it? I don't know. They're trying some new stuff. I think for a long time this program has rested in its laurels. Because we're the default, we're on people's radar. People that do the part-time program aren't moving here to do the program, they already live here. We're already on their minds. But is that changing a little bit. Those part-time numbers are going down, what does that mean? Preliminary numbers suggest we're maintaining market share and the market is shrinking. But if that's the case, can we grow the market?

### **What are the top selling points for the Part-Time MBA program for prospective students?**

With an MBA program, we're less hesitant to sell the name brand than you would be in undergrad. I came from undergraduate admissions where you're not selling the placement, you're selling the experience, even if you have a name brand to stand on. With part-time MBA, that's a little less true. Most of these people have a pretty heavy weight to the transactional value of it. What's the outcome? Not just, what am I going to learn, but what's the outcome? In the long-term, if you're applying for a job in ten years and the person you're competing against has a similar resume, don't you want to have gone to a top program? Or where is the person making the hiring decision more likely to have gone to school? You're selling them the career services office. Some of these students are open to going someplace else. You're also selling them on the quality of the other students: this is a group work program, there are networking opportunities. How much are you going to learn from your classmates? Who are you going to network with? I sell people to be more engaged. We're going to have more engaged alumni, the

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students are going to be more successful academically, they're going to be happier, all these benefits result from students engaging with the program and with each other. I tell them, this is the only time in your career you're going to get this level of networking with every top company. By the time you graduate this program, you should have 4-5 connections at the Fortune 500 companies in the area. This is the only time you get that. Part of what you're selling them is the quality of people that come into the program and where they come from and what their knowledge is. Faculty, we push the faculty. We make the argument that there's a different level of knowledge and exposure you get from being inside a Big Ten research university.

### **SOURCE 2**

#### **Interview with Patrick McCarthy, director of student affairs**

**March 25, 2014**

#### **What role do you have in the Part-Time MBA program?**

Full-time and part-time programs, I own a number of services we provide to current students once they've been admitted. I cover the communications and registration processes, the support mechanisms that are in place for students. The could include orientation, academic advising, managing their visa statuses, if they have tuition or billing matters they can operate through us to get those addressed. We have two sides of the house, one very academic, and one very community based. Myself, Hans, and Maggie are responsible for making sure our clubs and organizations are resourced properly, that we are funding those programs, and that we are operating under the guidelines and policies of the University. We spend tremendous amounts of time face to face with students as they either put together their academic plan to reach graduation, which we also manage, plus all the opportunities where they get to lead and represent Carlson in some shape or form. So if they're the president of the consulting club and reaching out to Deloitte, we can connect them. We also tend to sit in a lot of student managed meetings as they attempt to put together larger scale events, like the charity auction. We help navigate all the bureaucratic channels too. There's no real central historian here at Carlson: you have a lot of institutional memory built into the staff and that does prove valuable to the students over time. So the legacy that exists for our full-time program, after two years they're gone, anything that they did really well might not survive the transition to the next student group, so we help facilitate that.

#### **Why is affinity to the school important for the Part-Time MBA program?**

I think in the large mix of MBA programs within the U.S., every program wants to have affinity and it seems as though the value is realized in a couple of different ways. One, every program wants to be different, even though they aren't very different. We all offer similar resources and programs. When I go to conferences with my peers, we're all talking about relatively the same thing. So affinity helps distinguish us, it gives us this distinctiveness between programs. You realize affinity when you discover the special nature of an MBA program. For our part-time MBA students, I think that's realized in a few ways. We are the top program. Part-time students that submit surveys to us when we request them

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indicate that we are the best program in the state, that seems to carry some brand value in a sense. We interpret that as when part-time students tell their employer they're going to Carlson, they're being recognized as high-achieving people. I don't think there's much question about our admissions standards and who we're putting through the program. So affinity is built around the fact that they feel that they have been categorized in a certain way: they're high-achieving, they're going to be successful, and the program will lend success in their career.

Affinity also means that they're interacting with their peers, so it's important that they're being recognized, not just on an individual level, but as a large group of very capable people. So they enjoy interacting with each other to learn how their peers are doing things differently. So that might yield good opportunities for discussion and growth.

But they want to be sure that as they're moving through the program, they want to be sure we're admitting the best possible students. Ten years from now, when they're a Carlson alum, they want to know that we're protecting the value of their degree. Affinity is born out of that basic promise that we will continue admitting top quality students forever. They feel good about that.

There's also Goldy. We're all big Goldy fans. We're part of the larger University, and it's not hard to fall in love with this University. In a lot of ways, in fields like agriculture, science, and medicine, there's this great feel-good sentiment about being a part of that much larger system that is contributing not just to the individual development of our students but to the state and to its wellness, health, legal systems, business culture. When students see a sick kid and hear about Amplatz, they feel this great affinity to the work that's being done here. At every orientation we tell students that same thing: doctors safeguard the health of society, lawyers play their role in fairness within society, but the MBA student is playing an important role in managing the resources of society, and together they are all doing something very special.

### **What effect do alumni have on the program rankings?**

For part-time rankings, those figures are less significant it seems. Especially for us. If you were to take a straw pool of people from the Mall of America and they were all Minnesotans, the majority would probably say that Carlson has the number one program. That's just a general sentiment. The rankings themselves are very full-time focused. Some rankings will do somewhat of a side ranking for part-time programs. It doesn't have the same weight. But they've ranked us within the top 20, many times in the top 15, and we've been in the top 10 at least once or twice. Where it becomes important is with alumni. Some data suggests that with rising tuition costs, part-time students don't want to see the rankings slip. If they're paying more, they don't want to see anything that suggests the program is degrading. Part-time students put a little bit of stock into it, I think. But not to the same extent of full-time students.

### **From what you've observed, what have been some barriers to Part-Time MBA students becoming connected to the school?**

I worked at the Kellogg School in the part-time program and I had 14 clubs plus a student government, but what I have in the full-time program is relatively the same. But in the part-time program, I have a student government and 1.5 clubs, depending on how you look at it. Part-time student government has created a group called the professional student network. Professional Student Network to me suggests to me that these students should be getting together and networking, but what they do is some of that

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through speed networking events and a holiday party. They get students together for events that are somewhat social in nature, but what we haven't realized yet is some of the professional clubs that should exist. That would probably more quickly attract students to attend for networking and development. Maybe bring in speakers that could yield some results for them. So that's where my frustration is, having seen it done at Kellogg, it's been very difficult.

We have a very hard time communicating with our part-time students in my opinion. Communication seems to be stifled by the large volume of emails they receive from us and the University. We only know of a few things they're getting: How much communication are they receiving now? Anecdotally, they say they get a ton of email and we get lost in the mix. So this communication vehicle, the newsletter, gets lost. Our open rates are depressing. So the newsletter is not yielding a lot of information that's relevant to this audience. So the barrier there is we have a hard time getting penetration. In fact, I think if we could have a VP of communications that is an expert and can help us find something that works, that could help us get the penetration we need to. Short of putting a ferris wheel up in the atrium, there's no way I can conceive to better get a message out there.

Every student knows how to look for course information on the U's website, because all students have to do that. But they don't have to open the newsletter to do that.

I think there's a large number of students to come here, get the degree, check the box, and go. They don't want to be the leader of the marketing club, which is fine. Because there's about 1200 of these students. But if I have even ten percent invested, we'd be making big strides in the affinity space.

Could we build mailboxes somewhere in the school that we can put things in that they have to pick up because that's where faculty return papers? If you have to force people to go to something and pick it up, would that work? If you go to the intranet, it's not personalized in any real way. Without the personalization, I don't even feel a great affinity going to Inside Carlson or the intranet. So the barriers are there. There's one generic method of getting information and it's not very attractive.

I think students get a lot of information talking to each other and stopping into the office. But we don't see the volume we would expect from having as many students as we do.

### **Are there any qualities or characteristics that differentiate these students from other graduate or undergraduate students at the Carlson School?**

Full-time and part-time students are relatively the same in age and experience. So profile, they look really similar. Within a smaller full-time program, you get a higher GMAT average, but if I shrank down the part-time program to the top 100 students, it would be similar scores to full-time. So they're both very intelligent populations. Where we see the differences is their willingness to commit over a particular timeframe. For many it's a lifestyle choice: Can I forgo a salary for a few years and emerge successfully and reestablish my career? For some students, that's a scary proposition, but others are willing to take that risk.

This deep diver notion: the perception is that there are relatively no full-time MBA students that are just coming here to check a box, especially this program. We make them work way harder than other programs. Other programs require far fewer credits of core courses. Students know they are going to be diving very deep into this program to get their heads around the academics, and take on a leadership position in the community. Generally, the majority of students are going to be invested in guiding the program and enriching the experience for one another.

But part-time, you have a group that are the deep divers and are similar to the full-timers. They want to

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contribute and add value and create community, but then you have a large population of these ticket punchers that just want to get their degree and get out. They might have their reasons, and have massive commitments outside of this program and they fit us into their life as they want to. For both programs, we like to be a part of the students lives, but not their entire lives. But for full-time, we play a larger part.

### **What information or resources do these students take advantage of most often?**

Students don't get to see a lot of good information on the faculty before they register. It's a main complaint of the part-time students. They have created their own evaluations of teachers within their companies. We could better service our students by being more transparent with teaching evaluations to better inform students and help them make good decisions about their courses.

If I had a magic wand and I could waive it at two things I would get those ten student clubs up and running. I respect this student population hugely but I know they aren't in a great position to take that on: they're working full time and the idea of coming in and setting up organizations is daunting. So I feel like we should do it, but I don't want to take ownership away from them either. These clubs should at least be established with a clear mission for the students and what they're going to deliver in the first year, then put the call out to all the students.

But second, how do we send information out in a way that ACTUALLY REACHES students? I can send out a beautiful email that communicates information quickly, but it gets lost in the flood. So do I put up signage all over the atrium? One of the most successful events we have is Welcome Week, because we put out five days' worth of food. Everyone comes and they eat, and we have them all right there. But I'm really feeling like a caveman, trying to deal with this issue. We've gone to classrooms to present there because it's a captured audience, but I don't have twenty people that can go do that every night for four nights and one Saturday. That's why personalized something and mobile something else could be great. There are people out there that have this terrific potential. You see it in their eyes. They're alive, and they want to develop and grow. You have this intoxicating kind of experience, and messaging to them is so very important. But we need to deliver on that.

### **Have you implemented any programs or tactics recently to better connect with these students?**

#### **What were the results? Anything that fell completely flat?**

We have a new part-time MBA orientation program that has been running for a year and half now. Part-time orientation used to be very transactional, a half day event that gave basic information. Now we have a two day program and in the first night, we invite their significant others and spouses to the dinner. That's yielded very good vibes. By the way, it's hard to dashboard things in student affairs. Admissions has more metrics to measure success. But we get a happiness indicator, that we do once a year and that's about it. Anecdotally, we've heard that they're very happy their families are included right away. We realize the importance of that in our part-time program: We're going to be stealing a night or two away from their families and we need to acknowledge that.

In the second day, we do some transactional stuff, but we also incorporate speed networking and volunteering. So we've chosen a number of kid-related charities and that generates a lot of good affinity and good vibe.

We have Moodle and the intranet. Moodle is a good place for the part-time community to communicate with one another and the administration. Moodle has been successful in controlling content that allows us

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to customize the format according to their student accounts. The information they see is different depending on their student status. It is nowhere near where personalization should be, but it does allow me to see some things that are relevant.

### **How are prospective Part-Time MBA students currently information searching on programming?**

Before becoming director of student affairs here at Carlson, I was associate director of admissions so I got a bit of insight about how we were attracting students at that time. In Minnesota, there is a very tight-knit group of people. They form their networks to be strong, and they rely upon them. As an out-of-stater, it's been harder to break into those networks. What we've heard from full-time students, is that when they come from out of state, they have a hard time breaking into that network. Basically, people are informed through their networks if they're from here. They talk. They generally will know someone who went to Carlson or the U, and speak with them. So I imagine candidates who are local are utilizing their networks. "Did my manager go to Carlson? Do I know someone that went to Carlson?" More actively, they're certainly hitting the website for information. They come for information sessions, which are basically presentations. We have some workshops that we hope to attract prospective students to, especially for part-time MBA, about how to put your application together. We realize there is some anxiety about putting the best application together before submitting it to Carlson. We do not want students to self-select out of the process before being admitted to the program. So we try to help them put together the best application.

The web plays an important role, for both full-time and part-time, especially full-time if they're not from Minnesota. The web presents a lot of components about the program.

There are different aspects of the full-time program that are considered the crown jewels: the Enterprises are our four living laboratories where we put students through real, transformative programming. We can take anyone in that space and turn them into something else. They should know a lot about that before coming in to interview: they should check it out online and reach out to people that are in that enterprise. They utilize the ambassador program, and connect with students. There's no script for those ambassadors to ensure we're delivering the same information. It could be different from person to person. If I'm a prospective student in the full-time student interested in consulting, I can meet a brand enterprise student.

We used a podcast back when that medium was newer. We did a day in the life of an MBA student for full-time. In terms of what we were being charged, it was being utilized pretty well. It was 20-30 minutes and followed a student around. It was fun, and it was being utilized pretty well considering what we were being charged.

Admissions has a blog, and students contribute to that. It's real, it's not the glitzy recruiting content: it puts everything in a real life. Students share the real experience. In terms of information sharing, we have electronic components like Twitter and the website, but also information sessions and their own networks. The recruiter relationship with the candidate is also important.

There are some things that we could do better. Our students are tremendously successful in this program, but we don't get the word out about that. Two years ago, we were in eight national case competitions. Last year, we were in 14 and we had a couple of first place wins. This year, we were in 19 case competitions, had a number of first place wins, and brought home more than \$30,000 in winnings and the students took home substantial winnings. Schools have taken note of that. We're now doing videos on their case competitions and as a top place team, we talk about how to prepare for the

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competitions.

We could share the experience of the students better. The charity auction would be noteworthy. The graduate volunteer consultants and the way our students give back through volunteer efforts is very noteworthy. We can get that out to someone, who I don't know. Do I want to be in the newspaper with this type of stuff? Not really. I think it might be a fun little blurb on a sidebar for our citizens to take note of. But I think there's other organizations and companies that would benefit from knowing that we take students and do great things with them. We should focus on getting more of our student success out in the open.

### **What are the top selling points for the Part-Time MBA program for prospective students?**

"I'm ambassing the hell out of these prosopies."

Prospective students for part-time see our credibility and brand, and know that it's portable. If they are considering their options, they can choose the U, pay a higher price for that, and ensure they can move to Georgia or any number of places, and the U of M name is known. We rely on a dual-brand relationship that is U of M nationally, and Carlson regionally.

Students can get courses waived, and that seems to be an attractive feature.

Students have access to the career center and can utilize some coaching to help leverage the value of the degree in regards to their careers, and I think we have the best career coaches in the state. That's an important value add to the MBA experience.

I think students come here because they know the best part-time applicants are coming here. They want to be in a group of peers in a classroom where they can learn from each other.

Flexibility and online course offerings are growing in importance. They can take half-semester courses to move forward in their degree. We're planning to offer more flexible options. So those are growing in popularity. Every online section and compressed course we offer are full, all part-time students because they want to get through more quickly.

The international requirement that's a part of the part-time program is actually viewed as a big benefit. They actually get to go abroad to study another country's market and business practices, and this business community supports that. They also get to know their classmates really well during that time, and the students cite that as the highlight of their academic career, as one of the most valuable parts of their experience. So that's the part-time experience.

In full-time, what distinguishes us are the Enterprises. Other programs call us all the time to ask how they're sustained and managed. It turns out that we have terrific investment in those, that happened years ago, that is paying out now. We have a business community that wants to work with us, and continue to work with us year after year. The students take it seriously, and continue to put out good work, as do the directors.

The global experience requirement is similar as an attractive feature. We ensure students leave this program with an international mindset. When we bring students in, we talk a great deal about Enterprises and the global requirement, and what they get out of it.

We're a smaller program, and that intimacy allows for greater success. We have five coaches in the career center for 100 students, whereas other students have seven for 800. You're going to get more hands-on attention here. In the case of when a student applies for a job and gets multiple offers, they let their friend know to go talk to them. Our students help one another in that regard, there's not a great deal of competition in that space, they feel invested in each other.

**SOURCE 3**

**Interview with Tedi Mason, assistant director of admissions and recruiting**

**April 9, 2014**

**What role do you have in the MBA program?**

I'm the first line of defense. I get all the cold calls talking about MBAs. We split up all our inquiries, so I have a section of people that are in the pipeline. I'll also do interviews and the actual application review, from when they apply to when they get in.

**Why is affinity to the school important for the Part-Time MBA program?**

I think affinity is really helpful in people seeing the value of their MBA. They may not want to spend a lot of time fostering those relationships while they're here, but once they graduate, they call me and ask to put them in touch with someone. But if they feel more connected and can bridge those gaps themselves, that's helpful. It would also help in promoting the program to more people because if you have that brand loyalty, you'll think "why would I even consider going anywhere besides Carlson." I can see corporate clubs really doing a lot with that, as well as our alumni department, just getting people excited. And even if it's a few undergrads that we're capturing as well, but just getting the U of M love going.

**What effect do alumni have on the program rankings?**

It is less important to part-time students, I also think they are less informed. They're going to look, but they might not know the difference among all the rankings. Then you also have other people saying they're in the top 25 percent of MBA programs, which isn't an accurate reflection of where they stand on the totem pole. We need to toot our own horn a little bit better because we are in the top 10 percent and number 19. We talked about doing something cheeky to get that message across, but it didn't pan out. I also think the specialty rankings, they tend to put a lot more stock in that at the part-time level, but I don't think that's as valuable and I don't think they're going to get much out of it. I think at the end of the day, part-time is more about money and time.

**From what you've observed, what have been some barriers to Part-Time MBA students becoming connected to the school?**

Time. I think we also just don't have as many resources for them, not that we don't give them resources. But we don't have that social aspect that we do in the full-time program. There are certainly opportunities for it, but then again, only so many of them want it. They're all here at different times and you never know who you're going to get.

The move to online is going to make things even harder in the affinity space. It's going to be great to have that flexibility, but it will also distance us further from them.

I also experience some frustration when we put information out there, and I still get calls asking questions. Ten people may not like all the information they get, but two may. And we build the program one person at a time. It's kind of a finite time period to when they apply, usually 2-6 years after they



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graduate. Part-timers may make an inquiry two years out of undergraduate and not apply until eight years later, and they have been in the pipeline for a long time, and so it's hard to tell.

### **Are there any qualities or characteristics that differentiate these students from other graduate or undergraduate students at the Carlson School?**

There are just so many part-timers. We don't see them or interview them. And it's really up to them how much they want to be involved. A lot want to really get involved and meet their classmates, others want to show up, do their classes, and go home. And I don't blame them.

### **How are prospective MBA students currently information searching on programming?**

We wish we knew more, right now it's still very ambiguous. A lot of people reach out to us on our website, both full-time and part-time. We also buy lists of people who have taken the GMAT. And then we'll blast out emails to them. That seems to be moderately effective, probably more so with the part-time folks. Because if they're in this market and in this age group, they're probably going to get an MBA from us or St. Thomas. That's been pretty helpful here. But as far as how they actually find us, we really don't know. People come to events we host, sometimes people get brought to our events. A lot of it is referrals, that their boss or someone they knew is getting their MBA.

I think full-time students are more rankings driven, they're going through those rankings lists. Part-time we see being a little more tuition based, but they are also concerned a bit with rankings. We wish we knew better.

### **What are the top selling points for the Full-Time MBA program for prospective students?**

Hands down, Enterprise Programs are very unique in the MBA market, especially something as robust as we have. We've been doing this a really long time, so we definitely sell our Enterprise Programs to recruits. We definitely sell our size, it's both good and bad, we lose people because of our size. We're significantly smaller than other top competitors. We're by far the smallest top-tier MBA program. The market here is also important, we have a lot of corporate partners. Again, Enterprise is what we really push and what people really like.

Part-time, we go with our esteem in the area. We're always trying to find a way to differentiate from St. Thomas. That's really what we're looking for. We are much higher ranked, have better faculty, have more resources and alumni, but there's nothing that really stands out to point to that we're so much better. Like we don't have an Enterprise Program in the part-time program--basically we don't have a top selling point. It's a bit more ambiguous.

### **What are the pain-points for the PTMBA program? And are they potentially related to why prospective students choose other programming?**

Full-time is location, being in Minnesota is challenging. Not being a coastal city or being Chicago, being smaller. Again, that's also a selling point for us. It's one of those, well, what do you do--it sells our program for some candidates and is a deterrent for others. We lose a lot of people early in the pipeline to that. If they can get over that hump, it's not such a big deal anymore. Rankings has been a little tough recently. I think those are the really big things. Tuition is on par with competitors. We don't have a lot of scholarships available, compared to other places, and that's hard. Our lack of diversity can hurt us too when we're trying to get people. Then the fact that when people come to Minnesota, they stay here, so

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we don't have as big of a connection to the coasts from an alumni perspective. But we try to highlight, "yes, you can get out to Silicon Valley or New York, we have those connections." It is possible, but lots of people want to just stay in Minneapolis, St. Paul. We could showcase this better.

Part-Time is money, number of credits, and time it takes. That's really it. Once people start diving in, it becomes apparent that we are far and away the best program. But it also costs more and takes longer to complete compared to St. Thomas.

### **In regards to PTMBA advertising, what has worked? What hasn't?**

I'm not as tied into what marketing communications has done for us. I know the billboards weren't well-received. For a while there was stuff in the airport and I don't think we saw anything from that either. As far as stuff that has worked, it seemed there was an ad in the Strib about one of our part-time events, and I believe we got some traction from that, but I don't know if we got any great numbers from that.

I got a good response from some social media efforts before I travelled using promoted posts. I don't feel like I know enough to give a comprehensive answer.

People really like Be, Belong, Become. I don't think we've used it to its full advantage, though. But I feel like we could do more with that because we're not seeing it everywhere. I would love to see more stories around that. Especially with our size: during our admitted students weekend, what sold us was that the students knew everybody there. It's that community and really building that. I think that campaign really fosters that in that we mean what we say.

There's just so many of them with the part-timers. We just don't see them as much through the process. We don't interview them, we don't see them through the application process. It's really up to them how much they want to be involved. A good number of them want to meet their classmates and network, but a good number of them also want to come and get their work done because they're working full-time and are tired, and I don't blame them.

### **Do you feel that Carlson's social media presence plays a role in PTMBA recruitment efforts? If so, how? If not, how could it play a role in the future?**

I feel like we're still kind of stabbing in the dark and I wish we had a better way of doing it. It gets people excited. We had lots of people tweeting this weekend for our Up Close event, which was fun. I don't necessarily want to see it as just community building, I would love to see it as outreach. I would love to use Facebook to get to the friends of the people who are currently in the MBA program. I don't know how to use it as a pipeline tool or make it be valuable. But we need to, in my opinion, to make it more valuable.

People love those stories on the website. Any time we can show alumni or current students and how the MBA program transformed their life, and get more part-time students that would be great to really show the different types of part-time students. There are the people who want to get their MBA to get a promotion, and then there's the people who want to get their MBA and change companies, and that's the impetus for coming back to school. And then, you have the part-timers who are looking to completely change industries--from economics to marketing, for example, and showing everyone that all of these things, we can help you do. We know you have a family and that it's hard. Showing people that it's attainable and that they're smart enough to do it. I think we get a lot of self selection now. We get a lot of people who feel they couldn't get into Carlson and they self select. If we could capture this

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audience, that would be really helpful.

### SOURCE 4

#### Interview with Linh Gilles, director of admissions and recruiting

March 31, 2014

#### **How are prospective part-time MBA students currently information searching on programming?**

The part-time market is very different here than the full-time market, so let's start with part-time. This is predominantly a local market and they are very attuned to peer referrals. Luckily for us, the Carlson School has a strong reputation in the Twin Cities market, so the peer-to-peer referrals give us a huge advantage. When someone is considering an MBA while continuing to work, they're asking their peers at work "did you enjoy your MBA experience?" or "what did you like about the curriculum?" or at the very least, "why did you choose the Carlson School?". This is where we have an advantage. There are a huge number of part-time MBA alums who are still working and advancing their careers in the Twin Cities. And because of this, our word-of-mouth referral network is super strong.

It's also worth noting that our application process is much more rigorous than other part-time MBA programs in the Twin Cities. So this referral network is very integral to our success.

And with the part-time network, national rankings play a much smaller role than they do in the FT program. I know that our candidates are not typically information searching for this. They honestly don't really care all that much about rankings. Because they're going to be staying in the Twin Cities and working full-time while in the MBA program, they're more concerned about the quality of the program as defined by their peers and the time it takes to complete the program than the rankings. If they were primarily concerned with rankings, they would find the top program that they're capable of getting into, and move to that location to do their full-time program.

For the full-time candidates, we see similar information searching techniques to those considering the part-time program. Especially for local candidates. We're already in their consideration set if they live in the Twin Cities—if they're a top candidate, they know that we're the best MBA program in the Twin Cities. We have a leg-up on the competition in that regard.

Where the full-time candidate population differs most greatly is in how much they care about rankings. These candidates are VERY rankings-driven, especially for international candidates. They also care about what their peer networks think about specific programs, especially if the peers are alums. And this all comes back to creating vibrant alumni networks in each of our key recruitment areas across the country and world. Not super relevant to this conversation, but this is a huge influencer overall.

The full-time candidate population is very interested in gathering as much information as possible across all of their networks. This includes attending ad fairs, getting on email list-servs, sifting through schools' websites, asking their current employers—and those at organizations that they would like to work for post-MBA program. We do think there is an opportunity for social media here—this could really help us tell a story about what it's like to be a student in our programs. I see this being especially valuable for people applying internationally and from other regions who can't easily make a campus visit to the school.

#### **What are the top selling points for the part-time MBA program for prospective students? And how**

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### **does this differ from the full-time population?**

Our top seller for both is the experiential learning component. Both from an international perspective and the enterprises programming. Our alums say that they can apply what they're learning in the classroom to the real world. And for the part-timers, this could happen the very next day at work. These two aspects of our programming really set us apart from our competitors in both the part-time and full time markets.

We also have a unique community here in the Twin Cities that sets us apart. There aren't a lot of our competitors who can say that their campus is flush up against one of the most vibrant business communities in the country. That's a huge differentiator for us.

Our small class size for the full-time program is definitely a selling point for us. As well as the expertise of our faculty.

Where we struggle is trying to be everything to everyone. We have a lot of different tracks for specific programming that our MBA's may be interested; entrepreneurship, marketing, finance, etc., and to a potential candidate, this may look like we're trying too hard to be everything.

### **What are the pain-points for the part-time MBA program? And what about the full-time program?**

For the part-time program, there's the perception that we're the cash cow and we're a transactional program. This is the general perception of part-time MBA programs across the industry, but because at any given time, there are over 400 people enrolled somewhere in the part-time program, we definitely contribute to this perception.

There are also a good number of "ticket punchers" in the part-time MBA program. They know they'll get a promotion at their current place of employment when they complete the program, and because of that, this is all this program is to them—a means to reach that goal. They're not here to network, they aren't too concerned about the curriculum because they are already working full-time during the day. Pain-points for the full-time population aren't as strong as with the part-timers, in my opinion. Location is a huge one—just the fact that there is a perception that Minnesota is a fly-over state. And not necessarily somewhere that business actually happens. We know it's not a fly-over state, and so do our current students and alumni, but it does take some nurturing to get prospective students, especially ones who have never been to Minneapolis, to understand this.

Another one of our pain points is that we don't have a huge amount of school pride in the full-time MBA program. Because the Twin Cities are a vibrant community and have a lot going on, we attract a lot of students who already have families and choose the Carlson School because it will be a good fit for their family—the culture, lifestyle and things to do in the Twin Cities metro are very conducive to this. Where as, you have b-schools like Ithaca College in New York. MBA school becomes your life there—there's not a lot going on outside the school, so they've fostered a strong sense of community with that group. Those students really have drunk the Kool-Aid and they're entire lives for the 2 years of their MBA becomes all things related to the school.

### **In regards to advertising and promotional materials, what has worked and what hasn't? Is there variability between the part-time and full-time program on this?**

Traditional print advertising hasn't really worked for us simply because we can't track it and it seemed like there was a lack of objective. We don't know if it's effective or not; we can only speculate here. We really need a prospect's name and email before we can even start to have usable analytics. Billboards

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have given the perception that we are made of a lot of money already. Doesn't really send the right message. And pretty much anything without a call-to-action hasn't worked.

I really think we're just getting to the point of having effective marketing efforts. Facebook advertising has worked for us for events. I'd like to see us expand more on that—and all things digital, really.

### **Do you feel that the Carlson School's social media presence as well as other online story-telling presences play a role in MBA recruitment efforts? If so, how? If not, how could it in the future?**

Social media alone will not be successful, but we can't not be there. Social media really generates pride—we can foster this feel-good feeling of affinity with the school and this will be valuable whether you are a prospective recruit, current student, alumni or just a community member. We will be successful if we can effectively leverage our network of alumni and grow our overall affinity to the School.

We also want to make sure we're authentic to our brand voice in our recruiting efforts online, and this includes social media. We know how we sound and the message we're conveying when we're on the phone with recruits or communicating via email, but this is harder to convey through storytelling. And so important. This brand voice should be a personality and a force that is consistent across all of our messaging. But in order to get there, we have to know who we are and what message we want to convey. I think this would help people have a stronger relationship with our brand.

I also think we currently have a "set it and forget it" mentality with marketing and communications—especially on social media. We need to be more nimble and fluid—testing and finding what's effective.

## Carlson School MBA Focus Groups

### Group 1: Full-Time MBA

Held April 17 at Carlson School. Focus group was made up of 6 students enrolled in the full-time MBA program, range of ages and majors, all had completed at least one year of program

#### *Transcription*

#### **What led you to pursue your MBA?**

I was mentored by a couple of my clients at Padilla that staying in that client services area wasn't going to be fulfilling to me long-term, so they led me toward an MBA because it's more diverse and applicable. That's what inspired me. I always knew I wanted a grad degree, but hadn't decided on which one. When I was looking at programs, I thought I was going to go part-time. I was looking at Carlson Part-Time program and went to a mixer at Crave where I met Dan Bersh who talked me into looking at full time. He invited me to a recruiting weekend. It wasn't though anything online, not until I was interviewing here. I looked at Georgetown and Kellogg too and those I did look at online.

I was a government major in undergrad and didn't know I wanted to go into business. I fell into a general management role and found I loved corporate strategy but didn't have any education in it. So I decided to go back and do some schooling I actually wanted to do. My wife wanted to do it as well so we decided we would take turns. Her time in business school, I saw it was a lot of fun and I knew I wanted to do it. I applied to a couple of schools and around the same time, my wife got a job at General Mills and I had been looking at Carlson before that. I met Dan Bersh and he was awesome. I really liked how Carlson was in the city I wanted to be in and I liked the class size. My choice was between continuing to work or doing full time, but Carlson made it worth my while financially.

I used the website quite a bit. The law school advertises all the same statistics about salary averages right out of program, but that seemed a little inflated. It was important for me to see where people were going and what they were doing with their degrees. I followed up with some people here to see how inflated those claims were. The decision for me was about whether I could afford it and what opportunities it could provide. I wanted to be able to pursue the career of my choice, and Carlson really sold that online.

When I moved here, I knew I had to get an education in the United States if I wanted to go anywhere with my career. I looked at three different schools and started applications but wasn't committed enough to decide whether I should go full time or continue to work. I happened to meet Michele Weeser who was director of GBCC who always talked really favorably about Carlson. That was my first introduction to the school. Finally, I decided to apply just before the

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school year started and the fact that they admitted me at the time they did made the decision pretty easy.

I had an ROTC scholarship as an undergrad so I didn't have to think about what I wanted to do until much later. After I got out, I bounced around a lot. I realized I wanted to do finance and became a financial advisor, but didn't like it that much. I knew that in order to get a decent job in finance, I'd have to get some more schooling. I looked for schools that valued military experience. I met Chip Altman who started getting me excited about Carlson.

I was working a civilian job (I'm National Guard), and I deployed in 2011. A few of my friends were going back for their MBAs so I started looking into that. I was all online research because I was overseas. I was originally focused on HBS, but I stopped because the application was so intense. You had to have your parents social security numbers and the application was ridiculous. So then I focused my attention on Kellogg and Duke but didn't consider Carlson. I thought about it because I was local, and considered it for my backup school. But then I found out about the Enterprise program and decided to apply. By the way, the application was so easy. They made it financially worth my time, so I came here.

### **How did the Carlson School stand out from other programs? How could it have done this better?**

How small our community is and how close-knit we all are. There's 109 of us in our class and I know everyone on a first-name basis. With a smaller class, you get a lot of recruiters coming in and there's fewer people you're competing with.

Wes and I both went to Fall Preview Weekend and that was the moment I learned about Brand Enterprise, and for me, it made me feel a little better about getting off the ladder. Because I was still gaining valuable experience at the time. It sounds great, but it was a little less valuable than I thought it was going to be. So that was big. I've always been in small academic settings, so that was really appealing to me too. I knew I could do well as a big fish in a small pond. So that was super appealing to me to. And when I came, I really liked all the people I met. I did NOT have that experience at Kellogg. I didn't connect with the students or staff, I found the students to be rude and really disengaged. Nobody made any effort to talk to me or get to know me. I sat in on a class and was horrified at how little engagement there was. The professors were just reading from slides. At one point, I was watching a girl play Words with Friends. The students weren't friendly and the classroom experience was truly horrifying. And here it was like, everyone wanted to chat and hear your story, and everyone wants to know what questions you have. All the students just seemed very engaged. That engagement isn't

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one hundred percent of the time, but overall, I have been really impressed with the level of student engagement.

For me, when I was approaching schools, there were a couple criteria, the two main ones being rankings and location. My wife needed to work so I knew I had to be in a big metro area, so Duke wouldn't work for me. Then she got the offer in Minneapolis and we decided that was the city. For Carlson, rankings weren't as high as other schools, but the location was absolutely where I wanted to be. So I checked it out. I met the director of admissions at Harvard and she's the coldest, meanest person you've ever met in your life. I came here and Linh Gilles gave me a hug when I left. It's that personal interaction. My wife went to Harvard, and they have 900 students per class, and hey're doing amazing things at that school, but it's a factory: they push people out and it's very impersonal on a school level. But when I came here, it was person, small intimate, and the director of admissions gives you hugs. It was a better fit for me.

I liked the Funds Enterprise, it was a big draw. You get to practice and figure things out for yourself. I like the global discovery too, it's so important to see how things work in another country. Throughout my career I've stayed pretty global. I haven't done it yet, but am looking forward to it.

Global discovery sounded really cool when I was a prospective student, but then when I got here, everyone crapped all over it. But then I went and found it to be super useful and very interesting. It was very hit or miss in terms of the content we actually engaged with, but the hits were big hits. I feel like there's something to be said for having a bit more visibility into what global discovery actually is and what the benefits are you get out of it. What you actually do. You learn a lot, we saw Ford and how they do business in China. We saw Dorsey and Whitney, so how service businesses do business in China. You get to see a lot of approaches to international business and I got way more out of it than I thought I would. Eventually they will change it so it's exactly like the part-time, so you can go overseas or take a class instead. And I think that would make a big difference because then you get people who WANT to go. Because it can be a pain. It is expensive, and so the message you get out of it is people complaining because they were forced to go. It's not just study abroad. It's a global experience that isn't necessarily a class.

I realized something about the school when I got here. They've got the Be. Belong. Become. campaign here. But this school actually is transformational. In my opinion, the higher ranked the school is, the less transformational it is. They've got a ton of students that come in from doing finance, and then they go into private equity. Here, I've seen a lot of people increase their earning potential pretty dramatically, get some pretty great jobs and it's a factor of the



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students that we have but also the style of the program as well. Also where we are in Minneapolis. But that was something that I didn't realize coming into this.

Coming into Carlson, based on my level of experience, there's no way I should have the job I ended up getting after this. Career services worked with me early on. The amount I've progressed in leadership, project management, confidence, and the relationships I've developed, it sounds corny, but I'm completely different in my abilities and as a person from the beginning to the end. Carlson is honestly the best decision I could have made for my career and my future. But it's all what you put into it. If you just sit on the sidelines and don't invest yourself, you don't get as much out of the experience.

I'd second the Funds Enterprise, because managing real money was very important to me. But the network is amazing. I wanted to stay in the Twin Cities, and here there's no better network than Carlson. I knew I wanted to be here.

I've been talking to a prospective student and she wants to live in the Twin Cities after. So Carlson is the only choice. We try very hard to be this non-regional school, but the fact is we are a regional school. We might have a little more success with people if we didn't try to be the school that promises jobs on the coast. We should focus on the fact that we have an amazing environment here.

### **Do you think there's a disconnect between the communications and what the brand voice used in communications?**

I haven't seen much of communication from the school. (5 of 6 students agreed)

I didn't even know about the culture and the messaging as a prospective student. But now that I'm in school, I truly feel like it has been transformational. Now that I'm finding out about it later, I feel like it's the right message.

When I was looking at schools, when Carlson got the highest ranking for placement. To see HBS as number two and Carlson at one was awesome.

I think they try to be all things to all people. But I think a program of this size in this location with these sort of offerings has some unique differentiators, but they still try to be everything to everyone. I know I've been very happy here, and I think all have been successful within the program. I think the people who haven't been as successful feel they have been sold a false bill of goods. If you talked to international students, for example. I think if you talked to them about what they were promised coming in, it would be a different story than when you hear from all of us who have internships and got full-time jobs. If you talk to people who want jobs

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out of state, it's all on them to do that work. There is no real network of Carlson people. That kind of stuff, I understand they do it because they want to increase their yield and they want more applicants, but at the end of the day I think if you dug deeper into why people are unhappy, it would be because they were promised something they didn't get.

### **If the Carlson School was a person, who would it be at a barbecue? Your mother in law? Your creepy neighbor? Your close friend?**

I think Carlson would be like your kindly uncle. This is a school where they want to do best by you. This is a school where if you have a problem, they want to hear about it and they're going to try their damndest to fix it. I find them to be very caring and warm, very affectionate. You can go to them for advice and help and maybe a little pocket change. They'll slip you a twenty at the end of the night.

I would say it's the uncle too. But I would say he's the guy who is always trying really hard but still gets shit on. He does something good but then somebody else beats him: he'll hit a triple, but then Harvard will come in and hit a home run. Or he'll do something nice for people, he'll cook the whole barbecue for everyone and they will all complain that it's not steaks it's hamburgers.

I'm thinking about the rankings and how they're trying really hard. It's a young uncle, something who is trying super hard to be in the cool kid group but just isn't quite accepted there yet.

I also wonder if Harvard at our barbecue at all? Like, really? Harvard and Stanford aren't there. They don't eat barbecue do they? Maybe if it's a lobster bake. Kelly, Ross, and Olin would be there. Should Harvard even be at the party? We weren't invited to their party.

### **Who are the other b-schools at the barbeque, and who would they be? What are they doing at the party?**

Ross is your dick-ish grandpa that everyone shows up and everyone groans.

Yeah, and he thinks he's done everything better than you, even though you've done the same things. He's a retired cop and you're currently a cop, but he says he's the better cop because his rank was a little higher.

You would never have to ask him where he went to school, he would tell you right away.

Kelly is the life of the party but not very smart. Everybody loves Kelly when he walks in the room, Kelly's the coolest but there's not a lot of substance there.

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### **At that barbecue, how would Carlson spend his/her time? Talking with a lot with people? Keeping to his or herself?**

I think cooking for everyone, taking requests. They'd be trying to customize orders for everyone and make everyone happy.

The student body of Carlson would be sitting at the cooler. But Carlson the school would be doing something totally different. The School would say, "don't tell anyone about shotgunning the beers."

Carlson would be talking to everyone. There seems to be a lot of information sharing among those schools.

I think Carlson would talk to Ross, but Ross wouldn't talk to them. Northwestern, Carlson might be self conscious talking to them.

When I visited Duke, a lot of students said they didn't get into Northwestern, so they went to Duke. Then students at Northwestern said they didn't get into Harvard, so they went there. If they were all at the barbecue, they'd be like, "What's Harvard doing? What kinda shirt does he got on?" And Carlson would be like, "whatever man, I'm just happy to be here."

I feel like the Carlson person would be more confident. Say it's about to rain, I think Carlson wouldn't be worried about staying dry. They've got the student placement rates to cover them.

### **Do any of you read any communications or seek information to stay in touch with the school?**

I'm on the homepage a lot, but that's kind of it.

I get emails from the graduate office at the U. But I don't consume a lot, because I'm here. But when I'm an alum I think I will sign up for a newsletter or sign up on Facebook.

I'm the same way, because I'm here all day, I look for stuff here.

I read the weekly MBA email newsletter.

Yeah I don't do anything, honestly.

Same, I don't read much of anything. I read emails though.

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### **Do you have any other thoughts on the program or the School that you'd like to share?**

I've noticed you guys try to turn the conversation toward the marketing message, but for me, what sold me was all personal. I was on Carlson's website a couple times, but it was all one to one interaction that sold me on the school. It really had nothing to do with a crafted marketing message.

I used the Internet a lot because I was overseas, and I tried to find as much touchpoints as I could, discussion forums and all kinds of stuff. Other schools' discussion boards had a ton of comments. But Carlson had only eight and it wasn't enough, I wanted more information. I ended up going to some Indian discussion forum and they had a lengthy discussion among Indian students about what Carlson was like. It wasn't enough.

When comparing schools I got a ton of information from Beat the GMAT. It was a lot of peer-to-peer information. The website doesn't give you a feel for the experience. I couldn't find any valuable information whatsoever. And looking at the list of clubs, about 24 percent of them don't exist anymore. The storytelling piece comes in on the website, and that's pretty solid. Those are more personal stories.

### **Group 2: Part-Time MBA**

Held April 21 at Carlson School. Focus group was made up of 4 students enrolled in the part-time MBA program, all in a range of ages and professions. One participant was also a Carlson School employee.

#### *Transcription*

### **What led you to pursue your MBA?**

I had always been interested in doing some sort of a graduate degree but I wasn't actually thinking about doing the MBA until I took a job at the Carlson School, then once I had the job, I decided it would be wise to pursue my MBA while I was here. So I didn't really search out other Universities because I was here already.

I had gotten laid off from a job and decided to move to the Twin Cities, and when I started looking for jobs I realized so many of the positions I was seeking required an MBA. The positions and starting salaries were wider with an MBA. I knew I had to get a job when I moved so I could pay rent. When I found an organization and found out they did tuition reimbursement, that's when I got on board. Prior to that, I didn't want to go back to school. I value experience a lot, so I didn't know if there was really a value having an undergrad degree in business to learn more

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from an MBA, but money talks and reputation talks. Being in the area, I didn't look anywhere else, but I ultimately made the decision based on reputation.

I'd wanted to go back to school and the five year time frame was about right but it wasn't until I started with P&G and learned about their tuition reimbursement that I decided to go. So I waited six months and hit the ground running. Between Minnesota schools, I went to info sessions at Carlson, Bethel and St. Thomas and did tons of website searching. Then I sat down with different people at my jobs who had gone to each of the schools and kind of evaluated which I was looking for.

I knew I wanted to eventually go back to school, I just wasn't sure exactly which program. I graduated in communications. I assumed I would go back for another strategic communications degree. But after some experience in my job in higher ed after college, my colleagues recommended a business degree to get tools they didn't have. So understanding how to speak business and how to do budgeting and statistics and all that kind of stuff. So after some experience in my current roles and speaking with managers, I felt like the MBA would provide better experience for where I wanted to go in my career as opposed to a communications degree. I looked at St. Thomas for a business communications degree. Looking back, if I had to choose again, I would choose Carlson just because of the networking and connections Carlson has across the country, it's really appealing.

### **How did Carlson stand out from other programs?**

I would say two things: the people I knew that graduated from this program were of a different caliber and were doing things I'd like to be doing with my life. They were more connected and had the savvy compared to some other schools. I liked how Carlson has the academic and experience component. Some of the other schools felt a little more heavy on the experience background, but I thought Carlson did a nice job of combining those two and balancing that out.

All of my undergrad friends went to the Carlson program, and I've seen how they've been successful in their careers and what they've been able to achieve. I guess that's one thing. For me, since it was employment that drew me here, it still got me interested in this institution. But I've always known how well networked Carlson is in the business community. It's clear out in the community that those strong business ties already exist. So that was something that was very important to me when I came here. Being here as an employee and a student, you're really connecting across the whole Twin Cities.

Aside from employment, reputation is a big deal. I have a lot of friends who had heard of the reputation and the ties that they had with the community. With the part-time program, so many of the companies around here have individuals from those companies that come here and

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that really fosters the discussions you have in the classrooms. Looking back, that really is a very valuable asset in itself, you might not have that at other business schools. I'm sure St. Thomas has that too, but the reputation isn't as prevalent.

The reputation that Carlson has in the Twin Cities is that it's really connected to a lot of the companies I'm interested in. Also, colleagues that I have and other people in my industry who have gone to Carlson just felt like they were at a different level as far as business understanding and where they were at in their career and that was appealing to me.

I had heard if you want to stay in Minnesota, St. Thomas and Carlson can be comparable, they have a similar reputation. But if you want to get outside the state or outside the country, Carlson is the way to go.

### **What do you hope to get out of the program?**

I think "the talk," the communication and presentation skills are important. There's something to be said about people who have those skills. I hope the relationships I form are organic. It's not pushy and shovy. You're in the grunt of it together and I hope the caliber of people you're with build networks in that way.

I'm just looking to be a well-rounded business professional. My undergrad was in international relations and so to add the business intelligence and understanding of business process, it makes me a more well-rounded employee in general. It goes back to the presentation skills and being more confident in relationship building and networking and the business development aspect. And just knowing my stuff: being intelligent and being able to talk about things because I understand it and I'm confident in those areas.

I didn't think about this coming into it, but now that I'm about to do my global discovery program, the topic we're studying is sustainability and now I'm getting really interested in it. And I'd love to leverage that in my next job opportunity a little more. In general, I want to be more strategic, my undergrad gave me a good baseline for business, but the MBA program really does a good job of thinking bigger and setting long-term objectives and being able to translate that strategy into tangible takeaways.

For me, again, I really wanted to learn the business skills I felt I was missing from my undergrad. I really wanted to learn the business skills I felt like I was missing from my undergrad. Becoming a more well-rounded employee, being able to combine communications with an understanding of business strategy and be able to speak intelligently to it with my colleagues and supervisors was a big deal. As far as networking, one of the things I really hoped to gain from the program was building relationships with classmates that would then translate to being able to call them

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up to talk about a business problem we're both having but from different perspectives. Someone in a totally different industry struggling with the same problem I am, and being able to meet for coffee. Building a community like that in the Twin Cities is also really appealing.

### **Has the school lived up to its reputation?**

I think I have some friendly suggestions for the administration, but overall I think it does a good job. I have friends with no business backgrounds and they think it's very helpful. But for me it was a lot of refresher courses, especially with the accounting and financial side of things. The networking is hard, it's a catch 22 with the relationships you build as a part-timer since you do have a job and then you have class and some people have kids, so that's always a struggle, because the people you want to meet aren't going to those events. As far as the administration is concerned, I think they're doing everything they can to foster that. That's tough.

I'm pretty early in the program, but so far I feel it meets my expectations.

I've tried to go to one networking event a month and it's been good. The big events don't necessarily help you meet someone you'll know long-term, but they were good opportunities for me to get my feet wet. The faculty have been good. And I like the size of the classes, it's kind of fun to have that range of diversity. Everyone has been very open to meet and talk and extend themselves, which has been great, a bit surprising to be honest.

I would say as far as the academic side, coming from a non-business background, I think the program has been hugely beneficial. I've seen things I've learned in the program apply to my everyday job within the first two semesters. I feel like the biggest benefit has been the academic side. I would say networking, I haven't done very many of the events that the part-time program holds. And I don't know if it's just because I'm not interested in all of them or if the timing just hasn't worked out, so I can't really speak a whole lot to them. But I think the classroom networking and doing group projects and talking to people in class has been the largest amount of networking and relationship building that I've done. I would like to see the event side of it or the planned networking piece grow a little bit, but I don't know how that looks.

### **What opportunities or resources could the School provide that would enrich your experience?**

There's just such a segregation between the full-time and part-time events and opportunities, and I think that's kind of a missed opportunity, it doesn't seem as cohesive. I think as a school, it's not seen as the MBA program, it's seen as more segmented.

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I went to one of the LAB open houses and it was for part-timers, but I was confused about what was going on, so clarity in the leadership groups would be great. But I'm still curious what that looks like, for part-timers to be involved in a manageable commitment. It there were stories of people who have don it well, that could be helpful so see how other have balanced this with life. Some people have kids and spouses, and people are all over the spectrum. There's just people all over which is awesome. But stories would be really cool to see.

In general, information sharing in general is important. I think it's important for students to get the most important information in an accessible form. Students are going to the intranet and Moodle and all these websites where there's information for students, and I don't think it's always very clear where students should go. I think they're trying to figure out how to find very basic information. I think that's something the program could do better.

I second that

I would third the information find perspective. I think it's really hard to find the most basic information that a student might need, as simple as curriculum planning documents. I find them, but I have to search every time to find them. And that's a little bit frustrating. I also think, however I'm different from other students, but I get the perception that the full-time program is very structured and they have a curriculum that's planned each year and career activities that take place every semester, and I feel like the part-time program is so a'la carte, do it yourself that it's so easy to not use the resources at hand because maybe a student might not be aware of them or know how to engage them. I feel like a little more clarification or direction about when and how to engage and who's the right person to talk to, at least for students who are interested in having a little more structure around their part-time experience.

**If the Carlson School was a person, who would it be at a barbecue? Your mother in law? Your creepy neighbor? Your close friend?**

As a precursor, I thought before I came here, I had an idea of what a Carlson person was like. And it was a bit stuck up. Talking about themselves and their achievements or sitting on a pedestal. But since being here, I've met a wide variety of people that are humble and very down to Earth. Maybe other schools are coming to the barbecue with that expectation.

Even though I know it not to be true, I think there may still be a pocket of Carlson students that are a little stuck up. But I think I'd still say the majority of people at this barbecue are really smart, educated, intelligent, conversational, and open to talking about a wide variety of topics. When I first think of it, I think of that really intelligent conversation.



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Prior to being a student, I do think people see it as just a building with robots in black suits who are all being very professional and a little bit stuffy perhaps. But what I feel like the experience of the school really is are people who are incredibly strategic thinkers, and very entrepreneurial and innovative, very friendly and in to relationship building. So I guess that's how I imagine Carlson would be at a barbecue.

I think there's a lot of diversity, not so much in terms gender and ethnic diversity, but I think mostly world travelers. I've met a lot of people that have travelled for work or pleasure, and are very cultured and know what's going on outside of Minnesota, they're not all from the Midwest. It's good to see a diverse group. I was really surprised to meet a lot of engineers and people in IT, that weren't used to being in suits all the time. Half the population will be in suits and ties, the other half will be in Hawaiian shirts.

### **Who are the other b-schools at the barbeque, and who would they be? Mother in law? Creepy neighbor, etc.?**

I honestly don't know that much about them. I only went to public schools, so my thoughts on a private school leads me to believe they have a smaller network. I heard they do a lot more work, which I thought was interesting. So I don't think they're as focused on the networking or social aspect and they're a bit more studies driven, but beyond that, I don't know.

I think of St. Thomas as academic, maybe because of the private school having more of that prestige or feeling like there's honor going to a private school. I also just imagine them as well connected by their location in downtown to the Twin Cities, but I don't know if I would imagine them as being as worldly and cultured internationally as Carlson.

I don't know a ton about St. Thomas or the program, I didn't do a whole lot of looking and I don't know their size. But my perception without knowing it is the program is a bit smaller than Carlson so the students might know fewer St. Thomas students in their classes than a Carlson student.

### **What is your sense of the School's communication with part-time students? Too much, too little?**

I don't think the communication is enough. I get a lot of information just being on the staff side and I then turn around and tell the MBA office to put in the newsletter. They probably don't track how many people DO read that. When I was first in the program, I was looking for friends too. They put a small blurb about the tailgating the sports club did, and it was probably more full-time focused but open to everybody. And I went with my boyfriend and we had a great time, I was wondering why there weren't more part-timers there. I don't think they highlight

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some of those fun events, you don't have to always be on your networking game. The weekly newsletter is good, but I don't know if I've heard much more outside of that.

I read that newsletter every week. It is good, and I guess if there's anything I need to know about the program, I'm hoping it's all there. If it isn't, then I don't do additional research to seek it out.

I think they could build the intranet to be a bit more dynamic where you have the highlights, but then you could have all these things that are easier to get to. I think it's underutilized.

I would agree with the email piece. I think the once a week newsletter is super helpful and I read that regularly. I think the intranet is my biggest problem as far as communications, just not being able to intuitively find things. I think they could do a better job organizing it and making the navigation more user friendly.

There is an underground professor blog that gets shared from student to student, it's like a master Google doc that is very helpful when you're trying to figure out which classes to take because there are so many to choose from because it's kind of a create-your-own schedule. I would say that I would go to the website probably a lot more as a student if it was easier to know where there was information that was relevant to a student on there. When we get to the point of designing a new website, if as a student I knew which part of the website I could find relevant information, that would be great as well. Especially for event calendars, I'm thinking.

Event calendars aren't so intuitive on the website.

Even having a Google calendar that the part-time community could share, that would be nice.

I realize you're supposed to use the career center's Talent Link for finding some of that stuff, but that's not an intuitive system to use either. So it's not where you're going to go looking for events.

### **Do you have any other thoughts on the program or the School that you'd like to share?**

Recently there was a class that got randomly cancelled and registration was right around the corner. I heard it through the grapevine, but the school never sent us anything. I think a bit more transparency in terms of big changes that might affect us is needed.

APPENDIX C

**CONTENT ANALYSIS**

**KEY**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Tactic of Identification</b>	<b>Elements</b>
0	None	No tactic of identification present
1	Expression of concern for the individual	Content features the role of students in the organization
2	Recognition of individual contributions	Content recognizes students for their contributions to the organization
3	Espousal of shared values	Content states explicitly that “we” have the same interests as “you”
4	Advocacy of benefits and activities	Content advocates organization-sponsored benefits and activities
5	Praise by outsiders	Content promotes positive views of the organization held by outsiders
6	Testimonials by students	Content includes quotations by students expressing dedication, commitment, or affection with regard to the organization

**Content Analysis**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Communication Channel</b>
4	Holy workshops, Batman!	Email
4	Upcoming events for Part-Time students	Email
4	Tips and Tools	Email
4	Careers outside of marketing, finance, and consulting	Email
4	Upcoming events for Part-Time students	Email
4	Tips and Tools	Email
4	Interview resources	Email
4	Upcoming events for Part-Time students	Email
4	Tips and Tools	Email
4	Save the date: career enhancement seminar	Email
4	Upcoming events for Part-Time students	Email
4	Tips and Tools	Email
4	Looking for a post-MBA change?	Email
4	Upcoming events for Part-Time students	Email
4	Tips and Tools	Email
0	GBCC Over Winter Break	Email
4	Upcoming events for Part-Time students	Email

4	Tips and Tools	Email
1	Happy New Year from GBCC	Email
4	Upcoming events for Part-Time students	Email
4	3rd Annual GBCC Career Summit	Email
4	Upcoming events for Part-Time students	Email
4	Tips and Tools	Email
4	Contract coaches available	Email
4	Upcoming events for Part-Time students	Email
4	3rd Annual GBCC Career Summit	Email
4	Upcoming events for Part-Time students	Email
3	Congratulations to 2014 graduates	Email
4	Take advantage of GBCC this summer	Email
3	Congratulations to 2014 graduates	Email
4	Volunteer Opportunity	Email
4	CGI Skyway Advising	Email
0	Change to Tuition Dates	Email
0	Summer building hours effective May 19	Email
4	Accepting Applications for Global Enrichment Program:	Email
4	Carlson to Host Founders Day	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted summer	Email
2	Thanks to club for organizing event	Email
0	Change to Tuition Dates	Email
0	Summer building hours effective May 19	Email
4	Accepting Applications for Global Enrichment Program:	Email
4	MN Cup Team seeks MBA Student	Email
4	Twin Cities STARTUP weekend	Email
4	MN Cup Accepting Entries	Email
4	Carlson to Host Founders Day	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted summer	Email
0	Registration: additional courses offered in summer session	Email
3	Graduating students select faculty of the year	Email
4	MN Cup Team seeks MBA Student	Email
4	Twin Cities STARTUP weekend	Email
4	MN Cup Accepting Entries	Email

4	Carlson to Host Founders Day	Email
4	Carlson Annual Golf Outing	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted summer	Email
2	BAHM competitors bring home top prize	Email
0	Students needed for focus group	Email
4	Women's Center Scholarships	Email
4	Experiential Learning Opportunities at Carlson	Email
0	Severe Weather Awareness week	Email
4	Carlson Annual Golf Outing	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted course	Email
0	New Section of Course Added	Email
4	Experiential Learning Opportunities at Carlson	Email
4	MILL Actuarial Seminar Series	Email
0	Students needed for focus group	Email
4	Women's Center Scholarships	Email
4	Experiential Learning Opportunities at Carlson	Email
4	Carlson Annual Golf Outing	Email
4	Global Matters Speaker Series	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted course	Email
0	Academic Advising Appointments available	Email
4	Carlson Global Institute skyway advising	Email
4	Economic Club Luncheon	Email
4	Casual Friday	Email
4	Carlson Annual Golf Outing	Email
4	Global Matters Speaker Series	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted course	Email
4	Casual Friday	Email
0	Registration helpful hints	Email
4	Carlson Global Institute skyway advising	Email
4	Volunteer Opportunity: MBA Ambassadors	Email
4	AgriBank and AgStar Showcase	Email
4	Career Summit	Email
0	Graduate experience survey	Email
4	Take Bloomberg Aptitude Test free	Email

4	Casual Friday	Email
4	Economic Club Luncheon	Email
4	Carlson Annual Golf Outing	Email
4	Global Matters Speaker Series	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted course	Email
4	Career Summit	Email
4	Casual Friday	Email
3	Welcome back to Carlson	Email
4	Casual Friday	Email
4	Economic Club Luncheon	Email
4	Carlson Annual Golf Outing	Email
4	Marcia Page & Carlson Scholarships	Email
4	MILLsa Healthcare Leadership Tools Workshop	Email
4	Global Matters Speaker Series	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted course	Email
0	Spring break hours	Email
4	LEHRN HR Technology Expo	Email
4	Global Matters Speaker Series	Email
4	Casual Friday	Email
4	Marcia Page & Carlson Scholarships	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted course	Email
2	Carlson donates to Washburn Children's Center	Email
4	Marcia Page & Carlson Scholarships	Email
4	Professoinal Student Network seeks VPs	Email
4	Take Bloomberg Aptitude Test free	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted course	Email
0	Complete MBA experience survey	Email
2	Thanks to all who attended charity aution	Email
4	Attend a LAB meeting	Email
4	Marcia Page & Carlson Scholarships	Email
4	Professoinal Student Network seeks VPs	Email
4	Polar Plunge for Special Olympics MN	Email
4	Take Bloomberg Aptitude Test free	Email
4	MILLsa Healthcare Leadership Tools Workshop	Email

4	Memorial Blood Centers Blood Drive	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted course	Email
4	MBA Charity Auction	Email
4	MILIsa Healthcare Leadership Tools Workshop	Email
4	Memorial Blood Centers Blood Drive	Email
4	3M Seminars on Technology Commercialization	Email
4	Attend a LAB meeting	Email
4	Association of Energy Engineers Scholarship	Email
4	NSHMBA Kick-off Event	Email
4	Chinese 101: A practical Guide for Travelling Professior	Email
4	Free Personal Safety Workshops	Email
0	Daily Newspapers in Master's Lounge	Email
4	Economic Club Luncheon	Email
0	Registration and academic advising: highlighted course	Email
4	Service Academy Career Conference	Facebook
0	Is there Zen in Freemium (Carlson faculty research)	Facebook
4	MILI Opportunities	Facebook
0	Most Bike Friendly Cities in United States	Facebook
0	Changes coming to Cedar-Riverside community	Facebook
5	Carlson School No. 1 in Management Research Product	Facebook
4	MBA in Two Deferred Admissions Program	Facebook
3	MBA Admissions Q&A	Facebook
0	The Wisdom of the Crowd (Carlson faculty research)	Facebook
2	Former Naval Officer Help Women Navigate Business S	Facebook
0	Part-Time MBA Program structure	Facebook
4	Brand Matters event	Facebook
3	Dean's Blog: Knowledge and Insights from Board of Ov	Facebook
0	The 10 Greenest Places to Live	Facebook
0	Five Essential Business Lessons for Women Entrepeneue	Facebook
0	Minneapolis Ranks Among Best Cities for New College	Facebook
0	Discussion of Affordable Care Act (featuring Carlson fac	Facebook
0	Which MBA fits you best?	Facebook
3	What sets Carlson apart?	Facebook
6	Military Veterans Program	Facebook

0 St. Paul Urban Organics Aquaponic Facility Facebook

3 What's the best B-School Fit for You? (student-written Facebook

0 Minneapolis Ranked Among Most Innovative Cities in A Facebook

4 MBA Students Hold Table Tennis Tournament Facebook

3 Introverted MBA students? Yes, it's possible (student-v Facebook

0 Minnesota Ranked Second Best State for Achieving Am Facebook

0 MBA in Two Deferred Admissions Program Facebook

4 Toby Nord discusses Ventures Enterprise Facebook

0 10 of Minnesota's Top Corporate Women Facebook

0 Twins Home Opener Tomorrow: new food Facebook

6 10 Cool Things on Campus Facebook

2 Carlson Alum Named in Top 10 Minnesota Corporate V Facebook

0 10 Non-Profits Get Free Websites from the Nerderly Facebook

4 Executive MBA Virtual Team Project Facebook

0 U of M Physicist Confirms Key Piece of Big Bang Theory Facebook

0 Career Rocket Fuel Facebook

0 Should the Word "Bossy" be Banned? Or Embraced? Facebook

4 1st Tuesday Speaker Series Facebook

5 Professor Zahra Receives Global Award for Entrepenuue Facebook

LEFT OFF AT MARCH 13 Facebook

0 Personal Missions Statements of 5 Famous CEOs Facebook

4 Excited to see everyone at our PT MBA Meet and Ming Facebook

4 MBA offers help to military candidates applying to MB/ Facebook

2 Excited to have students representing Carlson at Babsc Facebook

0 Minnesota ranked in top 10 of Well Being Index Facebook

0 More interesting research coming out of Carlson Facebook

4 Join us for a Meet and Mingle event Facebook

0 Treadmill desks make workers better (highlight of facu Facebook

5 Part-Time MBA ranked No. 11 Facebook

4 Enter to win tickets to 1st Tuesday event Facebook

0 How always being busy makes you dumber Facebook

0 The economic case for a nontraditional career path Facebook

0 Innovation: You're doing it wrong Facebook

4 We'd love to have you for our Part-Time MBA meet an Facebook



0	U of M astrophysicists discover relic of the Big Bang	Facebook
0	Improve your networking game with a people plan	Facebook
0	10 Startups to Watch in 2014	Facebook
0	What's in a Name? Should MSP Sell Naming Rights for	Facebook
5	Carlson faculty named to Power 50 list	Facebook
3	Senior Lecturer discusses his approach to teaching	Facebook
4	List of speakers for MN Cup event	Facebook
4	Join GMAT Application Workshop	Facebook
0	Check out the MBA Program Comparison	Facebook
6	Alum shares her journey to PopCap games	Facebook
0	Thanks to Carlson School donors	Facebook
4	Attend MBA Charity Auction	Facebook
0	2014 Best Companies for Leaders	Facebook
4	Attend presentation by faculty member	Facebook
4	Attend MBA info session	Facebook
5	Carlson MBA ranked No. 54 by Financial Times	Facebook