

# BrandDNA Brief

Pepperdine University

# PEP MBA

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PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY  
Graziadio School of Business and Management

online MBA

Personal Practical

Professional

## **Positioning Statement**

Pepperdine University's online MBA is a high-touch, advanced business degree that prepares working professionals with the fundamental knowledge and practical skills they'll need to establish a lasting career at the management or executive level. Designed to complement and build on a student's existing experience, the program delivers a solid foundation in current business management theory and practice. It's a blend of advanced business training and personal development that prepares students for success in the next phase of their career.

As part of the nationally and internationally recognized Graziadio School of Business and Management, the online MBA program features a values-centered, collaborative, and experience-driven approach to graduate level business education. Focused on providing a rich interactive experience for students, the accessible curriculum emphasizes dynamic leadership skills, articulate communication, ethical decision making, and an overall understanding of the global future of business.

By utilizing small classes that incorporate real-world case studies and direct interaction with industry-experienced executives, the online MBA program offers students individualized attention and applied learning opportunities. The world-class educators at the Graziadio School of Business and Management actively engage, challenge, and empower students, thereby ensuring comprehension and inspiring confidence. This highly personal learning environment plus a practical business curriculum are what make Pepperdine University's online MBA program a transformative educational experience.

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## **This is Your MBA**

### **Business education gets personal.**

The quest for knowledge is a deeply personal experience. Education is a voyage of self-discovery and self-improvement. At the heart of every working professional who returns to school after spending time in the business world is the desire to improve. They possess the drive to become better at what they do, learn something original, and open the door to new opportunities. At the graduate level, students are motivated and searching for something substantial – practical knowledge, innovative ideas, new skills and techniques, or a spark of inspiration – anything that can help them develop personally and professionally. This aspiration to progress is powerful and inherent in our nature as human beings. It's the reason education is a catalyst for personal improvement and the facilitator of a better future.

### **This is how an online MBA should feel.**

What sets Pepperdine University and the Graziadio School of Business and Management apart is our personal approach towards graduate education. We reject the impersonal attitude many universities take towards higher education. When a student chooses to join our community, their goals,

aspirations, and development matter to us. It's a difference that can be felt throughout the program because we believe that higher education should be personal, high-touch, highly engaging, and challenging.

We understand that not everyone brings the same level of experience or business savvy into the program, so we begin by developing our students' ability for self-assessment. By examining their current level of business acumen and professional development, students discover their own strengths and weaknesses with help from our faculty. This approach allows our students to focus on specific and relevant areas of professional growth. In the process they'll develop an aptitude for personal self-awareness, a unique skill that can help our MBA graduates maintain direction and focus throughout their business life.

### **This is an MBA that will define your future.**

Pepperdine University's online MBA is focused on preparing working professionals for success in the next phase of their career. This is an online MBA that helps students attain the real-world knowledge and abilities to advance to the C-suite or excel their career. Through direct access and networking opportunities with corporate executives and one-on-one interactions with Pepperdine's world-class faculty, students cultivate a credible and definitive skill set that can change the trajectory of their career. Along with the opportunity to become a member of a highly successful, far-reaching, and respected alumni network, graduates of the Pepperdine University online MBA program are uniquely prepared for the future of business.

### **Experience the Pepperdine University difference.**

The University online MBA prepares students to become influential, successful, ethical, confident, and respected business leaders through a high level of engagement with faculty, fellow students, and top-level executives. The world-class faculty of the Graziadio School of Business and Management deliver the kind of personal attention that challenges students, helping them to achieve true personal self-discovery and self-awareness. They provide a values-centered learning experience that prepares students to become ethical and responsible leaders – complete managers who lead by example. Through opportunities to learn from and interact with executives who are currently setting the standards for business leadership, the program teaches students how to become a center of influence in the business world. With this degree of personal attention, small class sizes, top-tier networking opportunities, and the tight-knit community of learners and leaders in the Pepperdine University online MBA program, no student will feel unnoticed.

This level of personal engagement extends past graduation into the business world. Students earning an MBA from Pepperdine University are afforded lifelong access to career portals, career coaching, career development tools, and Graziadio Talent Online, a resource which helps graduates maintain high visibility with professional recruiters from businesses across the world. The benefits of earning

the interactive and personal MBA from Pepperdine University can continue long after graduates complete this online program that is defining the future of business education.

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## Uniquely Pepperdine How We Make Business Education Personal

### Connecting Education to Business (E2B)

The Pepperdine University online MBA program brings live cases from the real world of business into the classroom, encouraging students to deliver real solutions to today's business challenges. Graziadio School faculty members work directly with partner companies to identify the strategic problems, challenges, or opportunities confronting an organization and build them into real-time MBA-level case projects. This engagement brings active executives and students together in the classroom to solve real business issues. Students work together to research, analyze, and provide recommendations directly to executives and program faculty. Students are encouraged to build networks that can facilitate employment opportunities, provide career counseling and advice, open doors for internships, and increase understanding of management job responsibilities from current practitioners in the field.

**"One of the Top 10 College Courses That Will Pay Off at Work"**

*– U.S. News & World Report*

### A Values-Based Curriculum

By focusing on advanced theory and practical skills that are immediately applicable in the current business world, the Pepperdine University online MBA cultivates self-confidence and self-awareness. During their studies, students are encouraged to think entrepreneurially and pursue ethical business practices. Through direct and personal interactions with a world-class faculty, students are challenged to develop their professional identity. Emphasis is given to the concept of **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**, a mainstay of the Graziadio School for more than 40 years. Addressed in the form of **values-centered leadership**, CSR is woven into all aspects of a Graziadio School education, including curriculum, student clubs and activities, campus events, and faculty research. Some of these issues include: sustainability and environmental stewardship, ethics in business, social entrepreneurship and social enterprise, service to community, and global corporate citizenship.

### The Pepperdine University Community and Alumni Networks

Pepperdine University has developed unique organizations, social media outlets, and professional portals that create a direct connection to businesses and career advancement opportunities.

Pepperdine University currently has the largest MBA alumni network on the West Coast and has developed corporate partnerships to specifically recruit Pepperdine MBA talent.

- **Graziadio Talent Online (GTO)** –This one-stop resource provides a convenient way for employers to identify talented business professionals for their organizations.
- **Waves of Service** – This movement celebrates, supports, and connects Pepperdine alumni committed to volunteerism and service careers. The Waves of Service vision is to become the most active alumni service movement in the world.
- **Career coaching** –One-on-one short-term coaching sessions for guidance on resumes, interviews, career planning, salary negotiation, and more are available to alumni.
- **Career Leader** –This comprehensive online assessment helps students and alumni discover their best business career path.
- **Career Events** – Pepperdine University offers career workshops, webinars, career fairs, industry panels, and networking events to help students and alumni further their career.
- **Career toolbox** –This resource provides valuable tips to help with a job search. It includes information on topics such as resume writing, interviewing, networking, and salary negotiation.
- **Career links** – This list of web sites provide easy access to additional resources for career management.

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## Value Statements

### The Graziadio Experience

The Graziadio School of Business and Management enjoys a national and international reputation as one of the leading business schools in the world. It is recognized as one of the largest graduate business schools in Southern California and boasts the largest MBA alumni network on the West Coast. The Graziadio School rejects the impersonal drive-through approach that too often passes for business education. No student slips through the Graziadio School unchallenged or unnoticed. We pride ourselves on giving students personal attention through small classes, student-focused world-class faculty, and a tight-knit community of learners and leaders. The Graziadio Experience is values-centered, collaborative, experience-driven, entrepreneurial, and global.

### Pepperdine's Reputation

For more than 75 years, Pepperdine University has remained dedicated to purpose, service, and leadership. Pepperdine University is a nationally and internationally recognized Christian university, committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership.

## **A Complete Business Degree**

The Graziadio School of Business and Management's online MBA offers a comprehensive examination of business essentials, such as finance, marketing, accounting, economics, quantitative analysis, law, human behavior, communication, information systems, strategy, management, and leadership. Students are able to select a specialization that best suits their needs: Finance, Leadership and Managing Organizational Change, Marketing, or General Management.

## **World-Class Faculty**

Delivering personal attention, applied learning, and live projects, our world-class faculty members are uniquely qualified both academically and professionally. Faculty members not only have distinguished academic credentials but also have proven themselves in the business world as executives, entrepreneurs, and consultants. Many continue to work in the business world while they teach, so students receive knowledge that is current, relevant, and experience-driven.

## **Active Corporate Partnerships**

Companies partner with Pepperdine University for many reasons, from recruiting star talent to receiving free consulting from MBA students. With our focus on "experience-driven" education, Pepperdine University is proud of its longstanding relationship with the business community and is dedicated to fostering the connection between business and academics. By partnering with Pepperdine, a business can increase its talent pipeline, gain exposure for the business, and make a smart investment in the organization's intellectual capital. Some of these partnerships include: Paramount, Warner Brothers, AT&T, Bank of America, Google, Yahoo!, Disney, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, Merrill Lynch, and Mattel.

## **Rankings**

- *U.S. News and World Report* ranks the Graziadio School of Business and Management the #2 most popular business school in the nation.
- *U.S. News and World Report* ranks Pepperdine University's E2B program as "One of the Top 10 College Courses That Will Pay Off at Work."

## **Accreditation**

- Pepperdine University is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). WASC, a 501(c)(3) organization, is recognized as one of six regional associations that accredit public and private schools, colleges, and universities in the United States. WASC accreditation for the online MBA program is pending and expected in the fall of 2012.
- The Graziadio School is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). AACSB is a global, nonprofit membership organization of educational institutions, businesses, and other entities devoted to the advancement of management education. AACSB

provides internationally recognized, specialized accreditation for business and accounting programs at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels.

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## **Market Segmentation and Personas**

The potential audience for Pepperdine University's MBA is broad and diverse. It will come from every demographic group and professional industry; however, it can be grouped into three major motivational segments. These segments are attitudinal, and our messaging should be tailored to position the program to meet the needs of each group.

### **The Proactive Professional**

The Proactive Professional is the traditional business-minded MBA candidate. They are early to mid-career and have come to the point where they feel that they must obtain an MBA to stay competitive and create new opportunities. The Proactive Professional wants to obtain the advanced business skills and ability for high-level thought that is a prerequisite for moving into a position of greater responsibility or broader reach.

For the Proactive Professional an MBA represents the next step in their professional development, and the online option is the best way to go for flexibility, convenience, and accessibility. The Proactive Professional is very interested in and motivated by the concentration offerings. Choosing a specific area of focus will allow them to distinguish themselves in a relevant area of business, whether it's a current field or a new frontier. For the Proactive Professional the traditional MBA is a known quantity, and there is likely an assumption that the traditional MBA will give them all the skills they'll need to compete or qualify for leadership-level responsibilities.

The Pepperdine University program appeals to the Proactive Professional's goal of distinguishing themselves as one of tomorrow's business and organizational leaders and, indirectly, developing a broader business perspective. They are ambitious, entrepreneurial, and highly competitive, so we should appeal to their aspirations of career growth and the acquisition of core business management skills. We have to make a compelling case that the MBA is the most relevant, personal, and experience-driven MBA for today's business professional.

The Proactive Professional will be found searching for general and online MBA programs. They will read business and finance publications in addition to publications specific to their industry or functional expertise. The Proactive Professional will be attracted to the core business curriculum of the program as well as the rankings and success of Pepperdine's vast alumni network.

## **The Quality Seeker**

The Quality Seeker is the traditional MBA candidate who isn't primarily focused on concentrations or specializations, such as global or international business, sustainability, or marketing. One of their principal motivations for selecting a program is its reputation and prestige. The Quality Seeker is familiar with Pepperdine University and the Pepperdine brand, and they view it as a top option that will stand out in a crowded business world. They want to attend a top school, so they will heavily consider the program's rankings, its accreditation, and the credentials of its faculty. The Quality Seeker understands the worth of a degree from a highly ranked program in the marketplace and values the benefits of being an alumnus of a prestigious program.

Pepperdine University's MBA program appeals directly to the Quality Seeker's desire to attend and graduate from a highly ranked and prestigious MBA program. The Quality Seeker will respond to messaging that highlights the program's reputation and rankings, the accomplishments of Graziadio faculty/credentials, the vast alumni network, and regional accreditation. Secondly, they will respond to the personal aspects of the curriculum, the interaction with current industry professionals, and how the experience is designed to facilitate the next step in their business career. This type of person understands they should get something substantial for what they're paying.

The Quality Seeker will be found searching specifically for top-ranked MBA programs. They will consult educational rankings, such as *U.S. News and World Report* and *Princeton Review*, as well as business rankings, such as *The Economist*.

## **The Finisher**

The Finisher is a mid-career, high-level businessperson or entrepreneur that sees future possibilities and opportunities for advancement to the highest levels. The Finisher wants to be prepared for the future and also wants to put the definitive finishing touch on their business and management credentials. They recognize that a Pepperdine University MBA represents educational achievement. They might already have a master's degree but want the focused business education that the Pepperdine University MBA provides. The personal nature of the program appeals to The Finisher because they'll be learning from experienced business professionals and interacting with current executives whom they view as contemporaries. The self-awareness aspect of the curriculum is also important to The Finisher because it will allow them to accurately assess their strengths and weaknesses, including where they stand in the business world, on the corporate ladder, and within their company.

The Pepperdine University MBA program appeals to The Finisher's desire to pursue a high-level management degree that will give them the skills to compete long into the future. They are strategic and accomplished and want to further refine their understanding of business, but they cannot relocate to attend school. The Finisher will be attracted to the online nature and flexibility of the program along with the personal attention, high-touch curriculum, and access to other professionals in their peer

group and the Pepperdine alumni network. The Finisher will also value Pepperdine's history and the prestige of the Graziadio School.

The Finisher will be found searching for an MBA or leadership program online, in trade publications, and through word of mouth. They will read high-level business and finance publications in addition to publications specific to their industry or functional expertise. The Finisher will likely participate in leadership development activities, such as conferences, seminars, and workshops.

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## **Program Voice and Tone**

The voice and tone should reflect the history and prestigious nature of this school and program. Earning your MBA from Pepperdine University is an accomplishment to be proud of. A Pepperdine University MBA means you've earned a place in the business world. You are knowledgeable and skilled, ready for leadership as well as whatever challenges lie ahead.

On a more basic level, the written copy should appeal to potential students by emphasizing the values and mission of the Graziadio School of Business and Management, the experience-driven curriculum, the preparation for a successful future, and the personal connection to faculty and active executives from the business world. The voice of the program should be humble but speak confidently and directly to the potential student. It should develop a connection by explaining how students are given personal attention and how this MBA can help them define their professional future, become part of a community, and challenge them to become the best ethical and responsible leader they can become.

The fact is that Pepperdine University and the Graziadio School of Business and Management are two of our nation's best. However, we remain humble and let our success do the heavy lifting. We speak confidently, honestly, openly, and boldly. Students should expect more from their MBA program. Pepperdine University delivers more.

The overall tone of written copy and textual design elements should be personal and engaging. Copy should speak directly to potential students and remind them why they are getting an MBA and what they should expect from an MBA program. At Pepperdine, students are not just a number or a faceless student in front of a computer. When you enroll at Pepperdine, you have a name and an identity. At Pepperdine University we understand why you want to earn your MBA, and we are here to support you throughout your development. We are here to teach active business professionals what they need to know to become successful, help them achieve their goals, challenge them to work hard and improve so that they can build lasting success, and do more with their careers.

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## Creative Design Guidelines

The creative design elements for this program should be clean and contemporary with an emphasis on bold, inspirational images. The use of images should be relevant, impactful, and high quality. Images should not feel overly staged. While this is an online program, it takes a personal approach and encourages people to be themselves. This degree program is traditional, but the personal aspects will make it appeal to freethinking and sophisticated MBA candidates. Business people with personalities should be featured. The imagery and design should tell prospective students, "We know our students. We are actively engaged with your success and will challenge you to become better personally and professionally."

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## Academic Partner (AP) Considerations

1. Preference is to refer to the university by the full name, Pepperdine University.
2. Don't capitalize "Online Program".
3. Although the GMAT and GRE standardized exams are required for the online MBA, Pepperdine University will waive them, on a limited and case-by-case basis, in deference to the prospect's full experience. However, we must NOT advertise this practice.
4. Do not use the word "free" in the context of receiving a brochure.
5. When referring to Pepperdine University, do not use the word "The Pepperdine University" the correct copy should read "Pepperdine University" only.
6. Currently the online program is NOT regionally accredited. When referencing accreditation you must always reference the University, i.e., "Pepperdine University is regionally accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)..."
7. When referencing AACSB accreditation you must always reference the Graziadio School of Business and Management, i.e., "The Graziadio School of Business and Management is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)..."
8. Be consistent with the use of "online" in conjunction with the program name (e.g., online MBA program vs. MBA online program).
9. Images from the Pepperdine/Graziadio photo library are preferable for use in marketing materials.
10. List the concentrations in alphabetical order, with the exception of General Management, which should be listed last.
11. As much as possible, we will promote the brand "Graziadio"