

Top College Business programs by specialty

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The best programs in accounting, sustainability, and other specialties aren't always the obvious choices.

If you're looking for the best undergraduate business program in the areas of marketing, or financial management, or even macroeconomics, head for the state of Virginia. But surprisingly, your final destination won't be Charlottesville, home of the top-ranked McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia. Instead you will be traveling 75 miles southeast of UVA to the Robins School of Business at the University of Richmond. Robins is not only tops in the three areas mentioned, but also in corporate strategy and quantitative methods, making it the most celebrated program in BusinessWeek's annual ranking of the Best Undergraduate Business Programs by Specialty.

As part of BusinessWeek's Best Undergraduate Business Schools ranking, senior business majors were asked to grade their programs on a scale of 1 to 5 in 12 academic areas including marketing, accounting, calculus, financial management, and corporate strategy. Based on those grades, scores were calculated for each of the 101 ranked schools in each area. In total, 49 schools appear in the top 10 in at least one category.

With Richmond's strong performance in the classroom, it's no surprise that the school moved up the overall ranking eight spots to No. 12. True, the price tag at Richmond is steep—Virginia residents can expect to pay four times as much as they would at UVA. But for the price, business students say they get a small program focused on hands-on, real-world experiences, with engaging, accessible professors and a strong alumni base. Students laud the fact that up-to-the-minute news is incorporated into core business courses, with current market trends and announcements from the Federal Reserve directing daily discussions.

High specialty marks for overall top three

The undergraduate business programs at the very top of our overall list, published on Feb. 26, also are well represented in the specialty ranking, with each of the top 15 schools appearing on at least one top 10 list. No. 1 UVA was highly ranked in corporate strategy, financial management, and quantitative methods. Second-ranked Mendoza College of Business at Notre Dame takes home four top 10s, including calculus and business law. And No. 3 Wharton appears in five top 10s, including a No. 3 ranking in ethics.

Boston College's Carroll School of Management—ranked 17th overall—fared especially well, with eight top 10 specialty rankings including the top spot in accounting. This recognition comes at a good time, as accounting is one of the few bright spots in this less-than-desirable hiring market. But the remaining top-ranked accounting programs might not be the ones you would expect. In fact, the average overall rank for the accounting top 10 is 30, with schools like No. 45 Baylor, No. 48 Binghamton, and No. 91 Cincinnati in the mix for top spots. At Baylor, students say they are treated like accounting professionals, and that finding a job in the field is a cinch, thanks to a career fair specifically for accounting students. One complaint, though, is that this intense focus on accounting comes at the expense of non-accounting majors.

Further down the list, the University of Nebraska also enjoyed success. Ranked for the first time this year, Nebraska finished near the bottom at 96th overall, but the school snared top 10 specialty rankings in three categories, including the top spot in business law. Nebraska is also ranked in the top 10 in macroeconomics, which shouldn't come as much of a surprise, considering Warren Buffett got his B.S. in economics from the school and once even taught an

elective there. As part of another elective called "Investing the Buffett Way," students visit with the Oracle of Omaha at Berkshire Hathaway's (BRKA) headquarters.

Introducing sustainability

New to the specialty ranking this year is the sustainability category, an area many schools are delving into after requests from students. Leading the pack is the University of Illinois, where administrators have not only introduced courses focused on green business, but have also incorporated sustainable energy into the design of the business school's new "green" building. "Our facilities are revolutionizing standards for universities nationwide," says one Illinois student.

Elsewhere, schools like Ohio State's Fisher School of Business—ranked 11th in sustainability—are bringing local issues into the classroom. At Fisher, students have been developing possible solutions for the recycling issues the city of Columbus is experiencing. Also, undergrads can apply for a study abroad program focused on green business that includes a weeklong trip to Costa Rica to observe companies that have implemented sustainability-focused business practices into their operations.

BusinessWeek, New York, 9 abr. 2009, B-Schools, online. Disponível em <www.businessweek.com>. Acesso em: 16 abr. 2009.

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