

Ready for an MBA?

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COLLEGE-AGE STUDENTS MAKING THEIR WAY INTO UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS are usually shepherded into certain areas of interest by their parents, guidance counselors and a dash of ignorance about what they're really getting into. Adults who have already experienced the workforce – many of whom have families of their own – face different challenges when continuing their education.

Common questions, says Dr. Marci Goldstein, include: Is an MBA even right for me? How do I know which area to pick? What are the parameters and requirements? What are schools looking for? What are my options here in the Tampa Bay area? And, how will an MBA really help me in today's business environment?

Goldstein, a director at Troy University Tampa (www.troy.edu), says the first step is to figure out why you want your MBA. "A lot of people get their MBAs who are not interested in business at all, but because they think it's the degree of choice," she says. "Consider what's in your heart and what you think will make you feel good. You don't want to come out of graduate school having spent time and money studying something that you're not interested in."



GOLDSTEIN

Troy offers several MBA programs, including both online and traditional choices. Graduates can earn 36-credit general management or information systems degrees, or they can sign up for an executive, online MBA option in accounting, criminal justice, healthcare management, general management or information systems. For the program, Troy accepts students with or without bachelor's degrees, although the latter are required to take four prerequisites first.

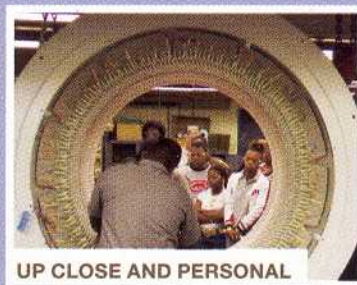
"Once those graduate courses are completed, you can come into our MBA program to complete a total of 48 credits," says Goldstein, who advises students to study the MBA curriculum carefully before signing up. "If quantitative methods are something that you're scared of, then maybe the MBA is not for you."

At the University of Tampa (www.ut.edu), Bill Rhey, dean of graduate studies, says the school recently introduced a master of science in finance option as a way to cultivate a workforce for the many financial institutions in the bay area. Other new options include the MS in marketing and the MS in innovation management. The latter differs from the traditional MBA in that it focuses on innovation and change in the global environment, says Rhey. "It prepares students for the next economy." Students who enroll in these new options, or the university's more traditional MBA offerings in various concentrations, can go to school part-time, full-time, or every other Saturday for two years.

Rhey sees the MBA as a good choice for adults looking to further their careers. "There is evidence that MBA graduates increase their rate of pay over time," says Rhey, who estimates that the ROI comes within three years. "There is also the perception that people who have the ambition to get their MBA are among the most ambitious and hardworking individuals in the workforce."

With five graduate-level programs, Webster University's Sarasota-Manatee campus in

Exploring High Tech Career Opps



UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Intent on exposing middle and high school students to manufacturing careers, Florida Advanced Technological Education (FL-ATE) Center for Manufacturing has created an outreach program so youngsters can see what goes on in today's state-of-the-art production facilities. The effort involves the Florida High Tech Corridor Council (www.floridahightech.com), Sarasota & Manatee Manufacturers Association (www.sama-fl.com) and Bay Area Manufacturers Association (www.bama-fl.org).

FL-ATE (www.fl-ate.org) has taken more than 1,500 students on tours within the last 18 months. In November, students toured New England Machinery in Bradenton. Outreach manager David Gula plays matchmaker for the organization by bringing students and manufacturing facilities together for the visits. "He investigates in advance the appropriateness of grade level for the particular class that's going to the facility," says Marilyn Barger, Tampa-based FL-ATE's executive director.

During the tour, a teacher gives lessons on manufacturing and technical careers, and educates students on the job options that await them in the field. Barger says student feedback has been very positive. "Many of them didn't even know that there was so much manufacturing in Florida," says Barger, "and how many fun, interesting cutting-edge jobs there are in manufacturing."