The Millsaps College MBA Stakeholder Perspectives

Located in Jackson, Mississippi, Millsaps is a privately supported national liberal arts college founded by members of the Methodist Church in 1890. Millsaps Else School of Management offers an MBA and EMBA program, both of which are AACSB accredited. CEO Magazine’s Alexandra Skinner spoke to graduates of both programs, as well as one of the school’s key corporate partners, to discover their true value from those with first-hand experience.

I graduated from the Else School of Management at Millsaps College in December 2012, and continued to work with ELSWorks, an entrepreneurial initiative within the business school, for a short period to finish a project while looking for a job. The career services department at the Else School was pivotal in my search for, and my evaluation and selection of, my job. Knowing my preferences, my counselor introduced me to the firm that would become my employer, Wealthview Capital, an independent wealth management firm challenging the status quo within the financial services industry for the benefit of the client. Even though I did not have the experience desired for the job, my boss says he hired me for my potential, a credit to my professors’ work to help me develop at the Else School.

In my spare time I run a small company partnered with a nonprofit to help feed the hungry in Mississippi. The company sells high quality apparel with subtle, graphic messages representing service to others. A portion of the sales proceeds go to the Mississippi Food Network. The idea was developed and brought to fruition after engaging both my professors and fellow students. The company, S.O. TEREKC, is now three years old and continues to grow.

My experience at Millsaps College was empowering, not only as a first-rate, nationally recognized education, but also from the incredible relationships with the faculty, which have transcended graduation. I continue to interact with professors and other faculty members on both a personal and business level. They continue to truly care about me and my career, and my last tuition check has long since been deposited. Millsaps College has also been a significant resource for networking, business consultation, and personal advice in my career. Much more than a diploma, the people at Millsaps created both a personal connection and a support system invested not just in the training process, but also in my success afterwards.

As I write this, next to me on a picture frame there is a sticky note on which the words of Herbert Spencer are scribbled: “The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.” This concept is a core principle at Millsaps. There, students and faculty act in the community through entrepreneurial initiatives, outreach programs, and volunteerism. To go to Millsaps is to be inspired. Many projects through the school emphasize the use of business as a vehicle, not just for personal gain but also for social improvement. And the professors don’t just teach it, they also live it, side by side with the students. To lead is to act; to act is to lead. When the books in the classroom closed, I knew I was ready to lead because Millsaps taught me to act.

Russell Morrison AIF®, CRPS®, Wealthview Capital, LLC. Millsaps College MBA graduate, 2012.
I was approaching forty years of age and had been working as a device sales rep for twenty years, with the last sixteen of them being with the same company. Even though my job was very challenging, I needed and wanted to be challenged in a different way. I had a desire to develop my leadership and business skills and to simply grow as an individual. I also believed that by developing these skills, I would be in a position to pursue management opportunities within my company as well as expanding my reach for professional opportunities if I decided to look elsewhere. This is when I began my search for the right EMBA program. I decided that Millsaps would be the best fit for me based on its reputation for small class sizes, the high level of interaction between students and professors, and the Millsaps writing-heavy style of learning.

As it turns out, I was right! Near the end of the sixteen-month EMBA program at Millsaps, I was given an opportunity with my current company to interview for a position that would put me on a management track. I was chosen for the position the same week that I graduated from Millsaps. When I asked the VP of Sales why I was chosen for the position, he commented that in the last two years he had watched me take personal responsibility in developing myself through the EMBA program, and as a result had seen a change in me and my level of focus and now felt that I was ready for management. The EMBA proved to be a great return on my investment.

Specific Returns on Investment:

- I committed to something that was going to require a complete change in how I spent my time and energy. There was fear of the unknown, but the lesson here is that in life you have to continue to grow, learn, and try something that is uncomfortable. Without doing this, we all risk becoming complacent and lose our ability to perform at our best.

- I expected to learn about leadership, accounting, management, marketing, and finance. The real learning, however, came from the projects and papers. As a result, I gained confidence in writing, became proficient in PowerPoint, and honed my Excel skills. These skills have had a major impact on my ability to perform at a much higher level than I was capable of prior to obtaining my EMBA degree.

- The class of 2013 was a small group of 13 students, all of whom came from different backgrounds. I learned to appreciate that we all had something significant to offer. Where I feel the program was most beneficial was in working with classmates on group projects. In my current job, I typically like to take a lead role, but I found it beneficial, in this setting, to give all group members an opportunity to lead. This has been a great lesson that has been useful in my new management position. When you give others a chance to lead, it can be surprising what you can learn from them.

- The exposure to and application of new business concepts, such as, Porter’s Five Forces in Microeconomics, Environmental Scanning in Marketing Research, SWOT Analysis in Marketing Strategy, and the Balanced Scorecard Concept in International Studies have proved to be highly beneficial in my new management role. I now have the ability to draw from these concepts when discussing business strategy with my coworkers. In addition, the study of Apple and Google and determining whether or not they would be a good investment, and acting as a Federal Open Market Committee member in understanding how decisions are made at the Federal Reserve, have given me the ability to engage in discussions to which I would not otherwise have been able to significantly contribute.

- Now that we have graduated, I am left with a group of trusted advisors to draw from – both my classmates and the Millsaps faculty. The faculty is not only there for you during the program, but is also committed to every student’s progress throughout the rest of his or her career.

I learned more than I could possibly relate in this article, but most importantly, my EMBA propelled me into a mindset of ‘wanting to learn and do more’ and not ‘settling for complacency’ and that is why this has been the best investment I have ever made in myself.

Julie Tauzin, National Account Manager, Alcon Surgical. Millsaps College EMBA graduate, 2013.
I chose the Millsaps MBA program for the small class sizes, dedicated faculty, and the diverse background of students that the program attracts. The admissions process could not have been easier and the scholarships offered provided me with the ability to pursue my degree within my own means, both financially and academically. The flexibility of the MBA curriculum allowed me to prepare for the CPA exam while developing skills that go beyond the audit industry as a whole.

I began the MBA program at Millsaps in the summer of 2013. My first class was a seminar in leadership with Dr Ray Grubbs. Throughout the course of the summer class, we focused on identifying leadership qualities through classic film and literature. I quickly recognized the similarities between fiction and real-life in relation to what makes someone a leader. I later used what I had learned from Dr Grubbs and these classic films in many areas of my education here at Millsaps.

Over the course of the program I discovered my individual leadership skills through group work, presentations, written reports and my position as a graduate assistant in the graduate admissions office.

From decision trees with Dr Blakely Fender to the colorful history of accounting with Dr Jesse Beeler, I gathered the necessary skills required of me to fulfill my current position with Ernst & Young. With much help from both my professors and the Else School’s career center, I interviewed with Ernst & Young and accepted my starting position at their San Antonio, Texas office.

I begin my career in August 2014, and while I wait to start my dream job, I am currently studying for the CPA exam. I have not yet transitioned out of ‘school mode’ but obtaining my degree from Millsaps has allowed me to go after my goals, both in my career and personal life.

Two things sum up the benefits of getting my degree here at Millsaps: receiving my MBA and accepting a full-time position at one of the Big Four accounting firms. Millsaps has afforded me the opportunity to pursue my career and develop myself into the kind of leader I learned about in my first class here.

Allie Cortes, Assurance Services Practice, Ernst & Young, U.S. LLP (San Antonio). Millsaps College MBA graduate, 2014.

The Millsaps College MBA: Key Information

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<th>MBA</th>
<th>EMBA</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>12 to 36 months</td>
<td>16 months</td>
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<td><strong>Schedule</strong></td>
<td>Classes meet during the week, in the evening</td>
<td>Classes meet biweekly on weekends</td>
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<td><strong>Entry Requirements</strong></td>
<td>Two years of work experience preferred, none required</td>
<td>Seven years of managerial experience</td>
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<td><strong>Start Dates</strong></td>
<td>Fall, Spring or Summer</td>
<td>January 2016</td>
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<td><strong>Application Deadline</strong></td>
<td>Rolling admission dates</td>
<td>October 15, 2015</td>
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Partnership Focus

Entergy

“The program has exceeded our expectations and the employees who have gone through it have excelled in the workplace.”

Entergy is committed to training our employees and making sure they have the tools they need to get to where they want to be. The Millsaps MBA and EMBA programs are a big part of the career advancement equation, which is apparent when you look at our leadership throughout the state, many of whom are graduates of the program.

The program has exceeded our expectations and the employees who have gone through it have excelled in the workplace.

Entergy Mississippi and Millsaps College have a long history with many of our employees, and many of those in leadership positions are Millsaps alumni. We know when our employees enroll at Millsaps, they are going to receive a quality education and graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to make an impact and be leaders within our organization.

We are also pleased to be a community partner with Millsaps in Jackson and work very closely with their faculty and leadership to help improve the Jackson community and surrounding areas.

The level of education and expertise our employees get from the Millsaps MBA/EMBA program is second to none. The location to Entergy Mississippi’s corporate headquarters is also an added bonus - it allows our employees to maximize their work and study time.

We have been impressed at how well Millsaps prepares our employees for the real world. The faculty goes to great lengths to stay up-to-date with the challenges and needs of business today, and do a great job of not only staying informed but, in many cases, being ahead of those challenges. The courses and instruction encourage student engagement and teamwork scenarios that are consistent with business.

The knowledge and skills gained from those classroom instructions are readily transferrable to the workplace.

The reputation of the Millsaps MBA and EMBA programs, and the weight the diploma carries, is widely known and respected throughout the community, state, region and nation. We know that when our employees successfully complete the program they will be well-prepared to meet the demands of our competitive industry. We believe the Millsaps MBA and EMBA programs are exceptional offerings, and are two of the best programs in the nation.

Haley Fisackerly, CEO of Entergy, MS Inc.

Biography

- Entergy Mississippi, Inc. provides electricity to more than 441,000 customers in 45 counties and employs nearly 2,000 people in the state of Mississippi. The company has invested millions of shareholders’ dollars in improving communities in its service area (more than $2 million given to philanthropy in 2013 and 2014 alone), aided the state in recruiting industry and creating new jobs (helping recruit almost 19,000 jobs since 2002), and been a major economic engine for Mississippi with an estimated $1 billion economic impact to the state. Entergy Mississippi’s partnership with the state of Mississippi has been beneficial to customers for more than 90 years.