Academics

Prestigious, rigorous, and well-rounded, Rice University’s MBA program combines a challenging core curriculum with “cutting edge” elective coursework and practical projects. You’ll hit the ground running at Rice, where the comprehensive core provides a “balance of qualitative and quantitative” material, designed to “expose you to a little bit of everything.” Well planned and executed, “the coordination between classes is incredible; the same day you review a new concept in one class you link it and review it in another one.” After completing the core, students can tailor their education through academic concentrations and fieldwork. Of particular note, Rice has a “strong focus on [the] energy industry,” and “close ties to energy firms in Houston.” In addition, the school’s finance program is “known throughout the south.”

At Rice, the workload is demanding, especially in the first semester. You can expect to spend some quality time in the library; students warn us that “no one can even come close to coasting” through their classes. In particular, the program “moves very fast for someone with no business undergraduate degree.” While challenges are manifold, “The faculty is dynamic, and very willing to help students fully grasp class concepts.” In fact, on the whole, “Professors are warm, approachable, and foster an atmosphere for learning.” With an excellent faculty to student ratio, “Every professor knows every student by name,” professors integrate “teamwork into each class.” A current student concurs, “I chose Rice because I wanted a smaller program where I would be able to get face time with my professors and establish a strong network with my classmates.” In fact, many students describe the school community as a “big family.”

Rice augments traditional classroom instruction with hands-on learning experiences, including the required Action Learning Project in the first year. A student details, “The Action Learning Project is a unique consulting experience that allows us to work with a local company on a project they select. It is a welcome addition to classroom learning, and they often implement our recommendations into their business.” Students can further hone their business education through one of three functional concentrations in accounting, finance, or marketing, or one of five cross-functional industry concentrations in energy, entrepreneurship, global business, management consulting, or mastering creativity and innovation.

If Rice students have one consistent gripe, it is that the school’s national rankings do not accurately convey the caliber of the MBA program. However, they also say the school distinguishes itself through a continuous commitment to improvement. In order to solicit student feedback, the administrators “run surveys and focus groups regularly, ask for feedback and apply suggestions from students.” Overall, faculty, students, and staff are “truly one team working together to constantly improve ourselves and our program.”

Career and Placement

Rice helps students prepare for a career through a range of curricular and extracurricular career development programs. The Career Management Center offers personal counseling, mock interviews, expert speakers, and industry panels. In addition, the Action Learning Project at the end of the first year helps students explore industries and, potentially, secure a job or internship. Strategically located, Rice is “the strongest school in Texas and the Southwest, therefore you have unparalleled access to the energy companies in Houston, the entrepreneurial companies in Austin, and all the other opportunities in this region.” In recent years, more than 75 percent of Rice graduates have taken jobs in the Southwest.
While the business school is small, Rice has a “strong and supportive alumni network,” and “there are a lot of companies in this area that recruit” on campus. Thirty-four percent of graduates took jobs in the Petroleum/energy industry; however, students take jobs in a range of fields and, in recent years, Rice students were recruited and interviewed by such diverse organizations as Amazon.com, Baylor College of Medicine, Citigroup, Deloitte & Touche, ExxonMobil, Lehman Brothers, Northwest Airlines, Toyota, and the Houston Zoo.

Student Life and Environment

Drawing students from a range of industries and backgrounds, Rice excels at “fostering class unity while maintaining class diversity.” To bring students together, the school offers “dinner and beer on our school patio (“the partio”) every Thursday evening, which is a great way to connect with other students.” At these weekly events, “recruiters and alumni speak with students in an informal fashion,” while students mingle with their classmates.

With a highly demanding curriculum, Rice students definitely keep busy; “Monday through Thursday is around-the-clock academics, networking, company presentations, student activities, and job search.” Fortunately, students enjoy the comfort and amenities of the business school building, which offers, “parking underground, wireless everywhere, nice library, [and] plenty of study rooms.”

Students warn us that there is a “tremendous amount of academic pressure and students do tend to worry a bit too much about grades.” However, most are able to maintain a “solid balance between social and academic.” If you can make the time, there are plenty of “academic lectures, competitions, social activities, or intramural games” to take your mind off classes. Of the many student clubs, “The National Association of Women MBAs chapter is particularly strong and holds many activities for the women at the school.”

Admissions

To apply for admission to Rice University, applicants must submit official transcripts of all college-level work, GMAT scores, two letters of recommendation, a current resume, and three personal essays. When evaluating applicants, Rice looks for both qualitative and quantitative skills; however, a strong academic track record is paramount in an admissions decision. There are no minimum GMAT or GPA scores required for admission. The mid-50% GMAT range is 630 to 710, though a high score does not guarantee admission, just as a low score does not prohibit it.