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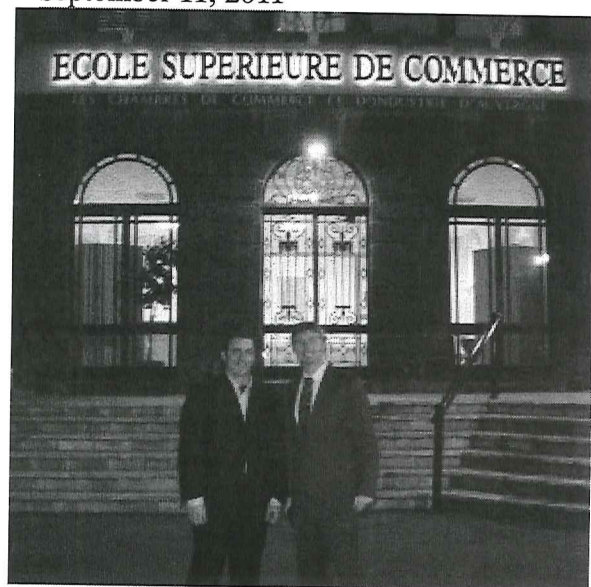
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Alphabet Soup or a Worthwhile Pursuit? KU's JD/MBA Program Demystified

What is KLFP?

Kansas Law Free Press is the student-run newspaper of the University of Kansas School of Law.

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During spring break of 2010, Matt Kincaid studied abroad at the renowned ESC Graduate School of Management in Clermont-Ferrand, France.

Most of you have undoubtedly heard of the JD/MBA program, and some of you have probably even considered applying for it. For those who haven't, let me explain it in a couple of sentences. The JD/MBA program is a combined study of law and business administration: it condenses a three year law degree (JD) and a two year graduate business degree (MBA) into a four year adventure. A JD/MBA student is a student of both the graduate school of business and the school of law.

With this brief background in mind, let's take a further look into KU's JD/MBA program by breaking down its positives and negatives. As the only person to be admitted and enrolled in the JD/MBA program from KU Law's entering class of 2008, I can assure you that this article is written by the foremost expert on the matter.

KLFP is about new things, big ideas, awkwardness, intellectual diversity, refinement, and getting to the point. It's dedicated to informing, inspiring, and entertaining the students, faculty, and administration at KU as well as the community at large.

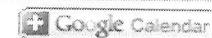
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University of Kansas Student Bar Association

December 2013 Week Month Agenda

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Dec 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	Jan 1	2	3
4						



Polls

The Good

Obvious Benefits

1. Shortened duration: A person is able to earn two prestigious degrees in one year less than he or she would otherwise earn the degrees separately.
2. Synergistic disciplines: The student is indoctrinated in the basics of two fields which will assuredly overlap at some point in his or her career.
3. Multiple career options: The student will have developed the KSA's (fancy business school term for knowledge, skills, and abilities) to function as a successful lawyer, manager, executive, or entrepreneur.



Matt Kincaid studied abroad in San Jose, Costa Rica, at the University of Costa Rica during winter break of 2011.

Not-so-obvious Benefits

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1. Additional summer internship/clerkship opportunity: The three year law degree provides the student with two opportunities to gain experience whereas the JD/MBA provides three. This has been one of the most significant benefits for yours truly, having taken the first summer to work at the (former) Wirken Law Group on a number of cases, including the nationally publicized ones regarding former Mayor of Kansas City, Missouri, Mark Funkhouser; the second summer to be a graduate teaching assistant for the MBA program's Organizational Behavior course, complete the law school's Professional Responsibility course and pass its corresponding MPRE exam; and the third summer to join Martin, Pringle, Oliver, Wallace & Bauer as a summer associate.
2. Increased study abroad potential: The business school offers more convenient opportunities to study abroad. During spring break of 2010, I studied abroad at the renowned ESC Graduate School of Management in Clermont-Ferrand, France. During winter break of 2011, I studied abroad in San Jose, Costa Rica at the country's flagship educational institution: the University of Costa Rica.
3. Enhanced networking and school provided services: The law school has a great network of alums and a career service office that is willing to help in the pursuit of your career. The business school does as well. As a student of both schools, I am able to tap into both networks and both career services offices. Additionally, as most career savvy students know, professors are willing to assist in the job hunt. It doesn't hurt to be able to get career advice from business professors in addition to law ones.

Surprising Benefits

1. Enhanced remuneration: Although salary data, especially for uniquely compensated individuals, often remains hidden from the public eye, there are a number of law firms that give considerable signing bonuses to JD/MBA grads. Some firms, instead of providing signing bonuses, start the newly minted JD/MBA as a second year associate. This results in a higher salary, but, more importantly, cuts one year off the partner track.



Kincaid met Warren Buffett during a business school trip to Berkshire Hathaway.

1. Practical career opportunities: The business school may be more practical when it comes to career placement. Several different “treks” are scheduled during the school year through which students can actually visit the job sites of prospective future employers. I have personally visited the headquarters of UMB, Intouch Solutions, MarketSphere Consulting, and Berkshire Hathaway through different treks. Not only can the student visit the physical location of the company, but he also has the occasion to meet with the company’s executives. KU’s most famous trek is to Berkshire Hathaway to meet the Oracle of Omaha himself, Warren Buffett. I was selected to go on this trek in the fall of 2009 where I had the honor of sitting two seats away from Mr. Buffett at his favorite restaurant.

The Bad

Are you totally sold on the program yet? Don’t make up your mind until you read this next section.

Obvious Negatives

1. Time: Compared to a three year law degree, it doesn't (from the outside looking in) appear to be that much more of a time commitment. Appearances can be deceiving. My friends from the entering class of 2008 have graduated (and I sincerely hope passed the bar exam) and moved on with their lives. I'm still taking classes.
2. Cost: Graduate business school tuition is about the same price as law school tuition. I've been fortunate enough to be the recipient of a few small scholarships, but I'm certainly not on a full ride. Broadening the expense analysis, business school teaches you to evaluate each decision's opportunity cost—the forgone benefit an alternative decision would have provided. For some, this could be a six figure salary.
3. Difficulty: Yes, there are some difficult courses in the MBA program. Corporate finance—a required course regardless of the student's interest in such field—has been notoriously difficult for decades. Statistics, macroeconomics, and financial accounting have been known to cause students anxiety as well.

Not-so-obvious Negatives

1. Increased required courses in the law school: Take a look at the required course list for the traditional JD program. Nowhere in this list will you find Business Associations, Business Associations II, Payment Systems, Federal Income Tax, Taxation of Business Enterprises, or a grouping of courses from which you must select two. These are mandatory in the JD/MBA program. Note too that these courses are some of the most difficult the law school has to offer.
2. Required admission to both schools: Remember how much fun you had taking the LSAT, finding the best people to write letters of recommendation, composing personal statements, etc.? Practically the same things are required for KU's MBA program. I had to take the GMAT, write several essays, find recommenders, etc., for the business school as well.
3. Scheduling and administrivia: It's hard enough trying to map out the perfect schedule when you are in just one school. It's even harder when you have to do it for two schools, especially when there isn't a specific JD/MBA advisor to assist you in this process. Not only do you have to worry about scheduling, but you also have to make sure you comply with each school's directives. For example, the schools have different start and end times for classes, different final exam periods, different attendance and meeting policies as well as different classroom expectations and types of assignments.

Surprising Negatives

1. Lower law school GPA: With the increased number of required courses and the decreased amount of hours available for elective courses, JD/MBA students are at a disadvantage when it comes to elevating their law school GPA's. As most of you all know, the school has a policy that requires each class in the first year of law school to fall within a certain GPA range and a similar policy that requires some upper level courses to fall within a certain GPA range. Almost every single one of my courses will fall within the school's mandatory curve policy. In a comparative grading system, this puts JD/MBA students at a competitive disadvantage against traditional JD students.
2. Falling prey to the nonsensical myth: There is a misconception that a person can only use his or her JD or MBA. You will potentially be burdened with the task of explaining to your colleagues and prospective employers that it is possible to use both at once.

Does The Good Outweigh The Bad?

In my opinion, the good definitely outweighs the bad. After all, I wouldn't be in the program if I thought differently. The benefit of having an extra summer to gain experience and further hone your skills cannot be over appreciated. The dual networks into which you tap and of which you become a part are worth every bit of the pain it takes to be admitted and deal with the administrivia of both schools. The additional year and a handful of very strenuous courses is a small price to pay for a lifetime of additional opportunities and understanding; besides, the opportunity cost of earning an additional year's salary is partially offset by a signing bonus or other comparable compensation.

You're just going to have to bite the bullet when it comes to the lower law school GPA and the increase in required law courses. Spending time with Warren Buffett and studying abroad in France and Costa Rica were almost invaluable experiences. The additional year of education sets you apart from your peers, and I have yet to work for a person or organization that doesn't appreciate it.

Matt Kincaid is KU's one and only 4th year JD/MBA student

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1. *Dee*

Posted [September 14, 2011 at 9:11 AM](#)

Thank you for providing this valuable insight, Matt. I'm pleased that your experience has been positive, but more importantly, I am pleased that you speak from the heart. Your advice will be well received by those considering this joint degree. You are a pleasure to work with as an MBA student. I am proud of you. -Dee (your MBA Advisor)

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