

Degrees of Change

From AI and analytics to health care management and human-centered leadership, Florida's MBA programs are evolving – reshaping how future executives learn, lead and contribute to their communities.

BY LORI CAPULLO

Florida's business landscape is evolving rapidly, and the state's MBA programs are evolving with it. From new concentrations in health care leadership and human resources to data analytics, cybersecurity and brand strategy, schools are reshaping their curricula to meet the demands of a changing economy and an increasingly complex global marketplace.

As employers seek leaders who can balance analytical rigor with strategic vision, empathy with innovation, and ethical judgment with technological fluency, these programs are stepping up offerings for professionals at every stage of their careers.

This year, **FLORIDA TREND** spotlights more than a dozen MBA programs that exemplify this dynamic. Many institutions are unveiling specialized tracks that reflect workforce trends – such as business analytics, fintech integration and purpose-driven leadership – while others are expanding experiential and global learning opportunities. Several universities are also strengthening ties between academia and industry through cutting-edge research, interdisciplinary collaboration and strategic partnerships.

For prospective students, these developments translate into degrees that offer more than another credential on their resumes. They promise practical skills, expanded professional networks and career pathways in sectors ranging from health care to technology to finance to international business. At the same time, these programs are producing leaders who will contribute not only to corporate success but also to community resilience, innovation ecosystems and economic growth.





Uncoding Leadership

How one MBA professor uses design thinking and real-world discovery to challenge convention and prepare students to lead.

At Rollins College's Roy E. Crummer Graduate School of Business, Keenan Yoho, professor of operations management, approaches MBA education with a deliberately contrarian mindset. "A central question I ask myself," he says, "is what can I do well that does not scale?"

For Yoho, Rollins' small size is a strategic advantage — one that allows for rich, hands-on learning experiences designed for cohorts of 30 students or fewer. That philosophy is embedded in the MBA curriculum, beginning with design thinking, which Rollins was among the first MBA programs in the

Keenan Yoho, professor of operations management at Rollins College, finds the college's small size to be a strategic advantage.

U.S. to make a core requirement. Yoho describes it as a disciplined process of “problem framing, customer discovery, solution discovery, prototyping — ‘building to think’ — and rapid iteration.” He blends design thinking with quality function deployment and design-for-six-sigma methodologies to give students “a repeatable way to design new products, services and experiences they can use immediately.”

Experiential learning extends beyond the classroom. Executive MBA students participate in site visits to organizations such as Amazon, Beep, HP, Dallara and Giusti. These are not casual tours, Yoho emphasizes. “I design purposeful contrast,” he says — placing students inside vastly different operating models to explore trade-offs between speed and precision, centralization and autonomy, or time-as-an-asset versus velocity at scale.

Global immersion, particularly in Italy, further reshapes how students think about innovation and longevity. Milan, Yoho notes, is “a highly cultivated and curated city where design, industry and brand-building coexist over centuries.”

Why does an MBA still matter in 2026? Because leadership, Yoho points out, is not automated. “We haven’t arrived at a place where a leader’s responsibility to choose, commit and align people around a direction disappears,” he says. “That’s exactly the capability we’re developing at Crummer.”



MBA students at Rollins College travel to Italy to expand their perspectives on innovation and longevity.



University of Florida's Warrington College of Business Professor Liangfei Qiu

AI Insights

UF business professor Liangfei Qiu's research suggests AI will have a big impact on jobs — though not in the ways most people assume.

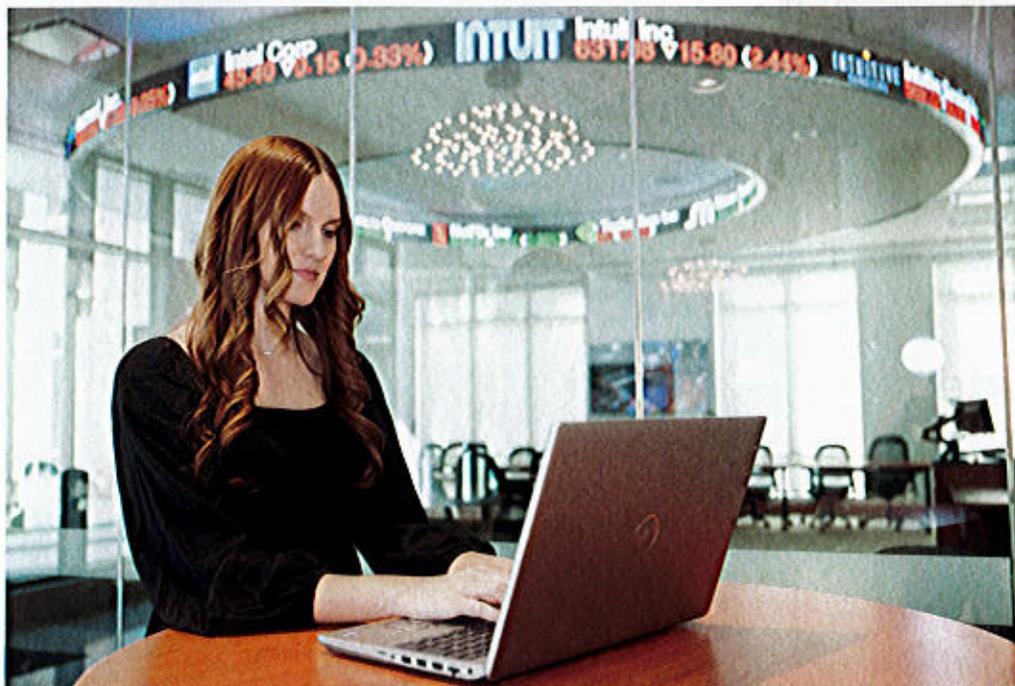
At the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business, Professor Liangfei Qiu's research sits at the intersection of AI, fintech, social platforms and telecommunications — but, as he puts it, it all comes back to one core question: “How does technology change the way people behave?”

Methodologically, Qiu combines large-scale platform data with econometrics, machine learning and experimental design to identify causal effects, not just correlations. “I like to start from an economic or behavioral model and then test it using real platform data, usually at a very large scale,” he says. One of his most surprising findings is that technologies designed to increase participation can actually narrow it. Studying Quora, his team found that while generative AI answers encouraged more users to contribute, “the platform ends up with fewer diverse ideas.” Similar dynamics appear across fintech and social platforms, where visibility tools and social comparison can unintentionally reduce performance.

That insight carries over to the debate around AI and jobs. While fears of widespread displacement persist, Qiu's work suggests a more nuanced reality. “What we're seeing in the data looks more like a reallocation of human effort rather than simple displacement,” he says. Routine, repetitive tasks are most exposed, while judgment-intensive and creative work tends to be augmented. The bigger risk, he argues, is not job loss but “that human expertise becomes underdeveloped if organizations rely too heavily on automation.”

In the classroom, Qiu builds these ideas directly into MBA coursework. Students analyze real platform data, run experiments and are encouraged to use AI tools while being graded on interpretation and judgment rather than output alone. “The goal isn't to teach them to compete with AI,” he says. “It's to teach them how to supervise it, question it and design around it.”

For MBA students worried about resilience, Qiu's advice is blunt: “Don't compete against AI. Compete on top of AI.” Employers, he notes, are looking for graduates who can blend technical fluency with business judgment — skills that, when paired thoughtfully, are far harder to automate.



FSU MBA student Edén Wahlquist is specializing in health care management. Starting this fall, the Herbert Wertheim College of Business will offer a new online MBA major dedicated to health care administration.

Market Ready

Florida State University's MBA programs are evolving in step with a rapidly changing economy, launching new concentrations designed to meet emerging industry demands — particularly in health care and finance.

According to Darren Brooks, assistant department chair, senior lecturer and MBA program coordinator, FSU's MBA leadership continually scans the business landscape to identify gaps where graduate education must adapt. "We're in a transformational period," he says, noting how technology, shifting workforce needs and industry disruption are reshaping every sector. Rather than isolating trends like artificial intelligence into stand-alone coursework, FSU embeds them directly into business disciplines where they have the most impact — from finance and HR to health care and operations.

One of the college's newest offerings reflects that philosophy. In fall 2025, FSU launched an MBA major in alternative investments, responding to rapid growth in nontraditional asset classes such as private equity, real estate, data centers, private lending, art and wine. Brooks notes that alternative investments are projected to account for nearly a quarter of the investment market within the next several years. The program has already expanded into executive education, with courses offered in West Palm Beach as South Florida continues to emerge as one of the

From health care to finance, FSU is adapting its MBA curriculum to align with today's business needs.

state's leading financial services hubs.

This fall, FSU will debut an online MBA major in health care administration driven by both market demand and the university's broader push into health care research and infrastructure. The new major blends traditional MBA fundamentals with health care-specific coursework in finance, risk management, law and human resources, while emphasizing leadership, communication and decision-making in high-stakes environments. Designed for working professionals — including clinicians moving into administrative roles — the program reflects FSU's broader MBA approach: rigorous academics paired with experiential learning, industry engagement and leadership development.

With health care now representing more than \$5 trillion of U.S. GDP and employing roughly one in seven American workers, it's one of the country's most complex and economically significant industries. As Brooks says, "You cannot separate health care from economics, public policy, workforce strategy and leadership. Our goal is to prepare business leaders who can navigate complexity — and lead through it."

Cultivating Space Leaders

The UCF Space MBA aims to equip engineers, scientists and others with the management skills to lead complex space programs.

At the University of Central Florida, the intersection of business and space is taking off. Greg Autry, UCF's associate provost for space commercialization and strategy, has spent more than two decades studying the commercial space industry. "I was a serial technology entrepreneur when I went and got my MBA at the University of California, Irvine," he explains. "I began to study the nascent commercial space industry as a context for entrepreneurship research back in 2002." His experience spans teaching at USC and Arizona State, contributing to U.S. space policy, and consulting with major space enterprises.

The UCF Space MBA is designed to equip scientists, engineers and professionals with the management skills necessary to lead complex programs. Autry notes, "All too often, these engineers and scientists suddenly (manage) a \$1.2-billion NASA program, and they have no financial training. They don't know anything about accounting. They've never had a leadership class or a project management class." UCF's program provides a full professional MBA curriculum — marketing, finance, accounting and more — delivered online and asynchronously, to meet the needs of working space professionals worldwide. "We want an asynchronous, online solution ... but they're going to be studying marketing, finance and accounting in the context of space," Autry says.

Students gain unique experiential opportunities with top-tier guest speakers,



Students in UCF's Space MBA program are studying marketing, finance and accounting in the context of space as well as learning management skills.



Greg Autry, UCF's associate provost for space commercialization and strategy.

including CEOs, NASA leaders and Space Force officials. "Our finance class is taught by someone who ran NASA's \$26-billion budget for two of the last five years," he notes. Space law, policy and entrepreneurship courses draw on real-world cases, allowing students to tackle challenges faced by companies led by Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and others.

Reflecting on the broader impact, Autry says, "Outside of space, there's nothing I would recommend to a young engineer more than getting an MBA. Having those skills makes all the difference in the world." UCF's Space MBA cultivates leaders who can navigate both technical and managerial challenges, preparing graduates to excel in government, industry and beyond.