



GAIN EMPLOYER SUPPORT FOR YOUR ONLINE MBA

Pursuing an MBA can be of tremendous benefit to both you and your organization. Whether you work at a multinational corporation or a local nonprofit, being aligned with your employer is an important step to ensure your success in the classroom and at work. Although gaining employer support isn't generally required for pursuing an online MBA program, it can be very helpful.

This guide will help you prepare for important discussions with your employer about the value that an MBA brings to your career and your company. You'll feel confident making the case for their support, which can come in many forms.

KEY ACTIONS (Click to navigate)

- Do your research
- Prepare your proposal
- Detail the logistics
- Present your proposal
- Follow up



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Business School**

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DO YOUR RESEARCH

Before you dive into discussions with your employer to gain their support for your Online MBA journey, it's important to research the opportunities available within your organization.

Many companies provide financial support for their employees to pursue additional education – and encourage employees to do so. If you know other colleagues who have leveraged this benefit, talk to them about their approach and agreement. If not, contact HR or your supervisor to learn about the opportunities for support – financial or otherwise – available to you.

It is also important to research and understand your company's goals, values and strategic plans. This will allow you to highlight how the skills you'll develop and sharpen as an MBA student will contribute to the future success of your organization.

“My MBA helps alleviate any imposter syndrome I may have because I know I have the skills and exposure to contribute to conversations [with senior executives].”

Mitch Goulding, Head/Senior Director, Communications, Cart.com, MBA '23



PREPARE YOUR PROPOSAL

HIGHLIGHT MUTUAL BENEFITS

UNC Kenan-Flagler students participate in at least one Summit during their time in the program. These in-person intensive learning experiences, offered quarterly, expose you to new cultures and ideas, immerse you in global business hubs and give you the chance to form strong relationships with business leaders, faculty and fellow students over a three-day weekend either internationally or on-campus in Chapel Hill.

“I’m grateful for the remarkable MBA colleagues who challenged me daily to think differently and innovatively. Surrounding yourself with individuals who are smarter, wiser and different from you is a powerful catalyst for personal and professional growth. It has unquestionably fueled my journey as a business professional and as a person.”

Christina Kerns, Contracts Manager, Thales Defense & Security, Inc.,
MBA '23



An MBA is an investment in both you and your organization’s future. Mutual benefits for you and your employer include:

IMMEDIATE PAYOFF.

Your Online MBA coursework will allow you to implement new knowledge and cutting-edge concepts within your workplace immediately. UNC Kenan-Flagler Online MBA students tout that they **apply lessons learned in the classroom** to business problems they’re currently facing as soon as the next day.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.

Your employer will directly benefit from the **comprehensive enhancement of your professional strengths and leadership style**, including workshops, unlimited career coaching and leadership assessments. Additionally, you will hone your management skills and explore various leadership approaches in the safe and immersive learning environment of the virtual MBA classroom.

A SMART, ENGAGED NETWORK.

Your newly expanded network — fellow students, professors, and alumni — means **additional people to tap into for problem-solving, brainstorming and business development**. During synchronous class sessions, Online MBA students address current organizational challenges and work projects as case studies in management and leadership (without disclosing confidential information or trade secrets).

MINIMAL DISRUPTION TO YOUR SCHEDULE.

At UNC Kenan-Flagler, you’ll continue to meet expectations in your current role by pursuing an MBA that is designed for working professionals. With the flexibility of the Online MBA format, business professionals are able to **pursue this transformational degree without major impact or sacrifices to regular work schedules and commitments, from anywhere in the country or world.**



SHOWCASE LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

As you discuss the mutual benefit of an MBA for you and your employer, it is important to demonstrate your commitment to the organization. After all, they are investing in your success!

Demonstrate your commitment to the organization by assuring your employer that you plan to remain with your company after completing your MBA. You'll want to highlight how the enhanced skills and strategic perspective you acquire will be valuable to the company in the long-term. Consider the following:

- What qualities make you a good candidate for this substantial investment of support?
- How have you demonstrated that you're able to take on larger and long-term commitments?
- How have you proven yourself so far?
- How will you meet the demands of your current position while you are in school?
- How do you anticipate the skills you acquire will directly apply to your current role and future leadership positions in the organization?

After considering these questions, it's equally important to think about your own timeline. How does the Online MBA prepare you for opportunities for growth in your organization? Be ready to answer this question as you begin discussions.

EMPHASIZE TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

In your discussions, it is helpful to **illustrate how the skills you'll acquire from the Online MBA will directly apply to your current role and future leadership positions within your company.** Additionally, emphasize how you will contribute to the company's strategic objectives and long-term goals.

The innovative and relevant curriculum at UNC Kenan-Flagler will lead to improved decision-making skills, new leadership abilities and improved business acumen. **By tailoring your Online MBA through a wide range of electives, one of our optional academic concentrations, and the Leadership Academy Certificate,** you'll bring insight and expertise back to the office that is aligned to your role and industry.

"I chose the Online MBA to transform my career without losing momentum in biopharma. The program gave me the perfect path without having to step away and become detached from the industry. I could immediately test operations frameworks in real-world contexts while maintaining my day job."

Lisa Park, Bristol Myers Squibb GPS Emerging Leaders Program, MBA '25

DETAIL THE LOGISTICS

When pursuing any form of organizational support, make sure you are familiar with the expectations for Online MBA students, and then consider the ways your employer may be able to support your success.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

If you are seeking financial support, **come prepared with a clear financial plan**. You can do so by exploring options such as employer sponsorship, tuition reimbursement or reimbursing other additional costs (like study materials or global program experiences). If you know other colleagues who have pursued financial assistance for a degree, talk to them about their approach.

Most tuition assistance programs include a contract or agreement between you and your employer. If your organization does not have one, create a sample of what you think should be part of the agreement, such as:

- How long you will remain with the organization after completing the degree
- How and when funds will be paid or reimbursed
- How much you need in assistance
- Role-specific course or skills-development requirements

Many Online MBA candidates receive at least some financial assistance from their employer. Here are some tips on how to discuss the numbers:

- Note that tuition contributions may be largely tax deductible for your employer.
- Structure your sponsorship request based on annual financial requirements, not as one lump sum. If the program stretches across multiple fiscal years, ask for an amount per year, which may translate better for budget forecasts.
- If you are seeking a partial financial contribution from your employer, be explicit with the amount you will be required to pay to put the overall cost in perspective.
- Consider other financial means your employer can support your Online MBA – such as travel costs or books and supplies – instead of covering tuition in full.

SCHEDULE ADJUSTMENTS

Although **UNC Kenan-Flagler's Online MBA program is intentionally designed for busy working professionals**, minimizing the need for you to rearrange your work or personal commitments, you can propose workload modifications in your discussions with your employer. Be sure to showcase how this modification will be temporary and highlight the measures in place to maintain your productivity.

“As I got halfway through the Online MBA program, I became deeply interested in obtaining a strategic operations role after taking a few courses covering this area. Fortunately, a role in the COO’s office became available, and I was hired. This role combines my past change management experiences with my new strategic operations skill set. It’s a big step in my career.”

jasmin Randle, Global Delivery Change Leader, Salesforce Inc., MBA '25





PRESENT YOUR PROPOSAL AND FINALIZE YOUR AGREEMENT

As you're preparing for your conversation, you should be able to anticipate objections or concerns from your employer. Consider some questions and thoughts that your employer may pose:

- Will this degree take time away from your work?
- What makes this program worth the cost?
- Do you plan to stay with this organization?
- Why do you need this degree?

It is important to **be transparent** and provide as much information as possible to your employer as you discuss your needs and what specific support you're seeking. By anticipating these concerns and preparing responses, you'll be able to have a productive and beneficial conversation.

FOLLOW UP AND FOLLOW THROUGH

Once you receive approval for your plan, be sure to follow through. Along with meeting expectations in the classroom and at work, it's important to **keep key individuals in your organization informed about your progress, the new skills you've acquired and how the degree is positively impacting your contributions at work.**

Consider having regular meetings with your supervisor or other stakeholders throughout your Online MBA experience. Discuss takeaways from your program experience, such as:

- How classroom concepts can be applied to current challenges and opportunities faced by your organization.
- Whether your organization has timely project needs or issues that would benefit from the perspective of your new network — expert faculty and members of your cohort.
- How to test and apply leadership skills and business frameworks that you've learned in the program.

WHY UNC KENAN-FLAGLER

There's no doubt an MBA will positively impact your career and greatly benefit your employer, but choosing a program comes with many factors to consider. **The UNC Kenan-Flagler MBA is top-ranked, providing outstanding value and ROI that you'll leverage throughout your career.**



“What I learn in class today, I apply to my work tomorrow – from leadership skills to strategic planning. So, in addition to earning credits at school, I am also earning credit at work. I’m already a better manager, with a deeper impact on the success of my company.”

Rajiv Sridhar, Product Lead, Airbnb, MBA '14

SMALL, INTENTIONALLY

The UNC Kenan-Flagler Online MBA is built to foster meaningful collaboration. Through small, weekly live classes, and other intentionally-designed programming, you'll **engage in informed discussions that shift your perspective and build strong bonds with classmates**. Your accomplished, driven classmates will become your greatest cheerleaders and provide priceless connections to future professional opportunities.

NETWORKING BEYOND YOUR COHORT

There is incredible value in developing a strong, widely diverse professional network. UNC Kenan-Flagler Online MBA students **collaborate with peers through live, weekly class sessions online and group projects, as well as form deep connections during in-person Summits** and other [experiential learning opportunities](#), such as the STAR program. In addition, you'll be able to leverage the support of more than 46,000 UNC Kenan-Flagler alumni, who are eager to share their experience and provide insight to any Tar Heel who needs a hand.

CONNECT WITH UNC KENAN-FLAGLER

An MBA has immense benefits for your career as well as your employer's bottom line. As you consider an Online MBA and navigate discussions with key stakeholders at your organization, don't hesitate to reach out to our dedicated Admissions staff at admissions@onlinebusiness.unc.edu any time.

TAILOR MADE

The Online MBA program is intentionally designed to allow working professionals to earn a UNC Kenan-Flagler MBA with minimal interruption to your busy work schedule and personal commitments. You'll have the opportunity to earn your MBA from anywhere in the country or the world. You'll also have access to electives offered in our on-campus MBA programs, as well as optional leadership programming throughout the year.

Additionally, **UNC Kenan-Flagler offers 6 concentration options and dozens of electives so that you can maximize the impact of your investment**. These customization options will take the foundational business concepts learned in your first year of coursework and build upon them in a direction unique to your current role, interests and career goals.

You'll personalize your journey through opportunities that include:

- 6 concentration options: focus on a specific discipline that aligns to your professional path.
- Dozens of electives: build on your core coursework by developing knowledge and skills customized to your current role, interests and career goals.
- The *Leading with Impact* series: participate in cutting-edge, hands-on leadership programming that addresses the key skills employers expect from future leaders.
- Earn the Leadership Academy Certificate: earn an additional credential on your path to the MBA with leadership coursework that counts towards your degree.