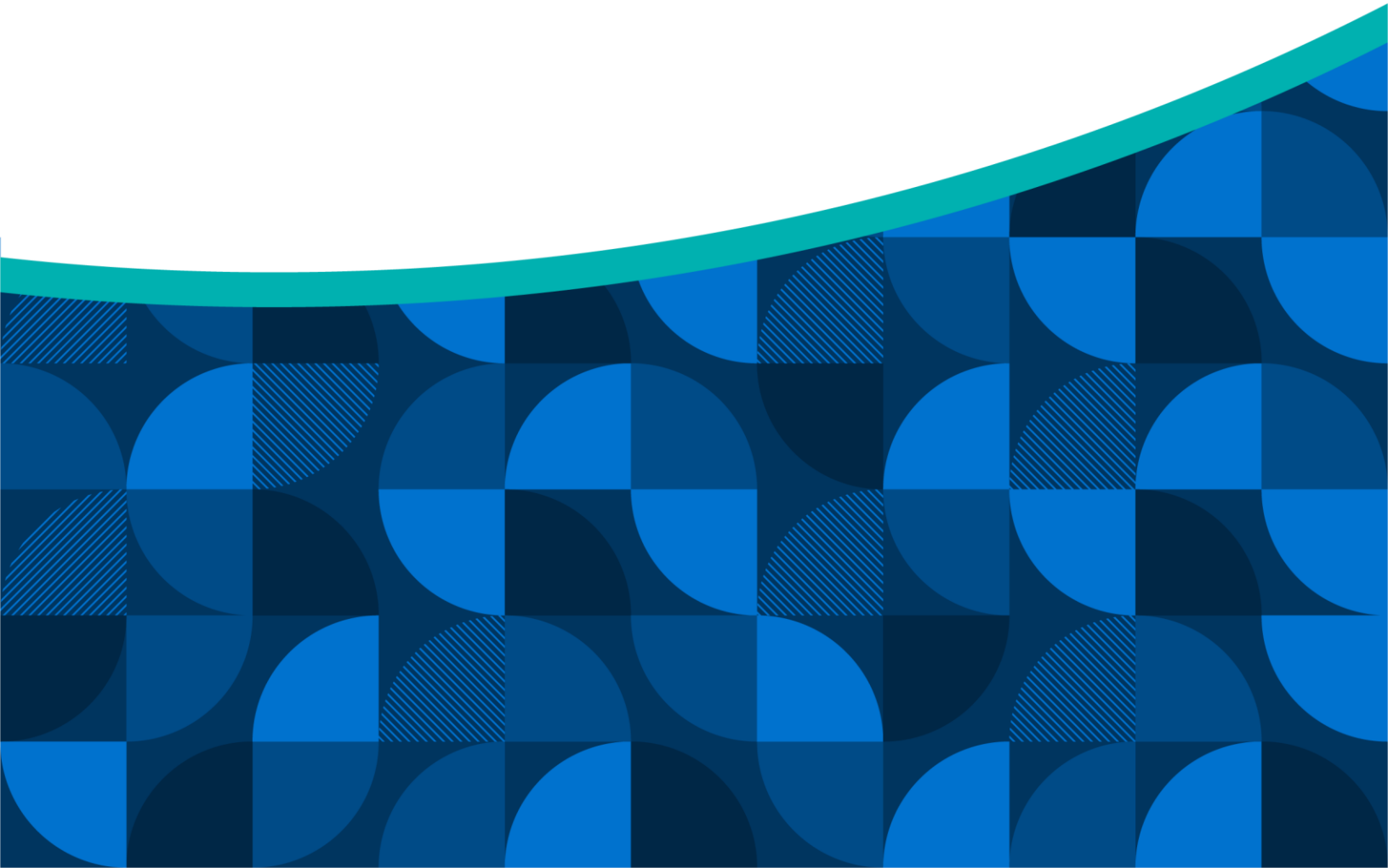




EAB MARKET INSIGHTS

Feasibility of a Business Administration Microcredential

Microcredential Feasibility Study
Completed July 2024



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Report Introduction and Table of Contents

This report assesses a new microcredential’s potential to attract students successfully, based on market demand. Further, it addresses how to position the microcredential to confer in-demand skills and serve prospective students.

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Defining a Microcredential



Institutions apply a variety of names to programs this report broadly considers as “microcredentials”. A microcredential is a codification of a package of learning smaller than the amount required for a traditional credential (e.g., degree) and designed around a specific skill or competency (rather than an entire body of knowledge).

Executive Overview



The University requested a microcredential MBA report to identify opportunities for microcredential development from the Master of Business Administration.

Analysis Includes:

- Job Posting Trends
- Top Occupations
- Top Titles
- Top Skills
- Top Employers
- Top Cities
- Education and Experience Levels
- Skills Analysis
- Curriculum Analysis

This analysis considered demand in:

- Pennsylvania,
- New York, and
- New Jersey.

Labor Market Analysis

Regional labor market trends suggest a competitive labor market despite a high number of relevant job postings¹. Between July 2023 and June 2024, regional employers advertised a high number of job postings for bachelor's- and master's-level business administration professionals (405,237 postings). Between July 2021 and June 2024, relevant employer demand decreased at a faster rate than employer demand for all bachelor's- and master's-level professionals (-1.26% compared to -1.07%, respectively). This suggests an increasingly competitive market. However, regional employment is projected to increase faster than average in four of the top five most relevant occupations across 2024-2034, indicating employment opportunities for graduates will likely increase in the coming years.

The labor market shows a need for positions such as Accountants, Financial Analysts, Account Executives, Relationship Bankers, and Human Resources Managers.

In-Demand Skills Analysis

Include Master of Business Administration coursework such as finance and accounting content in potential microcredentials to meet employer demand and prepare students for the labor market.

Employers seek skills within:

- Project and product management
- Finance and economics (e.g., financial statements)
- Accounting skills (e.g., auditing)

Courses such as Project Management, Financial Accounting, Economics of Business, Managerial Finance, Financial Statement Analysis, and Accounting Analytics can teach students these skills.

Additionally, address in-demand skills within:

- Business process and operations (e.g., strategic planning, performance management)
- Supply chain management (e.g., supply chain, purchasing)
- Risk and change management (e.g., risk management).

Courses including Strategic Management, Operations and Supply Chain, Supply Chain Management, and Operational Risk align with these in-demand skills. Consider including these existing courses in potential microcredentials.

Confer in-demand computer science skills with potential microcredentials to prepare graduates for the labor market. Across July 2021 and June 2024, employers increasingly sought computer science skills (e.g., automation, SQL). Consider incorporating these skills into potential microcredentials to prepare students for the labor market. For example, the University of Albany's [Essential Tableau Skills microcredential](#) and Hudson Valley Community College's [Advanced Data Analytics microcredential](#).

¹) We assessed demand for bachelor's- and master's-level business administration professionals with relevant skills (e.g., business process, financial management) to approximate demand for students who complete a microcredential with this skill focus.

Executive Overview (cont.)

Next Steps from this Program Analysis

Consider scaling your microcredential through an employer partnership; best practices for this process appear on [page 18](#)

- Leverage labor market intelligence to identify and motivate potential employer partners.
- Utilize the skills assessment in this report to take a more strategic approach to partnership development.
- Ensure buy-in from employer partners by splitting the cost of program development.
- Establish contracts with employers guaranteeing adequate enrollment to cover development costs.
- Meet employer needs while minimizing the creation of custom content.

Additional EAB resources for launching microcredentials appear on [page 19](#)

- Align microcredentials to market demand to ensure financially viable programs.
- Socialize microcredentials with a roadshow to help gain faculty support.
- Make sunseting microcredentials the default option to ensure limited financial resources are spent on successful programs.

Labor Market Intelligence

Regional Analysis of Job Postings for Bachelor's- and Master's-Level Business Administration Professionals

In the last 12 months, regional employers advertised a high number of job postings for bachelor's- and master's-level business administration professionals (405,237). Between July 2021 and June 2024, relevant employer demand decreased at a faster rate than employer demand for all bachelor's- and master's-level professionals (1.26% compared to 1.07%, respectively). The relevant regional employer demand decline percentage represents an average monthly decline of 1,528 job postings. These trends suggest an increasingly competitive market. Administrators should note, however, this decline aligns with trends for all regional bachelor's- and master's-level postings during this period and may not be industry-specific.

-1.26%

Average Monthly Demand Decline

July 2021 - June 2024, Regional Data

- Average monthly decline of 1,528 job postings.
- During the same period, demand for all bachelor's- and master's professionals declined -1.07%.

104,553 postings

Average Monthly Demand

July 2021 - June 2024, Regional Data

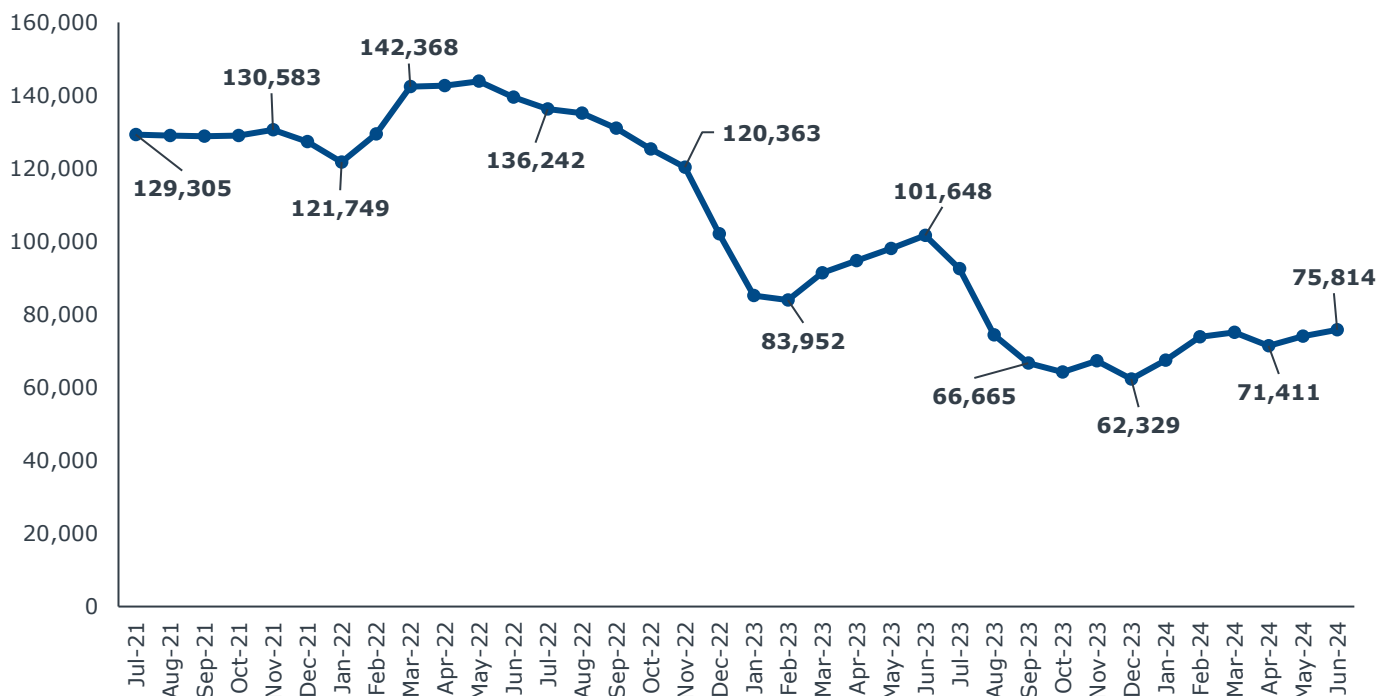
405,237 postings

Relevant Jobs Posted in the Past Year

July 2023 - June 2024, Regional Data

Job Postings for Master of Business Administration Professionals

July 2021 - June 2024, Regional Data



Source: EAB analysis. Lightcast.

Regional Analysis of Job Postings and Future Employment for Business Administration Professionals

Regional employment is projected to increase faster than average in four of the top five most relevant occupations across 2024-2034. This indicates employment opportunities for graduates will likely increase in the coming years.

Administrators should note, the projections for occupational categories are not necessarily for jobs specifically seeking bachelor's- and master's-level business administration professionals with relevant skills. Instead, projections provide insight into expected growth for occupational categories where graduates with relevant skills may find employment.

Top Occupations Across Job Postings for Master of Business Administration Professionals

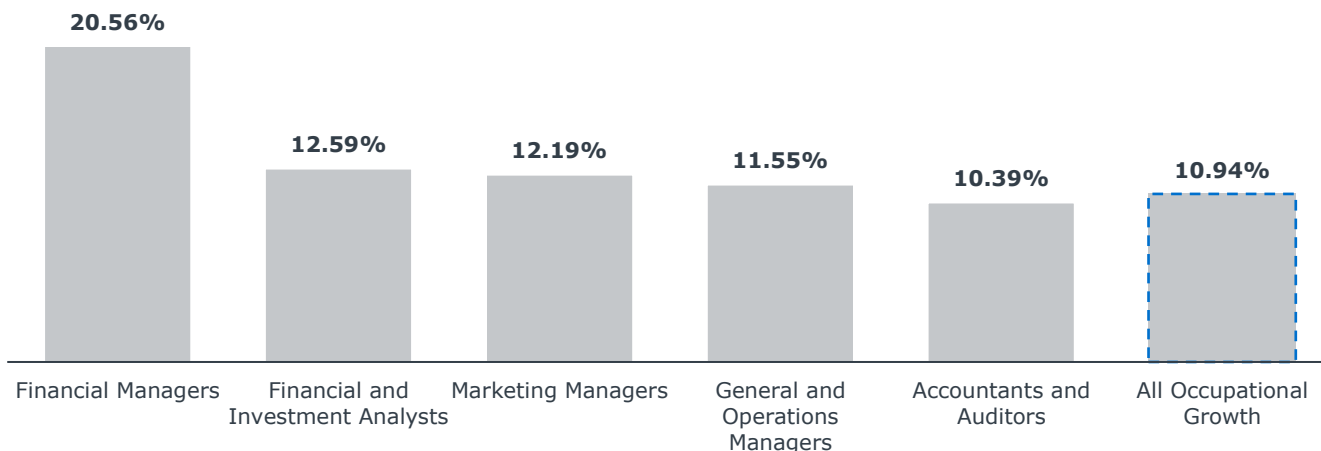
July 2023 - June 2024, Regional Data

n = 405,237 job postings

Occupation	Percent of Relevant Job Postings within Occupation	Number of Relevant Job Postings within Occupation
Financial Managers	6.75%	27,368
Accountants and Auditors	5.47%	22,185
Marketing Managers	4.83%	19,591
General and Operations Managers	4.30%	17,438
Financial and Investment Analysts	4.19%	16,990
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	3.87%	15,689
Sales Managers	3.78%	15,327
Computer Occupations, All Other	3.55%	14,404
Project Management Specialists	3.08%	12,469
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	2.69%	10,917

Projected Employment in Top Occupations¹

2024 - 2034, Regional Data



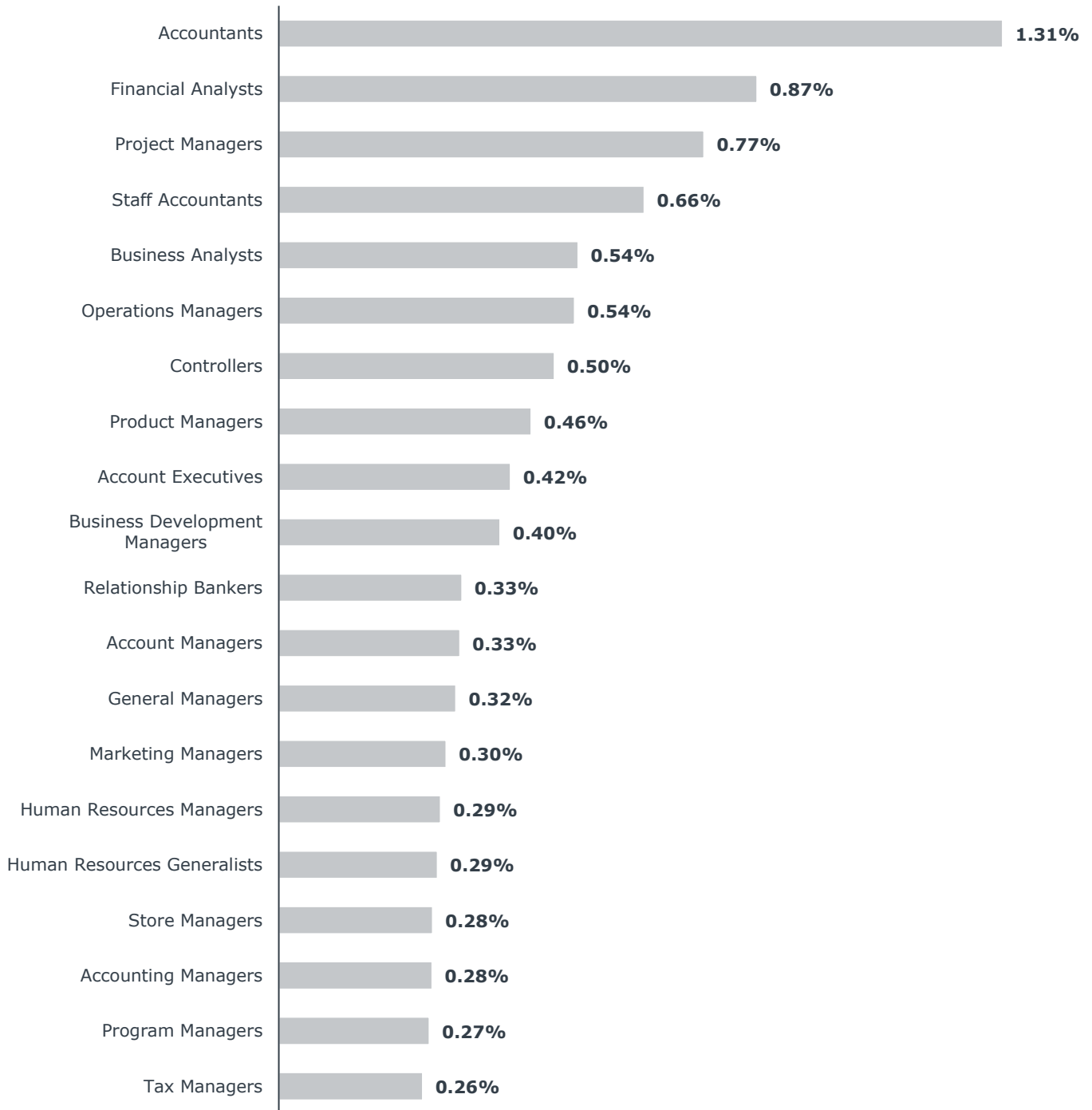
1) Top occupations refer to the occupations in which employers most often seek relevant professionals.

Source: EAB analysis. Lightcast.

Top Titles in Job Postings for Bachelor's- and Master's-Level Business Administration Professionals

July 2023 - June 2024, Regional Data

n = 405,237 job postings

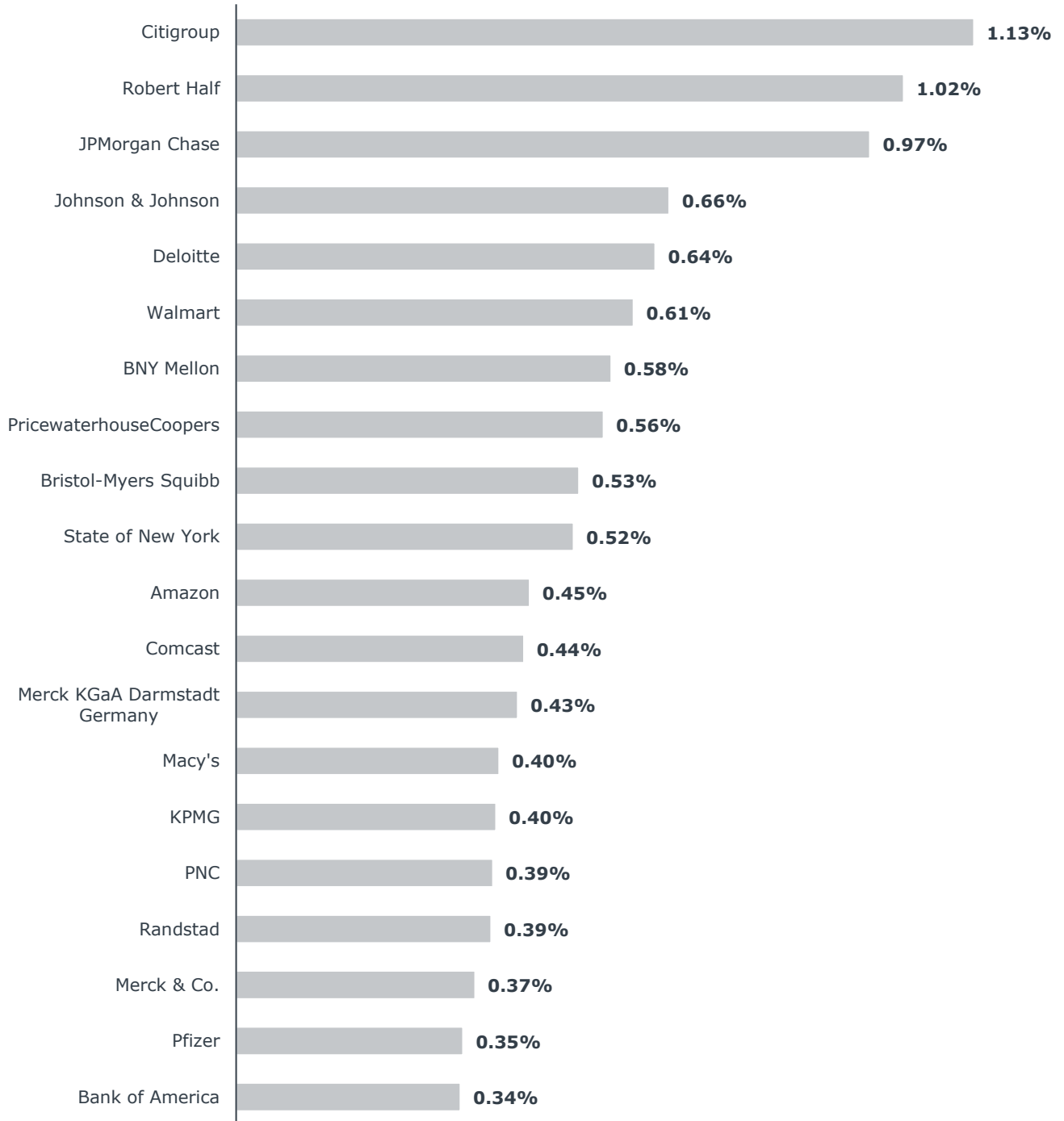


Source: EAB analysis. Lightcast.

Top Employers in Job Postings for Bachelor's- and Master's-Level Business Administration Professionals

July 2023 - June 2024, Regional Data

n = 405,237 job postings

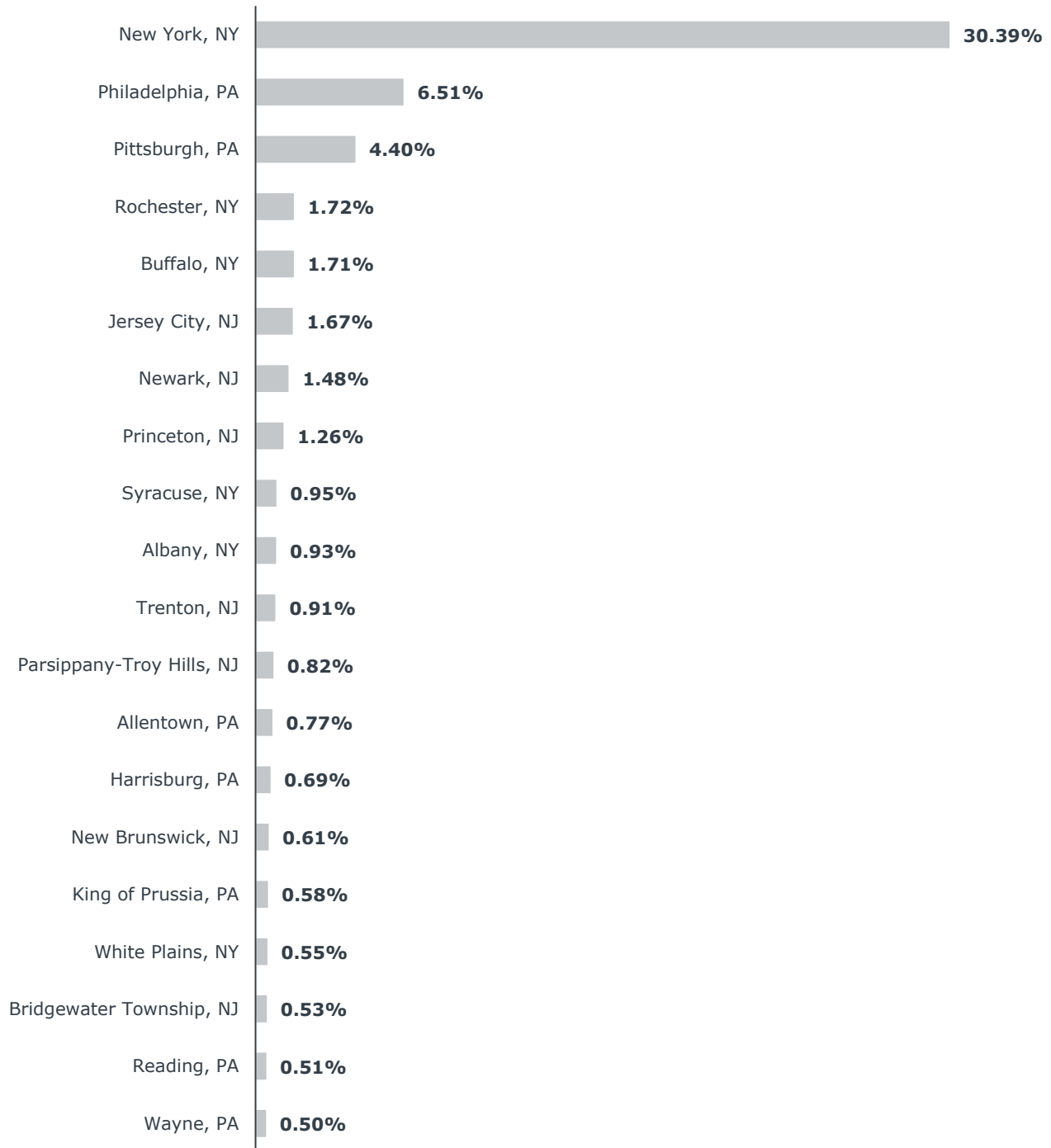


Source: EAB analysis. Lightcast.

Top Cities Seeking Bachelor's- and Master's-Level Business Administration Applicants

July 2023 - June 2024, Regional Data

n = 405,237 job postings

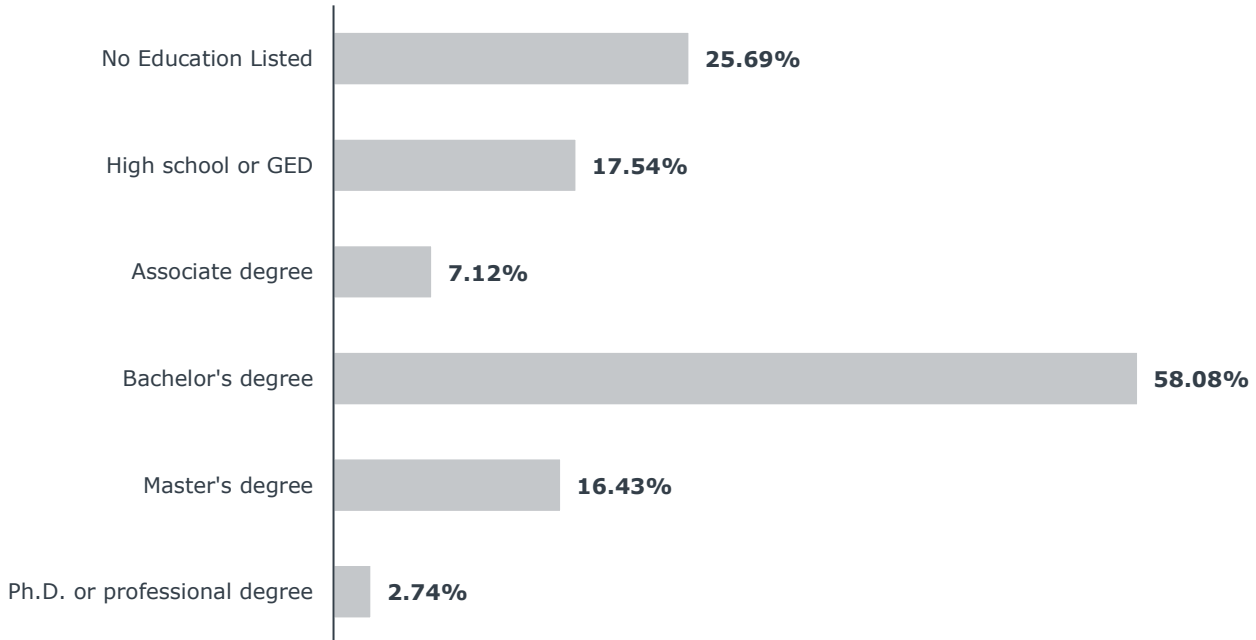


Source: EAB analysis. Lightcast.

Top Education Levels Requested of Business Administration Applicants¹

July 2023 - June 2024, Regional Data

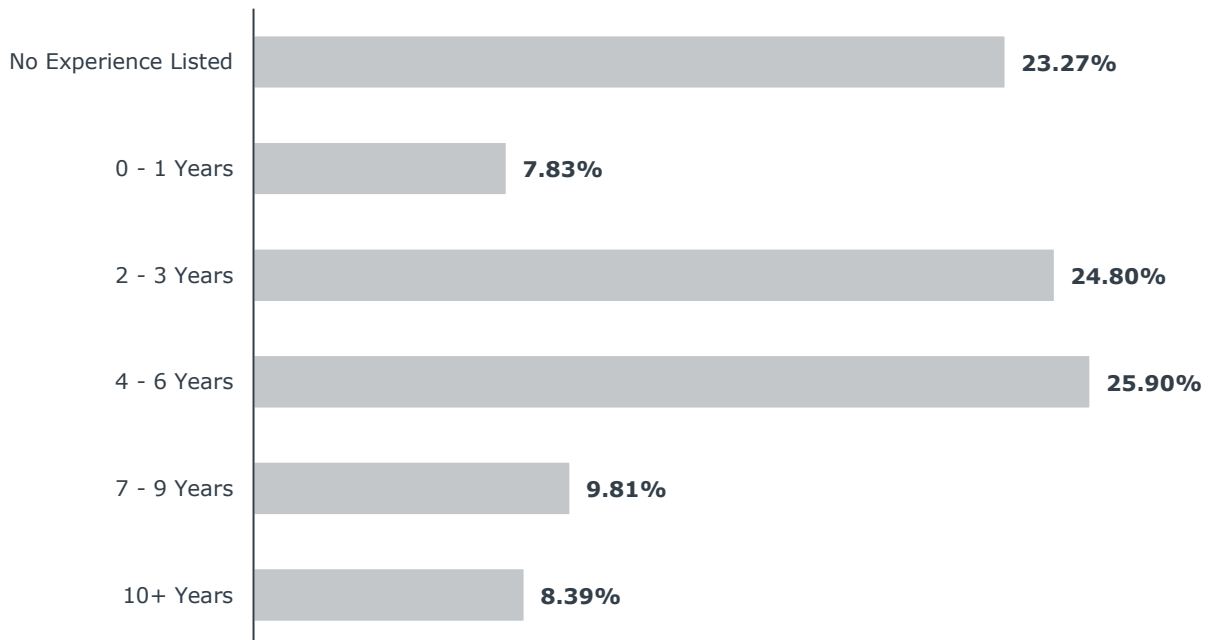
n = 671,156 job postings



Top Experience Levels Requested of Business Administration Applicants

July 2023 - June 2024, Regional Data

n = 405,237 job postings



1) The n-value reflects the number of job postings requesting any degree level business administration applicants rather than the number of postings requesting only those at the focus degree level.

Curriculum Analysis

Regional Analysis of Job Postings' Skill Requirements for Bachelor's- and Master's-Level Business Administration Professionals

Across July 2021 and June 2024, employers demonstrated demand for skills such as finance, project management, and financial services. Emerging skills include purchasing and business operations; developing these skills will prepare graduates to meet today's employer needs.

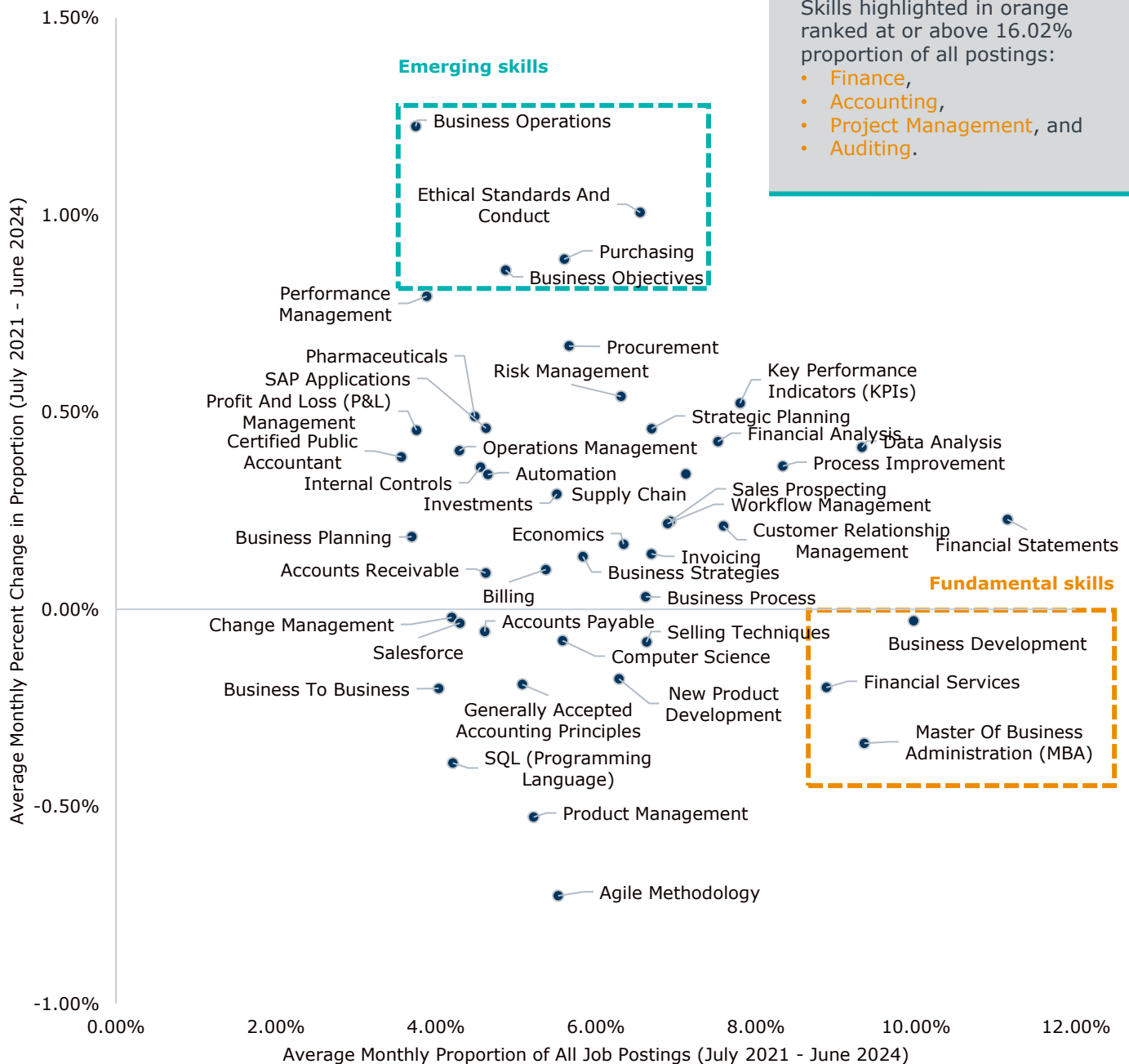
Fundamental and Emerging Skills for Bachelor's- and Master's-Level Business Administration Professionals

July 2021 - June 2024, Regional Data

n = 1,409,280 job postings

We excluded the following skills from the plot to improve readability. Skills highlighted in orange ranked at or above 16.02% proportion of all postings:

- Finance,
- Accounting,
- Project Management, and
- Auditing.

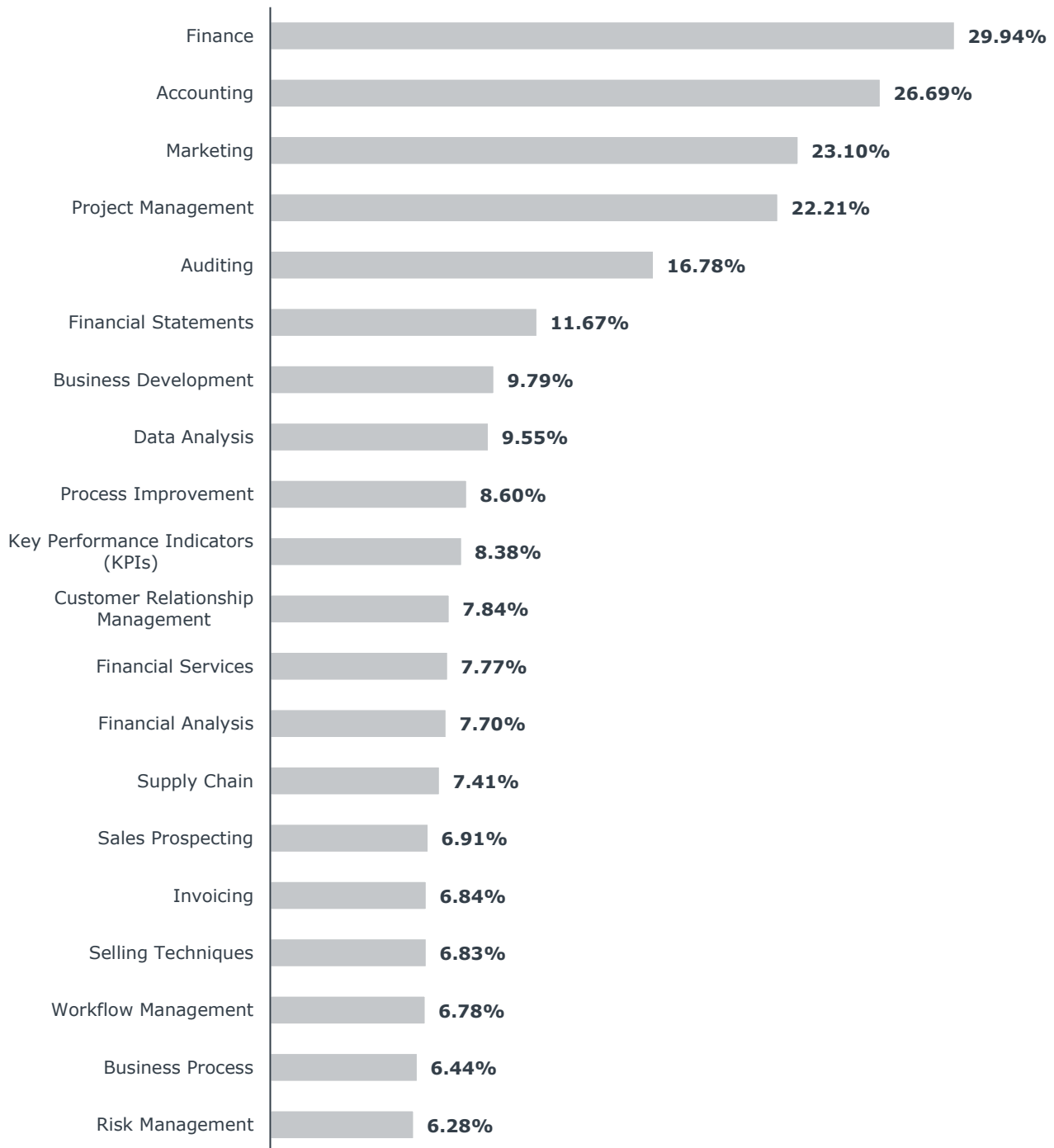


Source: EAB analysis. Lightcast Analyst.

Top Skills in Job Postings for Bachelor's- and Master's-Level Business Administration Professionals

July 2023 - June 2024, Regional Data







n = 405,237 job postings



Source: EAB analysis. Lightcast.

Alignment of In-Demand Skills to Profiled Programs' Curricula

Regional Data

	In-Demand Skills		Existing Courses
Project and Product Management	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • Agile Methodology • Product Management 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply Chain Management Specializations (e.g., Project Management)
Finance and Economics	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Financial Analysis • Financial Statements • Financial Services • Economics • Investments 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Accounting • Economic Foundation of Business • Economics of International Business • Managerial Finance • Accounting Specialization (e.g., Financial Statement Analysis) • Finance Specialization (e.g., International Financial Management, Value Investing, Working Capital Management, Investment Analysis, Financial Modeling)
Accounting	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting • Auditing • Billing • Generally Accepted Accounting Principles • Internal Controls 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting for Managerial Decisions • Accounting Specialization (e.g., Accounting Analytics, Principles of Taxation, Auditing Theory/Practice, Government and Not-for-Profit Accounting)
Computer Science	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Science • SQL (Programming Language) • Automation 	→	None Offered.
Business Process and Operations	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Strategies • Business Objectives • Business Operations • Business to Business • Strategic Planning • Workflow Management • Performance Management • Process Improvement 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managerial Skills • Strategic Management
Supply Chain Management	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement • Supply Chain • Purchasing 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations & Supply Chain Management • Supply Chain Management (e.g., Supply Chain and Logistician Management, Supply Chain Management Systems, Green Supply Chain Management, Lean Six Sigma)

Source: EAB analysis. Comparator Program Websites.



Appendix

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- Research Process and Sources

2

Research Process and Sources

EAB conducted a two-part analysis to identify opportunities for developing a microcredential from the existing Master of Business Administration at the institution.

All workforce demand data was collected from Lightcast, EAB's labor market intelligence partner.

1 Labor Market Analysis

Analyze regional employer demand to determine labor market favorability

This report includes an analysis of external labor market needs to determine demand for program skills. Researchers evaluate historical job postings and future employment projections to determine labor market favorability for microcredential development.

Data collected and methodology

EAB's Market Insights research guides strategic programmatic decisions at partner institutions. The Market Insights service combines qualitative and quantitative data to help administrators identify opportunities for new program development, assess job market trends, and align curriculum with employer demand.

Unless stated otherwise, this report includes data from online job postings from July 2021 to June 2024. To best estimate employer demand for bachelor's- and master's-level business administration, we analyzed job postings for bachelor's- and master's-level professionals with relevant skills (e.g., business process, financial management).

Research questions

- How has demand for graduates of my program evolved over time?
- In which industries should the program prepare students to work?
- Which employers demonstrate the greatest demand for graduates?
- What skills should the program teach to prepare students to meet employer demand?
- In what positions do employers demonstrate the greatest need for graduates?
- In which cities do employers demonstrate the greatest demand for potential graduates?
- What education level do employers most frequently request from relevant professionals?
- What experience level do employers most frequently request from program graduates?

2 Identify Content for New Microcredential Development

Analyze skills employers most highly demand from business administration professionals. EAB developed skills scatterplots of the knowledge and skills requirements in job postings relevant to the Master of Business Administration at the institution. EAB used this skills scatterplot to identify in-demand fundamental and emerging skills.

Identify existing courses that align with employer demanded skills.

EAB grouped similar high-demand skills identified in the skills analysis to develop recommendations for microcredential development. Researchers analyzed how existing course offerings align with the identified skill groupings. The researchers collect information publicly available on the program's webpage.

Data Sources

Lightcast <https://lightcast.io/>

This report includes data made available through EAB's partnership with Lightcast (formerly known as Emsi Burning Glass), a labor market analytics firm serving higher education, economic development, and industry leaders in the U.S., Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Lightcast curates and maintains the most comprehensive labor market data sets available for academic program planning, providing real-time job posting data, workforce and alumni outcomes data, and traditional government sources of data. Under this partnership, EAB may use Lightcast proprietary Analyst™ and Alumni Insight™ tools to answer partner questions about employer demand, the competitive landscape, in-demand skills, postings versus actual hires, and skills gaps between job postings and professionals in the workforce. The Lightcast tools also provide EAB with in-depth access to unsuppressed, zip-code-level government data for occupations, industries, programs, and demographics. For more complete descriptions of the Lightcast tools, visit:

- <https://lightcast.io/solutions/education/analyst>
- <https://lightcast.io/solutions/education/alumni-pathways>

To learn more about Lightcast and its software and services, please contact Bob Hieronymus, Vice President of Business Development at bob.hieronymus@lightcast.io.



United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>



EAB Research and Insights Library <https://eab.com/research-and-insights/>

Next Steps from this Program Analysis

Follow These Steps to Begin Launching Your Microcredential Program

Internal

Share this report with relevant leadership and faculty on campus. Use the EAB recommendations below to guide conversations with stakeholders and make informed decisions.



Align microcredentials to market demand to ensure financially viable programs. Use [EAB resources](#) to launch financially viable microcredentials. Specifically, utilize the [Microcredential Proposal Template](#) and [Microcredential Evaluation Form](#) to help your institution make more market-driven assessments of proposed offerings. First, use the Microcredential Proposal Template as a form that will guide faculty (or any proposing party) in making a thorough, data-driven case for their proposed new microcredential. Then, the professional, continuing, and online education (PCO) unit can use the Microcredential Evaluation Form to conduct an independent evaluation of the proposal to make a final determination on whether to develop the proposed microcredential.



Socialize microcredentials with a roadshow to help gain faculty support. Many institutions struggle to help faculty understand the role of microcredentials in the overall portfolio and the importance of proposing microcredentials aligned to market needs. Institutions that use road shows to teach faculty about microcredentials overcome this challenge by cultivating an understanding of the types of microcredentials that align with their goals.



Make sunseting microcredentials the default option to ensure limited financial resources are spent on successful programs. Institutions often struggle to regularly sunset programs. Because microcredentials have smaller financial margins than traditional programs, however, monitoring their performance and acting quickly to sunset or pause a struggling microcredential program is critical. When sunseting is the default option, microcredentials only continue when they are successful, providing an additional safeguard to ensure financial health.

In Partnership with EAB



Request a project debrief call with the EAB research team to review this report. Meet with members of our research team to discuss the findings of the report and potential next steps.



Evaluate the labor market landscape to identify new microcredential opportunities with high growth potential. Request a Nondegree Market Opportunity Scan to guide decision-making for new program development.



Microcredential Prioritization Matrix

Find new program opportunities with the Microcredential Prioritization Matrix. The tool helps users identify existing offerings that are best positioned for microcredential conversion. After identifying a potential microcredential program to develop, request another Microcredential Feasibility Study to determine how best to align the new offering with employer demanded skills.

Next Steps from this Program Analysis (cont.)

Follow These Steps to Develop Your Employer Partnerships

Employer partnerships can be a key enabler for achieving scale and financial success with microcredentials. But these partnerships can be risky. Follow EAB best practices to maximize the benefits of employer partnerships while mitigating the risks.



Utilize skills assessments to take a more strategic approach to partnership development.

Instead of relying on employers to identify their training needs, use in-demand skills analysis to identify those needs for the employer. This can accelerate the timeline for forming the partnerships and improves the overall design of the training. To identify in-demand skills for your requested program, refer to the Curriculum Analysis portion of this report.



Leverage labor market intelligence to identify and motivate potential employer partners.

Prioritize potential partners whose needs are most closely aligned with existing programs. This allows for a more strategic proposal to potential partners, clearly demonstrating how programs will meet company needs.



Ensure buy-in from employer partners by sharing the cost of program development.

Universities incur the most risk in employer partnerships when they take sole responsibility for program development costs. If program enrollments for the partnership never materialize, the institution loses that investment and may not be able to offer the program to other audiences. Sharing development costs with the employer partner reduces the institution's initial outlay and fosters mutual buy-in for the program.



Secure guaranteed student enrollment to cover costs. Employers may not be willing to pay for program development up front, even when splitting the cost with the institution. In this case, institutions can ask employers to guarantee a minimum number of students who will enroll in the program over a specific period. With this strategy, institutions benefit by knowing how much to charge per student to recoup development costs, and employers benefit by deferring payments until they can start enrolling students in the program.



Meet employer needs while minimizing the creation of custom content. A significant amount of the content employers want universities to provide in specialized programs is the same across employers. Therefore, institutions can fulfill employer needs without creating a wholly customized program. One approach is to offer a "menu" of existing content from which employers can choose. With this practice, employers create their custom program through the specific combination of existing content that they select. Alternatively, institutions can use a plug-and-play approach by designing core course content that is used for all partners while leaving space to build in employer-specific content.



Review our [Critical Disciplines to Grow Employer Partnerships Study](#) to find and secure best-fit employer partnerships. As organizations become increasingly complex, today's search, decision, and buying cycles have become exponentially longer, presenting more opportunities for PCO units to fall short. Finding partners that match with university offerings is a critical first step of a successful B2B enterprise.



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Your Imperatives Determine Ours

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Prepare Your Institution for the Future

Executive guidance rooted in research to support your strategic priorities

MARKETING AND ENROLLMENT

Achieve Your Enrollment and Growth Goals

Tailored partnerships powered by a recruitment ecosystem with unrivaled reach to enroll your future classes

STUDENT SUCCESS

Build a Student-Centric Campus

Technology trusted by 850 schools to retain, graduate, and empower more students

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Advance DEI on Campus and in Your Community

Technology, research, and bold initiatives to strengthen your DEI strategy and eliminate equity gaps

DATA AND ANALYTICS

Embrace Digital Transformation

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