Welcome to the chat room for the University of South Carolina, Moore School of Business. This is very informal and I encourage you to ask any questions that you have.

What departments are admitting this year?

The following departments will be admitting students this year (to start Fall 2015): Accounting, Finance, Organizational Behavior/Human Resources (Management), Production/Operation Management (Management Science) and Marketing. The Economics and International Business/International Finance departments are scheduled to admit students again next year.

Do the departments usually admit every year? How do they decide what years they will be accepting students?

It varies by department. We have a limited number of spaces per department (most departments have 8 students). If two students graduate, then we will admit two more. We intentionally keep the program small so that there is a close student:faculty relationship.

What materials are needed to apply?

There are a variety of items needed for admission. In addition to the application, students must submit a resume, statement of career objectives, GMAT/GRE scores, TOEFL scores (if appropriate), undergraduate and graduate transcripts, and at least two letters of recommendation.

Will departments begin to review an application before all information, such as recommendations, have been received?

Applications will not be forwarded to the departments for review until all required items are received. The application deadline is January 15, but I encourage you to submit your materials earlier because some departments will review applications as they arrive.

Do I have to print out the online application and mail it in?

Students are encouraged to submit all application materials on-line. Here is the link to our application and the necessary forms: www.moore.sc.edu/apply. Any items that are mailed should be sent to:
What really separates those few that get in, I am guessing all applicants are fairly qualified or otherwise they wouldn't waste their time applying...and is prior research important?

There are a variety of factors involved when considering a student for admission. We look at GMAT/GRE scores, resume, statement of career objectives, TOEFL scores (if appropriate), undergraduate and graduate GPA, and letters of recommendation. A weakness in any one area can be compensated by the other areas being particularly strong.

It is important to have letters of reference from credible resources. Someone who is aware of the rigors of a PhD program and can speak specifically about your abilities is the best person to get. The discipline is less important. Any research or publication experience is only going to help you. I would encourage you to emphasize that in your statement of purpose.

What is the general profile for students admitted to the PhD program?

A profile of our current students can be found at www.moore.sc.edu/phd.profile. It breaks down the information by departments. You can also find out more specific information about our current students at http://mooreschool.sc.edu/academicprograms/doctoral/phdcandidatedirectory.aspx.

What is the range of GMAT scores of the successful applicants?

Again it varies by the department, but if you check the first link mentioned above it will show you that information. Keep in mind the averages shown on the student profile page are averages. There are some students above, and some students below that. Although I will say that scores have been increasing the last few years. For example, we have not admitted a student with a GMAT below 600 in over 7 years.

So is GMAT the most important factor? Is it used as the initial screening criteria?

There are a variety of factors involved when considering a student for admission. A high score can certainly help you, especially if transcripts or letters of recommendation aren't as strong as the other applicants. However, a strong test score alone will not get you into the
program. You have to show that you are well balanced and successful and appear to have the drive necessary to withstand a PhD program.

Sometime the GMAT is used as the initial screening factor. It helps determine if you are competitive or not. A list of the current averages for each department is available on the link mentioned above. After the test scores they look at work experience, letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, etc. Research or publication experience can be a big plus.

Why do you have two different application deadlines?

Our preferred application deadline is December 15. Everyone who applies by this date will be considered for financial assistance. There are some University scholarships we can nominate students for if they are competitive applicants. Our final application deadline is January 15. Please note that your application will not be forwarded to the department for review until all application materials arrive (transcripts, test score and letter of recommendation). Some departments will wait until January 15 to review all files, while others will review applications as they come in. I would caution you about waiting too long, because if a department sees an attractive candidate, they may make an offer before all of the other applicants have submitted their materials.

How soon will I know the admission decision? Is it possible to be accepted before the application deadline?

It is possible you would know a decision before the application deadline, but it is highly unlikely. The national decision date is April 15. This is the date the applicants have to let the schools know their intent by. This means if you have been offered admission, you have to let us know by April 15. Every year you will have a few people accept other offers, so there will be a few offers made after April 15.

What's the admission rate to your university?

We usually have between 20-30 applicants for every one opening, but it varies widely by department.

Wow.... the competition must be tight.

Yes, it is a very competitive process and if you get in, you want to make sure you have the support to be successful. I'm not trying to scare anyone; I just want to make sure you have a realistic picture of what is required to complete a PhD.
Do you recommend talking with some faculty members before submitting the application?

Talking with a faculty member can certainly help specify what the focus of the department is. I encourage you to contact the faculty coordinator for the department you are interested in. The list of PhD coordinators can be found at: http://mooreschool.sc.edu/academicprograms/phd/academicprograms/facultycoordinators.aspx.

Should I schedule a visit? How do I talk to someone about the program?

Typically we prefer waiting to schedule a visit until all of your application materials have been received. We participate in recruiting fairs all over the country and a few places abroad. You can see a list of our current recruiting events at www.moore.sc.edu/phd.recruit.

What are the criteria for receiving a tuition waiver and stipend?

All incoming PhD students are expected to have an assistantship in their department doing research and/or teaching for 20 hours a week. In exchange for this students receive a stipend (minimum $18,000 - some departments are higher) for 4 years. We also provide 100% tuition subsidy for 4 years and pay 100% of insurance for anyone who uses the university-offered insurance.

Could you please provide me an overview of life of a PhD student? People say that it is too long and can get really frustrating.

Typically, you do coursework the first two to two and a half years. The next 2-3 years you focus on your dissertation. Our programs typically take 4-5 years depending on the discipline. At times it can be frustrating and take a long time. But if you stay focused and work hard you'll be fine. Remember to rely on your resources. We want to see you be successful.

Let me also recommend that everyone visit any school they are considering going to. (Most schools will want to interview applicants before they admit them). The school may look good on paper or the internet, but be awful in person. Keep in mind you'll need to work there for the next 4-5 years, so you want to pick a place where you'll be happy

Do most students opt for a career in academia or do typically students opt for industry?

Our program is primarily designed for students to pursue a career in academia, but we always have a few students (primarily Finance and Economics) that will go into business or industry.
**Do you offer an off-campus PhD program?**

No, because of the rigors involved in earning a PhD we do not offer an off-campus or online PhD. All students who come in have an assistantship working 20 hours a week for a professor and/or teaching. This is as important to earning the PhD as the coursework is. A lot of the education takes place outside of the classroom.

**How much emphasis is placed on work experience?**

It really depends on the department. Some departments will take people straight out of undergrad, while others will require an MBA or a couple of years work experience. Work experience may be less important if you have a good educational background and test scores. It depends on the department and who looks at the application.

**What key factors will the admission's department look for within the statement of purpose?**

The statement of purpose should simply state why you want to pursue a PhD in business. What got you interested and what you want to do with it? I would recommend not going longer than 2 pages. The statement of purpose is your opportunity to sell yourself. If you have any research or publication experience it may also be a good idea to mention that here.

**Can the recommendation letters be mailed or must it be submitted online?**

We would prefer to receive the letters on-line, but if someone insists on mailing them you can mail them to the address mentioned above.

**When we send a transcript should it be or the original or a certified true copy and who should certify......a notary public?**

Do not send your original transcript. Have an official transcript sent (or a certified true copy if you are an international student). Whoever at the school provides a certified copy (probably the Registrar) would be fine.

**I have a BBA but a masters in a different area than business, would you suggest obtaining an MBA before applying to PhD program?**

You do not have to have an MBA to get into a business PhD program. We have students who were engineers, English majors, etc.
My GMAT was taken in 2010; do I have to retake it due to the time?

The GMAT and GRE are good for 5 years; TOEFL/IELTS is good for 2 years. The Economics department requires the GRE; all other departments prefer the GMAT.

Without the MBA, what will the admissions committee focus upon when reviewing my application?

See the note above about the requirements. They would look thoroughly at your test scores, letters of recommendation, experiences, and statement of purpose.

I work for a consulting company and as consulting is heavily dependent on research, I have a lot of experience in research. Do you think that will be an advantage?

Any research experience will be beneficial. Make sure you emphasize that in your statement of purpose.

I am a second-year graduate student in US. As the Graduate Research Assistant, I have one publication and another working paper. Will this be a huge plus to my application?

I would certainly emphasize the research and publication in your statement of purpose.

I am an international student, if I graduate from a US university with a Master degree, do I still need TOEFL score? Is it possible for me to have TOEFL requirement waived if I apply for your school’s PhD program?

If you have a degree from an American university you do not need the TOEFL.

I have a Finance MBA, will that reduce my credits?

If you have a master's degree (MBA, MA Finance, etc.) it will probably reduce the number of prerequisites you need to take, but likely would not reduce the number PhD courses required. PhD courses are taught in a seminar format and tend to be much different in format than regular master’s level classes (sometimes between 3-15 students in a class).

I have taken some of the PhD level statistics class, would that reduce some of the PhD courses in Moore?

It is possible you could transfer in a few credits. That would need to be looked at on an individual basis.
How much weight is given to Beta Gamma Sigma membership?

I don't think that a lot of weight would be given to BGS membership, unless you can show you did research or something while involved with the organization. The things you did to earn BGS membership would be more important than the membership itself.

How is the weather in SC?

The weather is Columbia tends to be very pleasant. In the summer it can get quite warm (multiple days at 100+ degrees). The winters are very mild. It will snow here about once every three years. It is a mild climate and is very reasonable economically. South Carolina has a very low cost of living.

If someone takes GMAT twice, do you take the average?

We simply look at the best test score. Honestly, I wouldn’t recommend taking it more than three times, but as long as you are improving your score every time that's fine.

I did my undergraduate in China; the score is in 100 Grade system instead of 4.0, how does it transfer?

Don't worry about the grades transferring; we'd be looking more what classes you had and how you did in those classes.

What is your email address? I will like to contact you beyond this chatting session.

Feel free to contact me with any follow-up questions you have. My contact information is: Scott Ranges, sranges@moore.sc.edu, (803) 777-2748.