

# REPORT ON: SUNY OSWEGO

**Richard Skolnik**, dean of the School of Business at SUNY Oswego, says **SUNY Oswego** is offering a new customized online M.B.A. degree.

BY RICHARD SKOLNIK

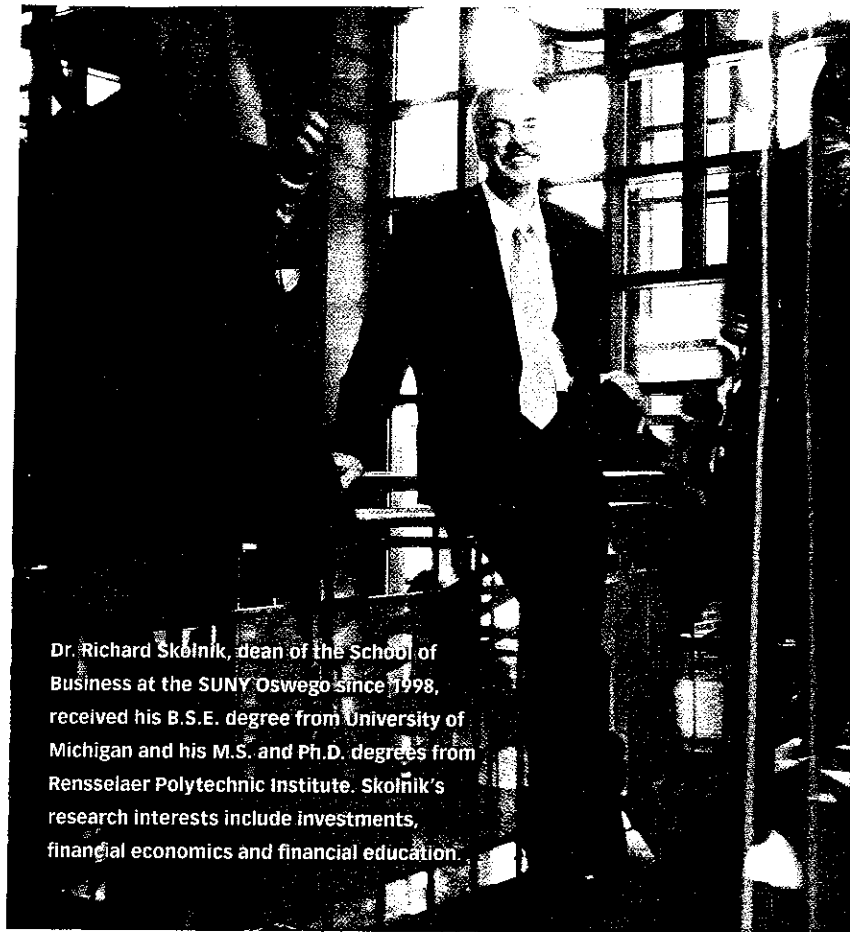
As the profile of the "average" M.B.A. student continues to change, so too are institutions of higher education, adapting to the ever-changing business landscape and striving to continually deliver high-quality programs. Today's always-connected, technology-savvy students welcome the increased use of online classes in education, and institutions are working to keep pace with students' changing needs and expectations.

Currently, about 75 percent of U.S. colleges and universities have seen increased demand for online courses from students, according to a 2010 online education report by the Sloan Consortium. About 11,000 students are currently enrolled in online M.B.A. programs in the United States, according to the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, the oldest and most highly regarded accrediting body for business programs.

The increase in online learning is no coincidence. Economic constraints, increasing responsibilities at work and greater acceptance of online programs have contributed to the steady rise of online education. In a 2010 survey of online programs, the Sloan Consortium found that slightly less than 10 percent of all higher education students were taking at least one online course in 2003. That grew to 29 percent by 2009.

The State University of New York at Oswego has embraced online learning and recently launched an online Master of Business Administration program that offers professionals and individuals the opportunity to earn their M.B.A.'s from an online, AACSB-accredited program. The online program was launched in the spring 2011 semester and supports efforts to steadily increase options for busy professionals. The School of Business has been offering online courses for more than a decade, and the number of courses offered has grown incrementally.

"Offering a full online M.B.A. program was the next natural step," says Tammie Sullivan, M.B.A. director at SUNY Oswego. "In addition to offering the program online, students can take



Dr. Richard Skolnik, dean of the School of Business at the SUNY Oswego since 1998, received his B.S.E. degree from University of Michigan and his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Skolnik's research interests include investments, financial economics and financial education.

classes at our satellite location at the Metro Center in Syracuse, at SUNY Oswego or through a combination of all three options. The M.B.A. program currently enrolls 112 students, a 40 percent increase since the start of the spring 2010 semester."

Business professionals typically earn an M.B.A. to advance their careers or break into a new industry. The average length of a program is two years, though students sometimes accelerate or slow the pace at which they study. Whether it is job security or the financial security that often accompanies it, remaining fully employed is sometimes the only option for individuals.

Given these circumstances today, online MBA programs, such as SUNY Oswego's, have emerged to bridge the gap and provide the opportunity for professionals to go back to school without putting their businesses or career growth on hold. An online program is attractive to professionals with schedules that don't require them to commit to classes on specific days of the week.

The new online M.B.A. program allows area business owners and employees to take advantage of a highly customized program. Whether business owners are seeking a niche program that will equip them with the expertise needed to solve specific challenges, or middle managers are working to advance themselves in large corporations, the online and in-class M.B.A. programs have immersed students in studies with the means to do so.

"No two programs will be exactly the same for our students," says Sullivan.



PHOTO BY JOHN BERRY

With a tailored program, like SUNY Oswego's, a student's MBA program — online or campus-based — becomes almost anything he or she wants or needs. Advisers help students build their M.B.A. programs based on future career or business goals and the desire to gain insight in areas such as finance, human resources, marketing or entrepreneurship. Others may want to shape a program to gain broad-based business knowledge to help grow their business, for example.

Local businesses and professionals also benefit from the flexibility of online programs because students are able to take classes on their own schedules while remaining fully engaged in the daily operations of running a business or working. Having access to course information 24 hours a day, seven days a week allows students to complete course work at their own pace and apply the concepts they learn in class to their everyday business challenges.

Busy professionals and business owners should understand that the amount of time and effort put into an M.B.A. program is not diminished in any way be-

cause the courses are completed online. A high level of participation is required and students are expected to post insightful comments and questions that count as part of their participation grade.

In 2010, the Sloan Consortium found that more than 75 percent of surveyed public institutions considered online programs as good as or better than face-to-face education, as long as suitable student interaction and professor feedback are provided.

Blended learning options — a combination of online and in-class instruction — are also available to students who require the flexibility of an online program but also want to take some courses in a classroom.

"The Metro Center makes going back to school for my M.B.A. convenient and accessible," says Lisa Tamilia '14, a district sales manager for an insurance company. "If it weren't for the classes available at the Metro Center, I would not be able to earn my M.B.A. and remain employed simultaneously. Now, with the online program, there will be even more options available."

## OF THE SUNY OSWEGO ONLINE M.B.A. PROGRAM

**1** **Students are online but not alone** — Advisers work with students closely, even those students who may take most or all of their classes online. Frequent meetings between students and M.B.A. advisers provide busy students with guidance and support to help them build an M.B.A. program unique to their needs and goals.

**2** **Networking and internship opportunities** — M.B.A. students interact with faculty members, area business leaders, industry professionals and one another to grow their networks and foster new business opportunities. Highly targeted internship opportunities also provide local companies with talented students.

**3** **Flexible learning options** — Busy professionals can take advantage of both online classes and traditional courses in a classroom, depending on their schedules and learning preferences. Classes are offered at the Metro center, SUNY Oswego, online or through a combination of all three options.

Experienced faculty, targeted internships and networking opportunities that connect businesses and potential employees are also an important part of the program. Faculty, staff and administrators understand the value of relationships and how they help provide opportunities for students — both in the form of internships during school and in permanent offers upon graduation.

"The M.B.A. program became mine," says Alicia Dargan '12. "While other programs have become overly streamlined, SUNY Oswego's is both competitive and personalized."

Industry connections help distinguish SUNY Oswego M.B.A. graduates from other students because faculty members work with students side by side and learn about each of their students' unique career goals and aspirations.

"There are no lecture classes in the M.B.A. program," says Tamilia. "Small class sizes breed a tightknit community where everyone knows one another and professors understand what their students want to achieve." ■