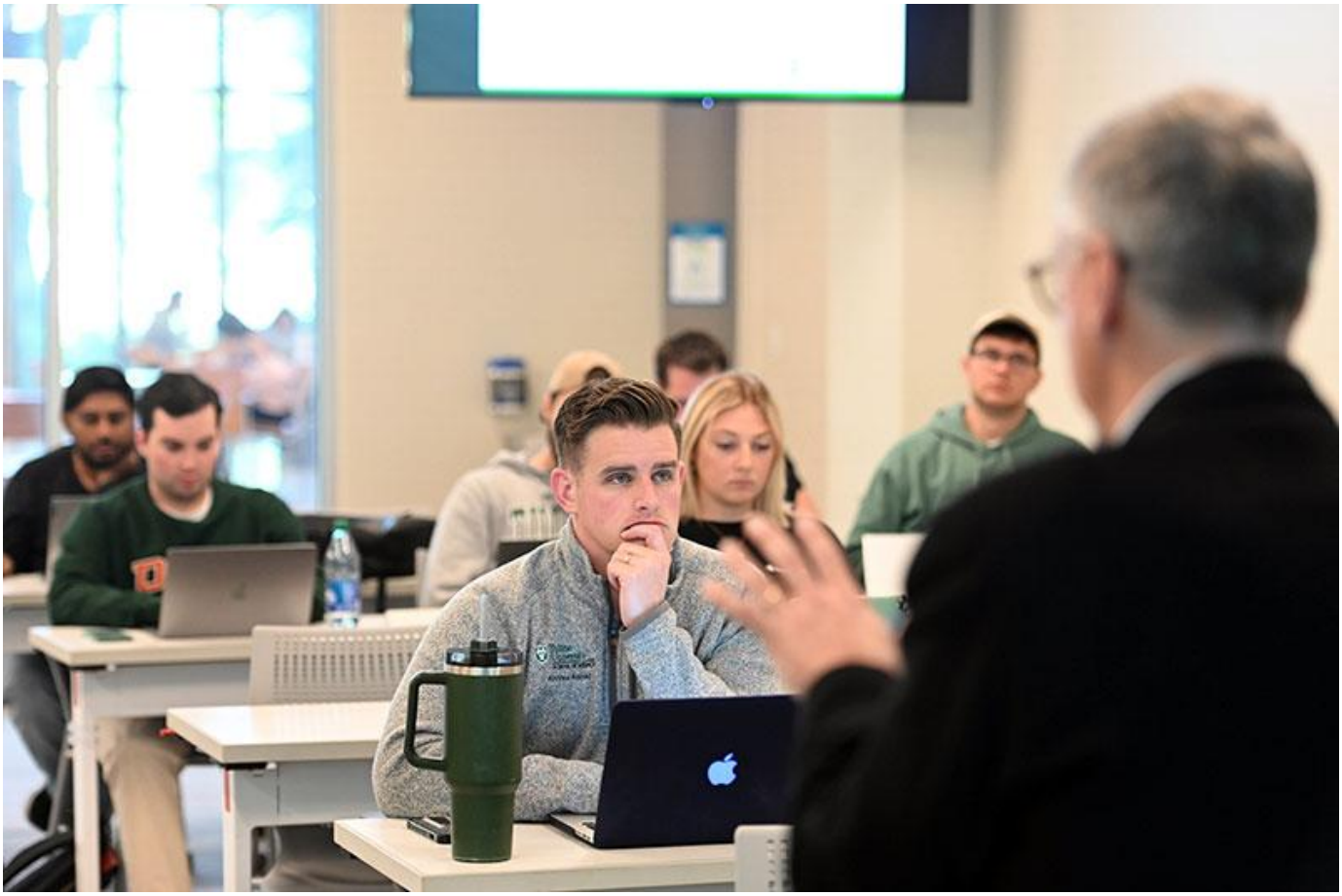
MBA applications rising nationally

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The Wall Street Journal reported this week that applications to MBA programs grew by 12% in 2024, reversing two years of declines. Leading the growth were applications to full-time in-person programs, which rose 32% to their highest level in a decade.

At the Freeman School, Assistant Dean of Graduate Admissions Melissa Lightell says she's seeing similar numbers, with applications to the full-time program up significantly.

"Compared to the 2023 cycle, our applications for the 2024 cycle in the full-time MBA program were up 26.2%," says Lightell. "Our domestic applications increased by 33%, but international applications still represent 69% of the application pool."

While *The Wall Street Journal* cited economic uncertainty and a lack of high-paying white-collar jobs as among the factors leading applicants to seek an MBA, Lightell says she's seeing interest from students who want to combine good jobs with good business.

"More and more, we're hearing that students want to be connected to the community and able to help the community with their business skills and knowledge," she says. "Experiential learning is something many students mention. They want the opportunity to learn by doing and to develop a tangible portfolio of projects and contacts, so I think the Freeman MBA Consulting Practicum and Impact Capstone are very appealing to applicants."

Internationally, Lightell says she's seeing interest from countries with growing economies, strong middle classes and large populations of 22-to-34-year-olds, including Nigeria, India and Ghana. International applicants are also seeking programs with STEM designations to take advantage of up to 36 months of OPT. Freeman's MBA program is fully STEM designated, compared to some other programs that feature STEM designations only for certain concentrations.

Ultimately, Lightell says Freeman is a good choice for students seeking a hands-on, high-touch, unique MBA experience.

"Our MBA students are able connect with New Orleans businesses and our alumni network in a way that students at larger programs aren't always able to do," she says. "We've also been doing experiential learning for decades, so it's deeply rooted in the program, and our faculty are committed to ensuring that our experiential projects are valuable to both the students and their clients."