



## LinkedIn to M.B.A. Admissions

July 9, 2014

By **Charlie Tyson**

Since 2011, LinkedIn users have been able to apply for jobs [with the click of a button](#), submitting their LinkedIn profiles to potential employers. A redesigned application for Cornell University's Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management transports this system's ethos to higher education.

Applicants to Cornell's M.B.A. programs can now pre-fill parts of their applications – such as their employment history and educational background -- with information from their LinkedIn profiles. Cornell officials said the university is the first higher education institution to incorporate LinkedIn into its application.

Julie Inouye, LinkedIn's director of corporate communications, said the company couldn't confirm whether other colleges and universities had used LinkedIn in this way.

LinkedIn does not have a direct relationship with Cornell. Instead, the university is using LinkedIn's open platform. And so are at least 30,000 other developers, Inouye said. So it's difficult for the company to check to see whether any other colleges and universities are using the same tools in the same way. "We theoretically could check ... but it would take a lot of time," Inouye said.

Cornell officials said, however, that they think they've broken new ground.

"We don't know of anyone else who is using LinkedIn in this way," said Heidi Russell, operations manager for the Johnson School's admissions office.

**The application asks candidates who submit information from LinkedIn to grant the university access to their full LinkedIn profiles.**

Using LinkedIn isn't mandatory, said Ann Richards, the Johnson School's interim director of admissions and director of financial aid. Some applicants come from geographic regions where LinkedIn isn't an option, she said. Applicants who choose to manually fill in information rather than populating data from LinkedIn will not be at a disadvantage.

But applying will be "speedier" for the students who choose to share their LinkedIn profiles, Richards said. The old application, by contrast, was cumbersome, she said.

The new application went live July 1. The university has already received one LinkedIn-enhanced application, officials said.

Cornell hosts the application system: students don't apply directly from their LinkedIn accounts (not yet, anyway).

Career coaches have long warned that to get into a top M.B.A. program, you need an impressive LinkedIn profile. Much as high school guidance counselors warn students of Facebook-related indiscretions, M.B.A. admissions coaches prize a beefy LinkedIn presence.

Richards said the business school's admissions officers occasionally glanced at applicants' LinkedIn profiles in the past. But incorporating LinkedIn into the application is "new and different," she said.

"Given the volume of applications, we never would have the time to systematically check everybody's LinkedIn profile," Richards said. "If there was a red flag on an application or some information that wasn't consistent, we might have Googled somebody or checked their LinkedIn profile. But that was really on a case-by-case basis."

For the admissions office, the addition of LinkedIn information "allows us to see the candidate the same way their professional peers do, or headhunters do," Richards said. "It gives us, in many cases ... a more holistic view of the candidate."

Cornell used a LinkedIn-enhanced application for its one-year M.B.A. program at Cornell Tech in New York City, which enrolled its first students in May. (Cornell's New York City campus, dubbed "Silicon Island" by *The New Yorker*, is a technology-oriented graduate institution created as part of an effort by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg to transform the city into a tech hub.)

The Cornell Tech application was a test run to see if the LinkedIn feature was useful in admissions. "It was so much more enlightening," Russell said of the LinkedIn-enhanced application at the New York City campus. "It gave us so much more insight into who [the applicants] were."

Richards said she thinks other business schools will follow suit. "I do think it will catch on," she said. "LinkedIn works particularly well for M.B.A. candidates because the majority of them have full-time work experience, sometimes five to seven years of full-time work experience."

Inouye said LinkedIn is involved in conversations with a number of colleges and universities about how institutions can use LinkedIn to connect with applicants and students.

College students make up LinkedIn's fastest-growing demographic, she said.

"Being able to help universities with that new student process is absolutely something that would be a value to both parties," Inouye said. "We're having those conversations on a regular basis."

Last year LinkedIn introduced University Pages, which allow prospective students on LinkedIn to explore pages from various colleges and universities.