Does Academic Research Help or Hurt MBA Programs?

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Since the 1960s, scientific academic research has played a prominent role in most leading business schools. Recently, however, critics have argued that emphasizing research is misguided and may only serve the faculty’s interests at the expense of students and the firms that employ them. This study attempts to inform this debate by investigating the short- and long-term effects of academic research in 57 business schools over 18 years on academics’, recruiters’, and applicants’ perceptions as well as on the schools’ education performance with current students. The authors find that academic research has positive long-term effects on the perceptions of these three constituents and on education performance, as well as short-term effects on academics’ perceptions. Moreover, effect sizes are large and meaningful. A persistent increase of three single-author articles per year is associated with an improvement in a school’s ranking among academics by one place, a decline in its acceptance rate of 1%, and an increase in graduates’ average annual starting salary of more than $750. The authors discuss the implications of these findings and present related opportunities for further research.

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