Chat with USC Marshall Admission Director
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- Kellee Scott, Sr. Associate Director, MBA Admissions, USC Marshall

- **Marshall Class of 2022 (Full Time MBA) Discussion:** https://gmatclub.com/forum/calling-all-usc-marshall-mba-applicants-class-of-301300.html
- **Marshall Decision Tracker:** https://gmatclub.com/forum/marshall-208/decision-tracker.html
- **Marshall Reviews:** https://gmatclub.com/reviews/business_school/marshall-21

Moderator: Hello everyone. Thank you for joining us today. We have with us Miss Kellee Scott, Senior Admissions Director, USC Marshall School of Business. Welcome Kellee!

Kellee: Hello everyone. I look forward to answering your questions. For those of you who applied Round 1, interview invitations will be going out later this week and next week.

For candidates outside of the U.S., we will be conducting some interviews in China, Taiwan, and India. You will be notified of the cities shortly.

I have a quick question about the first required essay. If I know what function and position I am aspiring to post-MBA but not too sure about the industry how do you address that question?

Kellee: You don't have to be exact about the industry. You can mention one or two you might be interested in, but as long as you have a direction, it's fine

My question pertains to admission prerequisites of MBA Program. Can we apply with a three year undergraduate degree.

Kellee: Yes, you can apply. However, your candidacy is more competitive if you add a 1 year Masters degree. It just depends on how strong the pool is. Chances are definitely better if you take the GMAT instead of the GRE in this case.

Hi Kellie, What is your favorite part of being part of the Trojan community?

Kellee: My favorite part is the continued vibrancy of new people each year! I find the students passionate about being at Marshall and they tend to get involved very quickly. We have great staff in all of our departments who are committed to your success. And of course, the campus is BEAUTIFUL!

While other schools require letters of recommendation, USC does not. Can you briefly share what is reasoning behind this?

Kellee: We dropped LORs a few years ago b/c it was decided that the majority of recommendations tend to be character references, not giving detailed information about accomplishments that we seek. One less thing for an applicant to consider. Also, cheating tends to be rampant.

What differentiates, in your opinion, Marshall from other B-Schools?

Kellee: Academically, you won't find much difference. I encourage candidates to consider culture, location, and values. There are some things at Marshall you may not find other places: Business of Entertainment, REQUIRED international core course, and many certificates and dual degrees. I encourage you to get student and alumni perspectives on this.

I am actually interested in analytics in the Entertainment and Retail industries so I'm glad to hear that! I know that a lot of up-and-coming brands are LA-based, such as Shadow Hill. Do any of these companies ever come to campus for events? Thank you for your response!

Kellee: Some of the smaller companies may come to speak as part of forums with our Retail Club. It's hard for them to do on-campus recruiting due to time and cost. They also tend to be JIT (just in time) employers, meaning they don't recruit unless they have an opening. Student with initiative will need to network more and do more outreach. If we have an alum there, we're connect you.

Practically every school does not require me to take the TOEFL exam as I completed a graduate degree in the US; however, USC does. This means that I would have to take the TOEFL test just to apply to USC. Is there a way around this on a case by case basis?

Kellee: I understand the frustration. Unfortunately, the language test is required by the University, which we at Marshall are fighting to change. Our graduate application is shared by all graduate schools, so we must abide by the rules. You can apply without the language test, we can review your application. However, we cannot officially admit you until we get the scores.

When applying, it is rather tricky to state career goals when the looking for a post-MBA career switch. How much stock is put into the viability of the post-USC exit goal? Essentially, would USC take that aspiration at face value or potentially look at that candidate as someone to groom during the MBA process for what could be a more viable exit path? Thanks!

Kellee: The best way to approach is to at least have a direction you'd like to go, including function and industry. We know that many students change once they enroll b/c they realize the many opportunities open to them. If there is not direction, it's a challenge to ascertain why you're applying for your MBA.

Can you speak to the different opportunities for spouses to be engaged in the USC community?

Kellee: Yes! We have a partners club for significant others which is funded and has their own activities. Spouses can attend just about every social event and some industry functions. they just can't go to class. Spouses become members of the Trojan family just like the student.

How is the start up ecosystem present in order to encourage students pursue entrepreneurship. What does marshall do to encourage entrepreneurship ?

Kellee: Entrepreneurs are more than welcome at Marshall. You can engage with the Lloyd Greif Center of Entrpreneurial studies. They have pitch competitions, forums, panels, and a well run incubator. A great benefit would be to sign up for their Alumni mentorship program. MBA students can be matched with entrepreneurial alums for mentorship/advise/friendship. The classes for our MS Entrepreneurial program are elective classes for MBA students as well.

In aggregate, PT programs tend to be somewhat less competitive than FT. Do you see a substantive difference between Marshall's PT and FT programs with respect to how the admissions committee views these candidate pools?

Kellee: There is no different in how we view applicants to either programs. The difference is just the pool of candidates. Our PT students usually apply after working longer, and do not take time off (like a year I've seen for some FT applicants), to study for the GMAT/GRE. Many who do well on the GMAT/GRE may opt to apply FT where there is more scholarship opportunity. It is not a reflection of intelligence or success in the program. They tend do very well on the career side because of their continued employment..

How supportive are the placements cell at USC? Will there be any separate program focusing on placements?

Kellee: The FT class is divided into three cores, and each core has their own adviser. We also have Global Sector Leads (GSLs), who are hired from industry to support students. They manage employer relationships, work with student industry clubs to set up visits, treks, information sessions, and recruiting. 2nd year student become coaches. Finally, we have an alumni mentorship program to match students with alumni who coach and mentor you throughout your time at Marshall (and beyond ....)

Would a professional qualification (for example, CIMA or CFA) increase competitiveness in lieu of a masters degree?

Kellee: It's nice to have a CIMA or CFA to show initiative and commitment, but the 1 year degree is stronger.

Can you please shed some light on the hiring landscape for international students, especially in fields other than consulting and tech?

Kellee: The hiring landscape for international students has been successful at Marshall. Internships are not the challenge, it's the full-time employment. There have been students successful in marketing and entertainment as well as consulting and tech. It's a matter of presenting a skill set that is as unique as possible.

What is your favorite part of USC? Is it a specific part of campus? Is it the atmosphere itself? The food?

Kellee: The campus is beautiful and you can't beat the weather is LA. We have a new USC Village with a huge diversity of food options in addition to options on campus. You can find food from any nationality that reflects LA's diversity. no worries hear about finding food to accommodate any dietary restriction. Leavey Library is a great structure. Next door to Popovich, where the graduate student have classes, is the new Ferttita Hall, state of the art building with study space and a gourmet asian cafeteria.

If I don't have a quant background, besides my quant score on the GMAT, what else can I do to show admissions that I can do the work and am willing to put in extra time if needed to catch up?

Kellee: Consider taking an Accounting and/or Finance class to strengthen you candidacy and get you ready for the rigors of the MBA core. Both give you quant and the language of business at the same time.

How does one prepare for interviews? What do they revolve around?

Kellee: Preparing for the interview is as simple as knowing your story, why you are interested in marshall, and what hobbies/interests are you passionate about. Be prepared for a conversation, it

should not be an interrogation. If you there are some red flags in your candidacy and they were not addressed in the optional essay, be prepared to answer the questions about them. (usually work gaps, many employers in a short time, academic struggles....)

Moderator: Great advice! Any final thoughts before we conclude?

Kellee: Our MBA FT program now has a STEM track for those who seek to work in the US beyond the 1 year of OPT. The classes that count for STEM can be found at https://catalogue.usc.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=11&poid=12435&returnto=3756

I would encourage those who are submitting in later rounds to take full advantage of Essay 2 and tell your whole story, not just your work story. Try to write about something we don't already read in other parts of your application. Bring out your uniqueness.

Moderator: Thank you Kellee for being with us today. This was really very helpful. Thanks to all participants. Do visit the USC application thread to stay in touch with fellow applicants and share application updates. https://gmatclub.com/forum/calling-all-usc-marshall-mba-applicants-class-of-301300.html

Kellee: Thank you for your questions and for the opportunity to chat with you. I wish you all the best on your applications!

Moderator: Always a pleasure having the Trojans come to our chat!

Kellee: Fight On!