



## Rankings and Accreditations:

# Their Influence on Branding of Higher Education Institutions in Poland

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### Introduction: Brand and the University

The brand as an important strategic element of higher education institutions' (HEI) was introduced in the 20th century when managerial thinking began to be applied in their management. This article focuses on the fundamental tasks of a higher education institution and how branding can guide decisions while defining and promoting the institution.

A popular definition of a brand is: "the combination of a product, its name, and its advertisement and related activities." In the modern business setting, corporations and companies are strongly defined by their brands, which can be valued at up to 70% of the company's total worth. For example, the Coca-Cola brand was valued in 1997 at 48 billion USD (without considering the value of its infrastructure, capital, etc). The brand of a higher education institution can be said to be the result of the perception of quality held by the primary stakeholders, quality of its educational programs, the quality of individual course design, the instructor quality, the level and type of undertaken research, and the institution's infrastructure and its organization.

This article presents a different definition, defining "brand is the sum of impressions, emotions, facts and experiences which a particular university has created in the public conscience". What is most important to the manager of a HEI is the fact that a brand is the sum of promises and trust.

The role of HEI brand increases in importance as the level of competition increases within the education sector. Institutions keen to lead the national rankings (and the international ones) must focus on strengthening their brand. The process of globalization and ever-increasing internationalization of HEI's or their programs introduces new issues into brand management. Undoubtedly, a strong university brand contains within it a sizeable portion of information about the expected high quality of study programs offered by the School. Unfortunately, addressing brand and marketing management within traditional universities invariably encounters a great deal of opposition. Almost immediately, the notion of

academic independence is brought up, coupled with statements about education being a mission. Universities must focus only on the mission including research. This view holds that marketing or branding of the institution is pure sales. As a consequence, sizeable conflicts are created within the institution's management and its faculty members.

Yet, with the mass nature of higher education, emergence of for-profit universities, withdrawal of significant governmental support, and the effects of globalisation process on HEI, the introduction of managerial decision-making (of which marketing management is part) is unavoidable. Competition is increasing and the "winners" will be schools that address these current and future challenges and introduce branding concepts and practices. The winners of this competition will be those institutions that have already introduced these concepts (leading private universities) and those public universities, which will be the first to see the current and future challenges.

Before addressing the brand and its role in determining the quality of higher education institutions, it is beneficial to identify primary stakeholder groups:

1. Founders of the institution
2. Students and their families
3. University graduates (alumni)
4. Potential and real employees
5. University faculty members
6. Local environment
7. Institutional partners

An additional group that cannot be included in the above, and which is extremely interested in the quality of a higher education institution, is comprised of student candidates and their families.

The fundamental ways of reaching the stakeholders include various alternatives:

- Internal Public Relations (PR) (directed at students and faculty)
- External Public Relations (directed at external stakeholders)

<sup>1</sup>By this we understand the wide variety of organisational types of schools offering tertiary education (universities, polytechnics, those with the right to award only BA-type diplomas or those that can award PhD's, etc.).

- Advertising in traditional media
- Promotion aimed candidates and families
- Internet promotion.

Primary tools used for reaching the stakeholders include: articles and information in the press, participation in institution rankings, direct PR, trade conferences, advertisements, and press conferences.

From the first days of WSB-NLU existence, we conducted research among our candidates and students that focus on their decision-making patterns related to institution choice and later satisfaction from that choice. The sum of our research experiences (12 years) coupled with the decade-long managerial experiences allows for the identification of 12 crucial factors affecting the creation of a strong brand (the listed order only partially recognises their relative importance):

- Trust towards the School as an institution
- High quality of offered programs
- Academic standing of faculty within the community
- Quality of alumni education
- Ease in finding employment by alumni
- Opinion held by potential and real employers.
- Opinion held by academic peers about the status of the institution.
- Extracurricular offerings which affect the quality of student life.
- Satisfaction from studying at a particular institution.
- Position held in rankings.
- Study conditions (quality of academic infrastructure and equipment, social and sports facilities, etc).
- Cooperation in terms of programs and individuals with international partners.

This article is presented by the Founder and Rector of a WSB-NLU. This higher education institution clearly focuses on its students, a School whose mission is the education of people to the highest attainable level. The development of faculty members and their scientific activities are the means to an end, which is the conducting of academic activity at the highest level.

For a higher education institution focused on the student, the most important aspects of brand-creation are:

1. Academic programs
2. Positive student-faculty relationships.
3. Good conditions for study (infrastructure, etc.).
4. Extracurricular offerings that enhances academic life (entertainment, opportunities for personal growth, etc.).
5. Building a positive image outside the institution within the wider academic community (prestigious conferences, research activity, receiving recognisable awards).
6. Widely-understood PR in the surrounding environment: local, regional, national and global.
7. Using new communication technologies (Internet, Intranet, etc.).
8. Using direct promotional techniques (mainly aimed at current students and alumni).

The information that WSB-NLU gathered during research among candidates points to four vital factors that assist in the decision-making process when it comes to school selection:

- Opinions on school shared by current students and alumni.
- Information collected from the Internet (websites).
- Positions in rankings.
- Articles in the press about the School, interviews with the Rector and outlining the careers of School alumni.

The fundamental factor affecting school selection (that emerges in nearly every poll answer sheet) is the opinion about the institution and the quality of its programs that is shared by current students in private conversations with the candidates'. Rankings also play an important role.

Undoubtedly, brands of historical and well-known state-funded institutions (for example the Polish Jagiellonian University or Warsaw School of Economics) are enough to lure students into their corridors without having to consult the rankings. The market for private non-state funded institutions has emerged only during the last 13 years, and in this industry segment, the position held in the rankings is very important when it comes to competing for high-level, talented candidates. Private institutions which function under condi-

tions of extremely aggressive competition are strongly dependent on their ranking spots. Rectors of such institutions must analyze the rankings and even make some decisions related to the School's future strategic development that must be directly applicable to "climbing" the rankings.

#### Accreditations, Concessions, Rankings

When discussing the quality of higher education, people often confuse the three terms listed above and there is especially large confusion about accreditation.

The "Panstwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna" (PKA or State Accreditation Committee) exists in Poland for four years, and in reality is a concession-granting commission and not an accreditation body, i.e. one that allows new institutions to enter and new programs to be offered within the official public system, upon receiving a positive opinion from the commission and a decision from the appropriate Minister. Only then is the institution granted the right to award diplomas which the School has received authorization. The PKA has a very useful function, setting the lowest acceptable standards (number of professors teaching, minimal content of programs) but in no way does it measure the quality of teaching at a given institution. The work of the PKA and its on-site Visiting Teams is focused primarily on paperwork and formal documentation, not on the teaching process nor the quality of the students and alumni.

Form the perspective of quality, much more important are the voluntary accreditation associations, like the American AACSB or the European EQUIS and CEEMAN, which established higher standards from those seen as merely acceptable. As a result, these associations separate a group of high-quality and top-quality institutions. The first Polish association was the "Stowarzyszenie Edukacji Menedzerskiej" (Association of Managerial Education) or "Forum", created 10 years ago. However, its activity is restricted to private institutions and only those at the forefront: the SEM Forum accreditation has only 24 schools out of over 250 of offering business/management programs.

A different method of measurement comes in the form

of rankings-their role focuses on assuring external measurement of institution quality and of their programs, taking under consideration the publicly held opinion as well. The ranking's value increases the further they are removed from the opinions of the academic world. An extreme form of evaluation is the comparison of first pay checks received by fresh alumni in their first job and the pay checks after 5 years. Unfortunately, this evaluation method is possible only in countries with stable economies and higher education systems that function for years without excessive changes. Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine and many others do not have such a favorable situation, where the last 15 years saw massive disruptions as a result of systemic change, including that in higher education.

In such a complex and fluid situation, the rankings should offer an unbiased picture of a higher education institution and provide a fixed point of reference. The importance of rankings is highlighted by the research conducted at WSB-NLU: 53%-83% responders (1995-2000) who learned about WSB-NLU did so through the ranking of Wprost, a leading Polish weekly political/economic/social magazine.

#### Rankings in Poland

Categories of rankings present in Poland:

1. Of entire schools (Rzeczpospolita/Perspektywy, Wprost).
2. Of the most popular programs/degrees (Polityka, Wprost).
3. Intra-industry (Home&Market, Newsweek).

Types of rankings:

- Academic (focus on interests of faculty members);
- Market-based (focus on interests of students)

#### A. Rzeczpospolita/Perspektywy Ranking

Considered to be the most prestigious by the academic community

- All institutions: state-funded and private combined, division according to the right to award doctorates (so-called

#### Viewpoint

## Usefulness of B-School Rankings as a Decision Tool

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Over the past decade, the theme of "business school rankings" has continually grown in popularity. Annual rankings featured in extremely popular publications identify which business schools are in vogue, as well as those in decline or not worth attention. Magazine issues featuring the surveys based on schools' prestige and quality are often best selling editions.

The epopee with rankings began with highly tailored editions of innovators such as US News and World Report. Following the pioneers, many other publications jumped on the ranking bandwagon, creating a major problem - Such publications often lack expertise on the topic and, as a result, their judgment is often imprecise. The first thing that casts doubt on the rankings' validity is a striking discrepancy between the business schools' positions in different rankings. Each magazine applies its own methodology. Moreover, their criteria are not always transparent. Consequently, the same school can occupy different places in different rankings.

For example:

*Wall Street Journal* B School Ranking (2004)

1. Michigan
  2. Carnegie Mellon
- Business Week* B School Ranking (2004)
1. Northwestern (Kellogg)

2. Chicago  
*Financial Times* B School-Ranking (2005)

1. Harvard Business School
1. University of Pennsylvania: Wharton
3. Columbia Business School

*Wall Street Journal* concentrates on how corporate recruiters perceive the experience of on-campus recruiting. By contrast, the *Business Week* rankings measure the quality of an MBA by three criteria - student satisfaction, employer satisfaction and research output. The *Financial Times* relies on more objective measures placing emphasis on "Weighted Salary 3-years Post-graduation", followed by "Research Rating" and the "Number of Doctoral Students" produced by the school. Even assuming that rankings can reflect achievements of b-schools precisely, a year is not enough time to measure changes. Therefore, dramatic changes in ranking from one year to the next is more often a reflection of methodology than of adjustment of the b-schools' prestige and quality.

Being fixated on rankings without knowing the specifics of survey methodology, many applicants fail to consider which school matches their intellectual prowess with an appropriate and challenging curriculum, and instead switch their attention exclusively to a b-school's ranking in the popular survey. As a result, dazzled applicants often

storm top b-schools, only to become disappointed after several months of study due to a disparity between their expectations and the school's delivery. Elements important to the MBA candidate are not always important in the rankings. Users need to delve into each ranking and identify the elements that can provide useful information or insight into schools that may interest them.

On the other hand, a b-school's position in the rankings does not matter to many in the academic world. For example, Harvard and Wharton, which share first place in the *FT* ranking this year, have stated they will refuse to provide publications with the information about their students and alumni in the future. Both professors and students of the aforementioned schools argue that rankings distort reality and misrepresent the majority of positive and negative aspects of a b-school. The two top b-schools' refusals to provide publications with the necessary information will obviously impact future rankings.

In Europe, being motivated by popularity of the rankings and the potential sales revenues of issues carrying the rankings, many publishers launched their own surveys. Again, different surveys apply different methodologies and blurred criteria. To make matters worse, in contrast to comparatively homogenous US b-schools, European programs are variegated, reflecting the multiple cultures and

level academic institutions) and private institutions that have the right to award MA's.

- Prepared by the Rector of School of Economics, Prof. Roki, and represents the views of the faculty.

Criteria and weight/importance placed:

- Ranking of academic HEI's: 20 categories divided into 3 groups-institution prestige (3 categories, 50%), scientific strength (5 categories, 30%), study conditions (12 categories, 20%).

- Ranking of private HEI's that award MA's: 28 categories divided into 3 groups-institution prestige (2 categories, 30%), intellectual potential/strength (11 categories, 40%) and study conditions (16 categories, 30%).

Evaluation of ranking:

- One-sided views (interests of the professor's), the position is determined by the strength of the professor group.

- Lacking categories for the evaluation of study programmes and the means of its realisation.

- No consideration of the interest of students.

- Defensive ranking, considering the interests of the old and large state schools.

#### B. Wprost Ranking

The oldest and most popular among candidates entering higher education.

- Separation of state and private institutions (universities, technical universities, medical, economic, farming, teaching, physical education, artistic) and 2 categories of private institutions (business and non-business) and a common ranking of MBA programmes.

- Unique ranking "Where to study" for the 9 most popular program/degrees, where the quality of study is compared as is the market value of the resulting diplomas. Common for state and private institutions (clearly aimed at the candidates and their families).

Criteria and weight/importance:

- For state institutions: 4 categories-intellectual capital (60 points), learning process evaluation (20 points), chances for employment evaluation (15 points), study conditions evaluation (5 points).

- For private institutions: 3 categories-intellectual capital evaluation (40 points), learning process evaluation (40

points), chances for employment evaluation (20 points). Evaluation of ranking:

- Places clear accent on the value of the diploma and showing the institution from the perspective of the students.

- Prepared by people from outside the academic community.

#### C. Polityka Ranking

Prepared by the Economic Academy in Poznan community.

- No ranking of entire institutions, just aimed at the comparison of the 7 most popular programs/degrees in social science (business/management, teaching, political science, psychology, sociology), law and computer science.

- 6 categories-academic position (6 indicators, together: 25 points), faculty potential/strength (7 indicators, together: 20 points), focus on studies (7 indicators, together: 20 points), relationships with the external environment (12 indicators, together: 15 points), selectivity (6 indicators, together: 10 points), infrastructure (9 indicators, together: 10 points).

- For business/management studies there is a separate classification of state institutions, private schools, whereas the other degrees are classified jointly.

#### D. Newsweek Ranking

Prepared by "Pracownia Badan Społecznych" from Sopot, which queried over 600 companies about whose alumni they are most interested in employing.

Categories-overall (2 indicators: percentage of total alumni population, estimated number of alumni in 1995) and professional posts (4 indicators: directors, managers, specialists, total) and the number of companies in which alumni work.

#### Role of Accreditation and Rankings for Institution Managers

Accreditations and rankings play an important role in the processes occurring in higher education institutions, especially in those forced to compete on the open market. State schools in certain countries (like Poland) face a much different situation, as they exist on the basis of state financial support and are therefore accepting students into tuition-free programs/degrees. However, in the future, even the state schools will have to compete for students, especially due to the approaching demographic low tide.

tempt was made by "Delovoy Zhurnal". Instead of creating an integral ranking, it produced six separate rankings based on different criteria. The rankings did illustrate a positive dynamic in the Ukrainian business education; however, Ukrainian business schools are still perceived as parochial cousins of their European rivals.

In conclusion, rankings can provide useful insight into b-school programs and illustrate some general trends, such as a salary increase or career progress of graduates. However, many important aspects of a particular school remain beyond the scope of rankings' research. The main problem with rankings is that they pretend to make objective something that is fundamentally very subjective and personal. Candidates or businesses researching schools need to be aware that current popularity and prestige of b-schools reflected in rankings often depend on subjective aspects. In selecting programs, rankings can be better used as a decision tool if the survey methodology is understood and personal needs remain paramount in any ultimate decision. □

not once-a-week like he used to. when the number of faculty was smaller. Also, this criterion completely ignores the lower-level instructors like seminar assistants, language instructors, etc., who are the people delivering the greatest amount of knowledge and work closely with students.

The author, who runs a School focused clearly on the student's best interest, analyzes the various rankings every year and draws from them conclusions helpful in setting the School's development strategy. Rankings prepared by professors value highly the right to award PhD's, which is granted to an institution with sizeable scientific achievements of its staff. This in no way translates into the level of education of conventional students. With a bit of exaggeration, we can state that the right to award PhD's serves primarily to boost the Rector's ego and that of his faculty, instead of generating optimal learning conditions for the students. It would be very interesting to conduct a century-long study of two schools, focused on ever-higher academic and scientific titles for its faculty and the other focused on assuring the best level of service in educating its students. The quality of faculty is for it a means to an end and not an end in itself. We can expect that the first would not survive. Rankings funded by the academic community do not measure the quality of a particular program/degree, the number of classes conducted with small groups, the use of active-teaching methods. The prestige of an institution in the eyes of its students and candidates is not measured either. Interestingly, this last characteristic can be measured easily, by calculating the percentage of students undertaking their education in a school that have come from a different city/town. At WSB-NLU 85-88% of full-time students come from cities other than Nowy Sącz, and over 70% come from outside the Malopolska region.

The ranking creators, by skillfully selecting the weights and measures, can change nearly everything (at least in terms of the leading group that is competing aggressively amongst itself), raise some to the clouds and discard others into the abyss. It doesn't matter whether the creators want it or not, but they are in fact influencing the education policy of the country. Therefore, both the creators and the readers should be aware of the rankings true value. Currently, most rankings are measuring with increased precision the value of higher education institutions from the perspective of the professors, and only some focus on measuring value from the perspective of the HEI's primary subject: the student, and the value of the school in the employment market. A Rector who runs his school according to the "professor-based" rankings and set his development strategy according to them, can destroy the quality of his school.

For a private HEI Rector, more important are the narrow subject rankings that evaluate a single program/degree. From those, we can draw useful conclusions, whereas the rankings of entire institutions are always too general and thus cannot play an important role in the institution's development strategy. It is impossible for a private school educating 3000-4000 students on 3-4 programs/degrees to compete in broad based rankings with a large university that employs several hundred professors and offers several dozen programs for 40000 students.

**Polish Myths and Facts in the Debate about HEI Quality (that Emerge During the Debates on Accreditations and Rankings)**

**Myth 1: The quality of an institution is defined by the number of employed professors.**

In Polish conditions, the permits for programs leading to the awarding of an MA-type diploma awarded by the

This author has a lot of doubts about the setting of rankings by the representatives of the community that is being evaluated, even if they are working hard to remain objective. They do become judges in their own case. For example, in the Rzeczpospolita/Perspektywy ranking the most important criterion is the evaluation by the academic community, usually conducted via a poll among a group of professors. This happens in a situation where a university lecturer or scientist begins his/her work at a give institution and many decades later retires from it. So he/she knows well only the parent institution and knows a few or a few dozen people from other institutions that are engaged in similar academic or scientific activity. Conferences offer another small window of acquiring knowledge about other institutions, although in today's times more and more conferences are organised at health spas or hotels. Therefore, how can a professor be a trustworthy judge of value of other institutions, of which there can be several hundred?

Rankings value highly the so-called "student access to highly-qualified staff". It seems like a good idea. Unfortunately, via the simple misapplication of this criterion we can easily destroy a school: one of the rankings calculates this through a ratio of (so-called) "calculatable" academic instructors (with a PhD holder valued as 1 and a full professor valued as 2 units) to the number of "calculatable" students (with a full-time student valued at 1 and the part-time/evening students valued at 0.3 units). What does this mean for a school? To move up in the rankings, it is advisable to have a lot of part-time/evening students, while simultaneously no one can defend the theory that part-time programs are of the same merit as full-time ones. Treating this criterion seriously would mean that an institution possessing 1000 full-time and 10000 part-time students will have a result 2.5 times better than a school where there are 10000 full-time and only 1000 part-time students. Clearly, this is absurd. "Academic availability" can be improved for example by lowering the number of contracted hours: for a professor from 120 to 60. That way the school can employ the double number of professors, improving its overall ranking result. Paradoxically, for the student such an action brings forth more problems: with such a small workload the professor will now visit the school once-a-month and

Minister of Education are dependent on the school possessing 8 full professors. Everything else, including the proposed program, is of secondary importance. Many rankings offer professor-to-student ratios. On the other hand, in a school focused on quality, where alongside classical lectures many classes are conducted in small groups, which allows for deep interaction, the student spends considerable time with adjunct professors (adiunkt) who hold a PhD, assistants and language instructors who hold a BA or MA title only.

This author is convinced that the quality of education is defined by the everyday work of adjunct professors and assistants, a reality illustrated in the table below, which offers data about the total numbers of hours a student spends during his/her studies with each of the four fundamental faculty groups.

Data comes from WSB-NLU programmes in 2004-05:

Faculty	Business Program	Political Science Program
Professors	13,13 %	10,23%
PhD's	31,66%	38,07%
Assistants	18,15%	19,88%
Language Instructors	37,06%	31,82%

Of course, the role of the professors, their experience and role in the forming of younger staff, conducting of thesis seminars, etc is very important to the school - but the quality of education is defined by the entire employed faculty and not just the professors.

**Myth II: The ranking location and prestige are determined by scientific research conducted in the institution.**

The quality of scientific research conducted within the institution is only directly related to the quality of education in the case of doctoral studies, while there is a small or virtually no effect upon undergraduate programs. The importance of research is greater in the applied sciences (like physics, mathematics, etc), some technical sciences, while in the case of social sciences (like business or law) the importance is drastically reduced. In the case of mass-access higher education we can easily imagine an institution running an outstanding business program where there is no research being undertaken, the teaching staff has to follow world-class progress (conduct "reverse engineering" research to understand them) and a sizeable part of classes are taught by people with practical business experience, employed in successful companies.

**Myth III: A direct indicator of attractiveness and quality of a given program is the number of candidates applying for each available place.**

In the Polish reality, where state-funded institutions offer tuition-free study, most candidates submit no less than 3 applications to different universities, not necessarily for the same program, so that the chance of being accepted onto a tuition-free degree is sizeably increased. This financial factor is very important. So, the comparison of quality and attractiveness of a given degree would be possible only then when all universities would offer programs at the same financial level (either tuition-free or tuition based with similar fee structures).

**Myth IV: The selection of a university among candidates is strongly influenced by the presence of "big professor names" employed in the institution.**

Only within the smallest percentage of the candidates, those most gifted with a clearly defined goal of pursuing

an academic or scientific career, will the presence of recognized names be a factor in the decision-making process. The rest of candidates are influenced more by the brand, accessibility, good opinion among existing students about the degree itself, material conditions and the atmosphere.

#### **Influence of Accreditations on the Quality of a Higher Education Institution and its International Position**

The correct selection of accreditation systems undertaken by the school management is important in the long-run management of processes, whether it is a small school with the focus is on constant quality improvement of its programs or a large institution focuses on its faculty.

A good case of using accreditation procedures is WSB-NLU. Before winning the Wprost rankings in 1995-1996, the school was completely unknown in Polish academic cir-

cles. Its founder was someone from outside the community and the school did not employ well-known professors. As a result the Wprost ranking was questioned within academic circles. To justify its success, the WSB-NLU management applied with its business program to the newly created accreditation committee and received acceptance for the program. The next step, connected to the right for awarding American Baccalaureate diplomas, was passing through the accreditation process of the American commission appropriate for Illinois, the North Central Association. This entailed accreditation of the entire school and not just the programs. Currently, due to the growth in international recruitment, WSB-NLU is preparing for CEE-MAN accreditation.

The experience of passing through two accreditation processes is positive. The most important factor is the preparation by the program designers and implementers of an honest faculty peer review-the set of formal requirements that must be fulfilled for the accreditation committee to be satisfied allow its management to better evaluate the programs and find ways of improving the quality. In essence, the process of accreditation brings with it a wave of self-discovery. An important part of the accreditation is the on-site visit by the evaluation committee, especially when the Team is made up of experienced professionals (this was the case with WSB-NLU's NCA accreditation where the team members included two Presidents of American universities) as then the school management can utilise their evaluations to further improve quality or institute policies aimed towards such a goal.

An important factor in any accreditation or concession awarding is the analysis of a given program from the perspective of fulfilling existing predefined minimum program requirements. In this area there is always sizeable debate raging within the community. In Poland, the official bodies ("Rada Główna Szkolnictwa Wyzszego", the Central Council for Higher Education for the "Panstwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna", State Accreditation Committee) set their own program minimums whereas the accreditation associations set their own. The minimums are set to assure that there is minimal, repeatable knowledge and certain skills possessed

by each alumni of the program regardless of which institution they studied. Unfortunately, excessively detailed minimums make it very difficult for School management to create a specific, custom program that can be set apart from the competition.

To summarize, the role of the state accreditation systems is the granting of concessions for the undertaking of a particular program and assuring that the institutions offering it realize a set of minimal program requirements and required techniques of its realization.

The role of the voluntary accreditation associations is the highlighting of high quality programs. A well-designed program of gaining follow-on accreditations for the various programs offered and for the entire institution allows for the perfecting of academic staff and the offered programs.

Accreditations acquire special importance when the given institution enters the international recruitment market. The problem of proper evaluation of program quality becomes vital for people considering undertaking studies in other countries. Polish higher education institutions are opening to international recruitment-all the state and private schools combined offer a total of 500 000 places (in full-time and part-time programmes) whereas the number of 19-year olds who have completed high school is beginning to decline and will fall within a decade to 200 000 per annum.

WSB NLU is operating an MBA in English program since 1997, but until now Polish students have been the dominant group. In 2002 the School decided to open a 5-year BA+MA Management and Marketing program in English. The obvious advantage of WSB-NLU over its rivals is the offering of two diplomas: the Polish Licencjat (BA-type degree) and Magister (MA-type degree) and the American Baccalaureate awarded by the School's American partner-National-Louis University. Since 2003, together with DePaul University, WSB-NLU is also operating the prestigious 2-year MSc in Computer Science.

During the first years of the School's existence Poles studied alongside only Slovaks and Ukrainians, for whom learning in Polish wasn't a large problem. Since 2004 the increasing number of foreigners is growing as they undertake the increasing number of English-lingual programmes while the number of Socrates-Erasmus exchange students is also growing. Currently, the number of foreigners has passed 100, from 16 countries, with a group of 23 Chinese that looks to steadily increase. For the Chinese Scholarship Council, the official governmental recruiter, the NCA accreditation, the American programme and double diplomas have been the main reasons for selecting WSB-NLU, signing an agreement and sending Chinese students to Nowy Sacz.

The case of WSB-NLU, created in 1992 (in cooperation with an American partner) that has won or placed high in the rankings since 1995-1996 and maintains a leading position despite strong competition, fits well into the globalization processes in higher education. Currently, higher education institutions in Central Europe have to decide whether they want to remain local schools or compete for students from all over the world. The first, defensive strategy can lead to school closure due to demographic changes, while the second, aggressive strategy calls for competing on the international arena and demands constant improvements in terms of program quality and the breadth of the offering. It is a difficult strategy, but one that will bring results to the founders, faculty and the students and alumni. ☐

## Launching New Projects

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