Message from the Dean

The Geneva School of Economics and Management (GSEM) of the University of Geneva (UNIGE) is entering its third academic year. Since its creation in 2014, many reforms have been implemented, and others are in progress. This brief activity report shows that the GSEM is a dynamic faculty, which has already reached some of its objectives in only two years, and which has much more to offer after two years.

The GSEM was created upon an institutional and political willingness to create a business school in Geneva, aiming to contribute to the interests of our city by being recognized as a leading one in its field. As a faculty of the UNIGE, the GSEM aligns its development strategy along the academic excellence of its research, while referring to three fundamental values which are social responsibility, community ties, and disciplinary openness.

- The main reform so far resulted in the creation of a new, bilingual French-English Bachelor’s program in Economics and Management. Since its introduction in the fall of 2015, the number of new students has increased by 24%.
- Administrative reforms have allowed for an efficient organization, bolstering student services to correspond to international standards.
- The recruitment of ten new professors led to a significant leap in high-level scientific output.
- The arrival of new professors also allowed us to strengthen the excellence of our teaching, especially with regards to training doctoral students, who are now in a better position to find professors’ positions at the international level.
- GSEM-executive continuing education, which represents more than 50% of all the continuing education activities at the UNIGE, is also undergoing structural and strategic reforms in order to gain stronger international visibility. Our MBA programs have recently received the prestigious AMBA accreditation.
- These reforms and the launch of two new Masters programs align GSEM’s mission with the Canton’s economic strategy, particularly in regards to the growing influence of the “Big Data” effect on business activities (Master in Business Analytics), the international organizations challenges (International Organizations MBA) and the fast transforming economic sector of commodity trading (Master in Commodity Trading and Shipping).
Bilingual Bachelor in Economics and Management

This new program was an instant success, as shown by the 24% increase in new students in 2015. A unique Swiss program completely bilingual in French and English, GSEM’s Bachelor (BA) also sets itself apart through its generalized curriculum, which places an emphasis on social responsibility. From their very first year in this program, students are encouraged to take on «institutional» projects by engaging in the faculty and university life. Built upon solid methodological bases, the new BA offers a range of specializations which allow students to pursue their studies in varied academic or career-track fields (see «Our Masters»). Numerous visits from professionals in leadership positions bring theoretical learning closer to the realities of the professional world.

Thanks to our reforms and new hiring, we now position ourselves in areas of great added value for our societies, such as analytics or «Big Data», sustainable development, environment, or energy management. We also benefit from the presence in Geneva of important stakeholders, with whom we are continuously developing partnerships to improve the quality and impact of our services, in education and in research. On the one hand, our training programs adapt to existing needs and our research work is inspired by the important issues faced by entrepreneurs; on the other, we welcome professionals whose experience complements our professors’ knowledge and skills. After two years of dialogue and exchange, we can rely on solid partnerships with the local economic and institutional community.

In 2015, the GSEM had 1,566 students in Bachelor, Master, PhD, MAS¹ and MBA² programs, and 1,100 in CAS³ and DAS⁴ programs, as well as nearly 300⁵ in inter-faculty programs. Between 2014 and 2015, the number of registrations in all core programs increased by 19%, and this trend became stronger between 2015 and 2016.

¹ Master of Advanced studies, 60 ECTS
² Master in Business Administration, 60 ECTS
³ Certificate of Advanced studies, 18 ECTS
⁴ Diploma of Advanced studies, 36 ECTS
⁵ Estimate based on a proportion of the students since different faculties are concerned.

All of the members of the GSEM, professors and teachers, administrative staff and students, can be proud of the results we present today, after only two years of existence. The Dean’s office can therefore confidently take on the second half of its mandate.

Prof. Maria-Pia Victoria-Feser
Dean of the GSEM of the UNIGE

To achieve this objective, the GSEM needs to go through the accreditation process as proposed by the EFMD association (http://www.efmd.org/index.php/accreditation-main/equis).
Since 2015, seven GSEM’s graduated doctoral students have been enrolled as assistant professors by prestigious Universities.
³ http://www.mba-world.com/
Our masters

Beyond the four disciplinary Masters (Economics, Management, Wealth Management, Statistics) which are taught in English, the GSEM is currently preparing «career-track» Masters. While disciplinary Masters aim to prepare our students for doctoral research, most students enter the professional world after obtaining their Master. Career-track Masters are part of GSEM’s innovative «bridge the gap» project, and strengthen the links between the academic and professional worlds, in a «win-win» process, and prepare students for their entry into the workforce. These interdisciplinary Masters grant them access to both a solid academic education (over the course of one year) in a range of disciplines, as well as professional training through a six or twelve month internship with a company or institution. This kind of program offers two major advantages: students are given the opportunity to immerse themselves more rapidly into the professional world, and companies the chance to recruit highly specialized graduates. In the fall 2017, a new Master program in Commodity Trading and Shipping¹ and a Master in Business Analytics will be launched.

¹ This new master is the result of revamping the existing one.

The Canton budget allocated to the GSEM represents approximately 5% of the total budget allocated to the UNIGE, or around 16 million francs¹. Furthermore, thanks to the activities of its professors, the GSEM generates around 11 million francs in additional revenue for educational and research activities.

¹ The financial resources of the services and faculties of the University of Geneva are reported annually in the latter’s management report, which is publicly available.

Continuing education is aimed at professionals who, either after gaining corporate experience¹ or alongside their work, wish to deepen their knowledge in a field of economic science and boost their career. The GSEM offers CAS, DAS, MAS, and MBA programs that fit current demands in management. These programs are designed in close collaboration between the academic and professional worlds, on both the regional and international levels. Today, close to 1,500 students are enrolled in the 45 different programs, which are either functional (traditional corporate positions) or sectorial (for economic and institutional activities of particular importance to Geneva). Today, a significant number of former students hold leadership positions in Geneva and elsewhere in Switzerland.

¹ One of the requirements is an experience of at least 3 years in a managerial position.
Innovations in Learning

With the support of the UNIGE central services, the GSEM is committed to developing new types of alternative education means, especially distance learning. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), private distance courses (Small Private Online Course) and streaming courses not only reduce overcrowding in the lecture hall but also attract different student audiences. As university education becomes more globalized, local specializations become more and more attractive. The GSEM therefore offers students located abroad to benefit from its teaching programs, in both core programs and in continuing education. Next step: online interactions in classrooms.

GSEM’s professors who are affiliated to the GFRI (Geneva Finance Research Institute) have developed a series of MOOCs on the theme of «Understanding Financial Markets», which are now ranked among the ten most followed courses on the Coursera platform. (https://www.coursera.org/)

Community Ties

From the outset, the GSEM has showed its commitment to the importance of local anchoring and strong international positioning. An Advisory Board composed of representatives from Geneva’s corporate, social, and international fields, was created to debate GSEM’s development strategy to ensure that our education and research missions better answer the needs of society.

Furthermore, a new association for economics sciences alumni from the UNIGE, BeGSEM ALUMNI (http://www.be-gsem.org/), was launched in November 2015. It aims to create a community around the GSEM and its values. Exchanges between graduates, professors, researchers, corporations, and organizations are enhanced, notably through events organized by the association. This initiative offers unique meeting and networking opportunities for the transmission of the academic values throughout the society.

Through GSEM’s Centers for Competence and Innovation (CCI), our professors develop innovative research topics with high added social value. They create research groups on the local and international levels, and thereby bring sought-after skills to UNIGE. Some of these research topics include public-private partnerships, energy economics, consumer behavior, the environment, human development, sustainable development, micro-finance, data science, business analytics, etc. With the recruitment of new professors, other CCIs will soon be launched as well.

On the international level, partnerships with Business Schools are continuously being developed. This mostly concerns the mobility of our Bachelor students, who are allowed to spend a semester of study abroad. In one year, 33 exchange agreements were signed with prestigious institutions. And we have only just begun.