

Academic Applications of the Birkman Method® in Colleges and Universities

U.S. undergraduate, graduate and continuing education programs find that the Birkman Method® personality assessment positively affects students and the businesses that may hire them or in which they work

Although used for years by corporations to foster leadership development and team building and to improve employee placement and job fit, several universities across the U.S. also have been using The Birkman Method to aid in career guidance and to acclimate students to the real-life issues faced in working within business organizations. These universities have introduced The Birkman Method to students in their graduate, undergraduate, executive MBA and open enrollment programs, and have even used the assessment to aid their own internal administrative staff.

Since the Moore School of Business began using the Birkman Method, its placement rates for graduates have increased from 45 percent to 88 percent. Employers report that students who have graduated since the school implemented the Birkman Method are more focused and know what they want.

Schools like the University of South Carolina, Emory University and Colgate University, are administering the assessment to students in order to help them better understand how their work styles affect their interactions with others, their roles in team settings and the workplace as a whole. In the case of Emory University, those same applications and uses have been extended to key administrative, university leadership and staff departments.

The University of South Carolina's Moore School of Business is such a passionate believer in the Birkman that it has made it the foundation of its Moore Professional Series, a two-year career and professional development process incorporated into the regular graduate academic schedule. This program helps graduate students prepare to make educated, appropriate career choices after graduation. Graduate students participating in the Moore Professional Series, usually students studying to receive their MBAs, are required to take the Birkman before the first day of class.

"Since we've been using the assessment, we've really found that the Birkman is what defines who we are now," said Jane Willis, director of the Graduate Career Management Office at the University of South Carolina.

Emory University, another zealous Birkman user, has implemented the assessment in several academic areas throughout the campus including:

- the Executive MBA Program
- Emory Healthcare
- the Office of the General Counsel
- the Development Office
- the President's cabinet
- Emory College (the university's undergraduate liberal arts school)
- the BBA undergraduate program
- multiple levels of the university's leadership and administration

As many as 5,000 individuals have taken the Birkman Method assessment through the auspices of Emory University in the last six years and between ten and 15 professionals are currently trained to administer and interpret the Birkman there.

"The face validity of the Birkman is exceptional," said Kelly Bean, director of Executive Education for the Goizueta Business School at Emory University. "Ninety percent or better." In terms of assessments, face validity refers to a colleague's or friend's personal validation of the assessment's findings. Namely, after reading the reports the respondent believes that the descriptions "fit".

Goizueta Business School's first application of the Birkman was in the Open Enrollment Leadership Program that Bean founded and pioneered with a small number of companies.

Students usually work in study groups within this leadership development program. After the Birkman has been administered and interpreted at the individual level, the study groups undergo a Birkman group debrief and experiential workshop. Together, The Birkman Method and the group reviews provide fresh and actionable insights for perceiving and acting upon differences among people. According to a hard-driving, high-powered executive who took the Birkman as part of the Open Enrollment Leadership Program, "There's no such thing as 'the right way' or 'the wrong way' to do things" as long as they are done with integrity and ethics. Some of the largest and best-known companies in the U.S. now send executives to the Goizueta Business School's Open Enrollment Leadership Program to accelerate business acumen and interpersonal savvy. Ultimately, the gift of The Birkman Method is that it "is a tool for managing behavior, not changing behavior," said Bean.

"Not using the Birkman is like making the cake without the flour."

Jane Willis
Director of the Graduate Career Management Office

University of South Carolina

"There's no such thing as 'the right way' or 'the wrong way' to do things."

Graduate of Goizueta Business School's Open Enrollment Leadership Program

Colgate University has utilized the Birkman Method in its undergraduate program since 2004, and since then more than 500 students have taken the assessment. Bruce Crowley, assistant to the Dean of the College/Executive in Residence at Colgate University, has led two different classes at the university that incorporate the Birkman Method: Self-creation for the New Economy; and Leadership Development for the New Economy. Both of these classes are geared toward undergraduate liberal arts students and take a practical approach to using the Birkman Method.

In his classes, Crowley emphasizes the value of self-awareness and uses the Birkman Method to connect students to their core interests, underlying motivational needs, preferred working styles and the potential for negative behavior under stress. He focuses on using the Birkman Method to teach students how to connect with other in the workplace. He highlights how the different personality types behave and react to one another in order to teach students how to be able to modulate and refine their presentations to other types. Also, he works with students on networking and dealing with senior-level individuals in the workplace.

Universities applying the Birkman Method are seeing positive effects on their graduates. They are finding that graduates are more prepared for work life and have a better understanding of the role they play in teams and in work environments.

More than 1,000 graduate students have taken the Birkman Method since the Moore School of Business began using the assessment in 2001. As a result, its placement rate for graduates (within 90 days after graduation) has increased from 45 percent to 88 percent. Employers report that students who have graduated since the school implemented the Birkman Method are “more focused” and “know what they want.”

According to Jane Willis, “Not using the Birkman is like making the cake without the flour.”

Graduates who have Birkman Method insights also have a better grasp on how their personalities affect their work styles and how to leverage that knowledge to gain a competitive advantage. They become more interpersonally effective both “up” and “down” the organization. In addition, they are also better equipped to understand others’ work styles and the best ways to communicate with people who have very different personalities and behaviors.

As one student in Emory’s Executive MBA Program and Birkman user said, “There’s no such thing as normal behavior; ‘normal’ is a setting on a washing machine.”

We thank Director of Executive Education for the Goizueta Business School at Emory University Kelly Bean, Director of the Graduate Career Management Office at the University of South Carolina Jane Willis and Assistant to the Dean of the College/Executive in Residence at Colgate University Bruce Crowley whose insights shaped much of this article.

Send any questions or comments about this article to response@birkman.com or info@birkman.com . Visit us on the web at www.birkman.com.

About Birkman International

The Birkman Method® has been in use for more than 50 years and has been used by more than 2 million people and 5,000 organizations worldwide, including corporations, not-for-profit organizations, governmental agencies and individuals. The assessment accurately measures social behaviors, underlying expectations of interpersonal and task actions, potential stress reactions to unmet expectations, occupational preferences and organizational strengths. For more information visit our [website](http://www.birkman.com) or call 1-800-215-2760.

BIRKMAN INTERNATIONAL INC.
3040 Post Oak Blvd. Suite 1425
Houston, Texas 77056
USA Phone: 1+(713) 623.2760
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