

French business school SKEMA is opening campuses around the world, including a unique venture on the American mainland.

**Pascal Vidal** details the how and why

# A FRENCH DEBUT IN AMERICA

*SKEMA's ambition is to be a global business school, which, through its research and teaching programmes, trains and educates the talented individuals that 21st century businesses require*

**Alice Guilhon**

Dean of SKEMA Business School

Since its creation in 2009 through the merger of CERAM Business School and Groupe ESC Lille, SKEMA Business School's challenge has been to create a global, multi-campus, fast-growing school. Working closely with international and national companies, it aims to train responsible, open-minded and mobile managers who will be able to:

- develop successfully in a multicultural context and in a globalised knowledge economy in organisations of any size in any country
- Contribute to the development and sustainable performance of their organisations through their ability to innovate, their technical skills, and their cross-disciplinary and international culture.

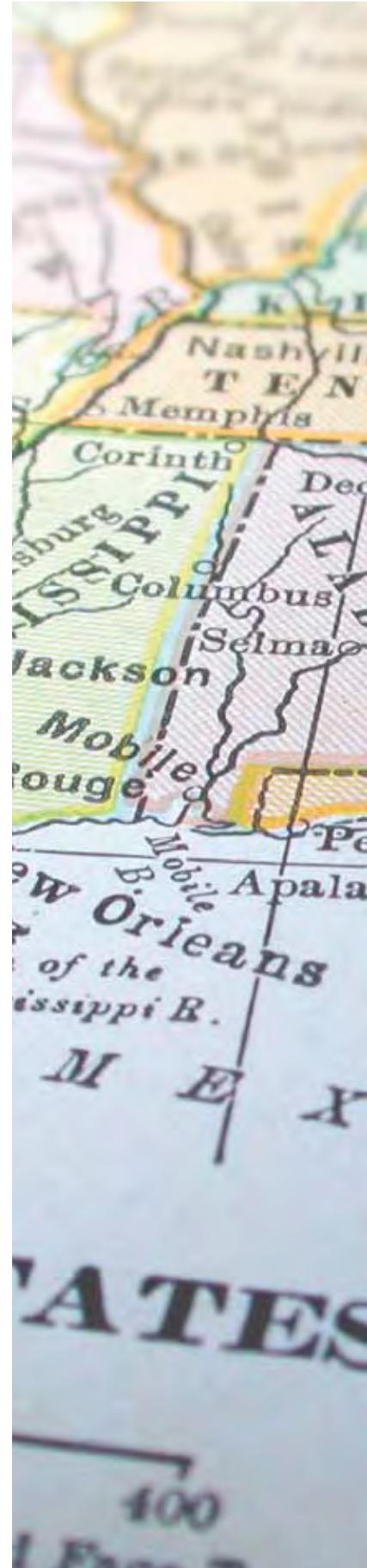
Its founders always envisaged SKEMA as a multi-campus school, with centres in Europe, Asia and the Americas. The merger created three campuses in France – Lille, Paris and Sophia Antipolis near Nice – and one in China in Suzhou near Shanghai. But the school still lacked an American campus.

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With support from the SKEMA strategic orientation committee and its international advisory board, an extensive research study was set up to identify potential locations in America. From this a short list was developed and SKEMA established contacts in this area and began to visit them.

While there is no perfect location, partner or environments, there are combinations of these that are more attractive than others.

After months of careful study, it became more and more obvious that North Carolina, especially the area around Raleigh, was the place SKEMA was looking for, where universities, companies and local authorities worked together to contribute to the development of a knowledge economy.

In particular, Research Triangle Park (RTP), a leading high-tech research and development centre created in 1959, is renowned for its robust economy and innovative work. There are now over 170 companies employing 42,000 workers at RTP.

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# 100

35% of SKEMA Business School's international students come from over a hundred countries (in 2012/13), with 30% international faculty

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SKEMA is situated in Research Triangle Park (RTP), a leading high-tech research and development centre created in 1959, with over 170 companies employing 42,000 workers in the park

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It also fitted in well with SKEMA's existing strategy of locating its campuses in top research areas. The Lille campus, for example, is in the Euraille business district and close to the EuraTechnologies and Eurasanté technology parks while Sophia Antipolis is a technology park. In 2010 SKEMA signed a university-level partnership agreement with North Carolina State University (NC State), one of several top universities in the area, to establish a campus in Raleigh.

The first five semesters of operations have already demonstrated the quality of the partnership with NC State and the dynamism of the environment for SKEMA students, faculty and staff.

By September 2012, just two years after welcoming the first students to Raleigh, SKEMA and NC State have launched their first two joint degree programmes, one at the bachelor level and one at the masters level (a Master of Science in Global Luxury Management in partnership with the Poole College of Management, the College of Textiles and the College of Design at NC State). Collaboration has also started with the College of Engineering and the School of Public and International affairs.

SKEMA is the first non-American business school ever to launch a real campus in America to serve its international students and is also the first non-American Business school to be granted the right to invite international students to study in America by Homeland Security.

SKEMA is, of course, not unaware of critics who ask what is the point of a French business school setting up shop in America?

Well, if the SKEMA Raleigh campus was a just a French campus it would certainly be a waste of time, money and energy.

But SKEMA Business School is more than a French business school; it is truly an international school with 35% of international students coming from a hundred countries (in 2012/13), with 30% international faculty and most of its programmes delivered completely in English.



SKEMA aims eventually to become a truly global school along the lines of Gabriel Hawawini's definition: "A truly global school is one with complementary and interconnected campuses located in the three major economic regions of the world (The Americas, Asia and Europe)".

SKEMA Business School is also becoming more and more global as the student experience becomes global, with the guaranteed opportunity to move internationally every single semester on any of the SKEMA campuses if they wish, and if it makes sense for their education.

For SKEMA students one of the key benefits of the Raleigh campus is that while on campus they are students of NC State University. As a result they have:

- a real US campus experience
- access to the facilities of an innovative American university, including the new Hunt library, across the street from the SKEMA campus and probably one of the most advanced libraries in the world
- mixing with US students for social, multicultural and academic activities from day one when arriving on campus; in 2012 80% of Raleigh Campus students had American roommates
- courses with local and international faculty. Last semester only 20% of the faculty teaching on the SKEMA Raleigh campus had a French passport. In 2012 there were 20 student nationalities on campus

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31%

The international mobility of students is growing; up 31.3% from 2005 to 2009 according to UNESCO – in 2009/2010 there were 3,324,871 "students abroad" around the world

The internationalisation of higher education, though a relatively recent phenomenon, is underway and accelerating. As an example, in 1997 AACSB (established in 1916) accredited its first school outside North America. By 2012 it had accredited more than 650 institutions in almost 50 countries. EFMD's EQUIS (established in 1998) covers some 140 institutions in nearly 40 countries.

In addition, the number of students enrolled in the higher education system is growing. In the next 30 years, according to UNESCO, more people will be graduating than since the beginning of history. On top of that the international mobility of students is growing too; up 31.3% from 2005 to 2009 according to UNESCO. In 2009/2010 there were 3,324,871 "students abroad" around the world.

America is by far the most popular destination for "students abroad", attracting 723,277 students in 2010/11 and the population of international students in America is growing (+32 % since 2000/01). Meanwhile, 270,604 American students studied abroad for credit in 2009/10. Though this population has more than tripled in 20 years it represents only 1.4% of the American student population and 56% of them are abroad only for the summer or eight weeks or less.

To conclude, SKEMA will become increasingly global as its students, faculty and staff transform the school itself as they circulate between its various campuses.

SKEMA students experience global reality as they work with multicultural distributed teams around the world (with a 12-hour time zone difference between our American and Chinese campuses). Such a work environment will be the future for most if not all students. At SKEMA it is already their day-to-day working environment.

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PHOTO © SKEMA

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pascal Vidal is a professor of information systems management at SKEMA Business School and the first SKEMA US campus Director.