

BUS 5111 Quantitative Skills, Feelings and Concerns

Jeffrey Elkner

University of the People

BUS 5111: Financial Management

January 31, 2026

BUS 5111 Quantitative Skills, Feelings and Concerns

In the first week of our BUS 5111: Financial Management course, we were asked if we had any concerns regarding the quantitative requirements that will be involved, and to share our feelings and any other concerns we have as we move forward. I am delighted to be given a prompt like this, and most happy to share my thoughts.

With a bachelor's degree in mathematics and a master's in computer science, I have no concerns about the quantitative skills we will need for the course. I will cheerfully churn out computations of financial ratios, and will comfortably enter spreadsheet formulas whenever needed, and may even write a Python script to do some of them if the opportunity arises.

What I am concerned about is the ongoing struggle I have between my view of the world and the world view implicit in a business administration program under our current economic and social system. My experience in our MBA program has been much as I anticipated. It uncritically embraces an economic model in which making money is the central if not sole concern. At sixty-five years of age I can unashamedly say that I still do not even know what money is, and can confidently say that no one else seems to either (Ingham, 1996). Yet here we are taught to make our decisions as to what we should do in the world based on the maximization of it, blindly believing that some invisible hand will somehow reward us if we do, despite the rapidly mounting evidence to the contrary.

Reading *The Business School and the Bottom Line* confirmed my suspicion that MBA programs throughout the world largely share this characteristic, rooted in the ideology of the United States at a particular point in its development from which these programs originated and spread. In the summary of their findings at the end of the book the authors state that they have shown that "business school teaching is, to some extent, flawed, ossified around a limited and somewhat partisan model of capitalism (Starkey & Tiratsoo, 2007, p. 197). That certainly aligns with my own experience.

That does not mean I am unappreciative of my experience here. On the contrary, I am deeply grateful to the University of the People for offering this MBA program and for obtaining WASC

certification. It enabled me to affordably complete the 18 graduate credits required to teach business classes at Northern Virginia Community College, my motivation for enrolling. Yet reaching this goal now makes it harder to continue. With my original goal met, should I continue to pursue an MBA? The determining consideration is whether continued studies will have direct relevance to my work in the solidarity economy. Thus far I have made efforts to see that it does by often taking liberties with the writing assignments given in class, twisting the prompts to serve my learning goals. I write assigned papers with my solidarity economy comrades as a primary intended audience, and then publish them on my website so they can be useful toward that end (Elkner, 2026). I have been able to do this so far and still earn passing grades.

This class in particular is timely. I serve on the board of a non-profit organization, SECOSOL, which has a goal to help launch a bookkeeping cooperative in 2026 (SECOSOL, 2026). This course will give me valuable skills that I need to help with that effort. I hope to focus on those skills and to minimize the time I spend analyzing the business practices of large extractive capitalist enterprises, which for me will only have the very limited benefit of better understanding the economic system we need to replace.

Should I continue with the rest of the courses required to earn an MBA, I plan to use my credential to develop a new solidarity economy business program in the high school where I teach that will directly serve the economic needs of the working people in my community by helping them form and operate their own democratically owned and operated businesses. In this way I hope to do, as the South American expression goes, the work of one of the ants by forming another experiment like those described in *The Making of a Democratic Economy: Building Prosperity for the Many, Not Just the Few*, “laying the pathways toward an economy of, by, and for the people” (Kelly & Howard, 2019, Preface).

Reference

Elkner, J. (2026). *Welcome to elkner.net!* [Review of Welcome to elkner.net!]. Elkner.net.

<https://elkner.net/>

Ingham, G. (1996). Money is a Social Relation. *Review of Social Economy*, 54(4), 507–529.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/29769872>

Kelly, M. & Howard, T. (2019). *The Making of a Democratic Economy: Building Prosperity for the Many, Not Just the Few*. Berrett-Koehler Publisher.

SECOSOL (2026). *Homepage* [Review of *Homepage*]. SECOSOL. <https://secosol.us/>

Starkey, K., & Tiratsoo, N. (2007). *The Business School and the Bottom Line*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619342>