

PRESS RELEASE | PARIS, 9 SEPTEMBER 2026

At SKEMA, a new academic year focused on a changing world



Left: Frédérique Vidal and Didier Le Bret during the signing of the agreement between SKEMA and the Académie Diplomatique et Consulaire (ADC). Right: François Villeroy de Galhau, former Governor of the Banque de France.

An inaugural address by François Villeroy de Galhau, a partnership with the Académie Diplomatique et Consulaire, and a hackathon focused on emerging trends: the start of the academic year for SKEMA Business School's Master in Management (PGE) program immersed new students in the major transformations they will be expected to understand, navigate, and help shape as future managers.

On their first day in SKEMA's Master in Management (PGE) program, new students were encouraged to take a broader perspective. Gathered simultaneously across the Lille, Grand Paris, and Sophia Antipolis campuses, they attended an inaugural address on September 1 by François Villeroy de Galhau, former Governor of the Banque de France and now President of the Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil.

Welcomed to the Grand Paris campus by Sylvie Jean, Director of the PGE program, and Rodolphe Desbordes, Professor of Economics and Director of the SKEMA Center for Global Risks, François Villeroy de Galhau spent 45 minutes combining economic analysis, personal experience, and a forward-looking perspective. Geopolitics, artificial intelligence, climate change,

and the rebalancing of relations between generations were among the topics discussed with students.

“Joining SKEMA is, of course, about acquiring knowledge and skills, but also about learning more about yourself, broadening your perspective, and finding your place in a world undergoing profound transformation. Meeting François Villeroy de Galhau immediately gave the start of this academic year a strong dimension of reflection, engagement, and knowledge-sharing,” said Sylvie Jean.

From geopolitics to diplomacy

The focus on geopolitical issues continued on September 4 with the signing of a partnership agreement between SKEMA Business School and the Académie Diplomatique et Consulaire of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. Initiated by Frédéric Munier, Professor of Geopolitics and Director of the SKEMA School of Geopolitics for Business, the agreement aims to strengthen exchanges between academia and French diplomatic professionals by developing cooperation among researchers, students, experts, and diplomats.

Planned initiatives include SKEMA students’ participation in the Fabrique de la Diplomatie, cross-contributions between the academy’s experts and SKEMA faculty and researchers. This will be initiated particularly through the SKEMA Publika think tank, as well as opportunities for diplomats to visit the school’s international campuses before taking up assignments abroad. The partnership creates a direct link between education, research, and a deeper understanding of international environments.

From the world’s major challenges to weak signals

Another highlight of the new academic year took a different format but pursued the same objective: learning how to make sense of a changing world. Over three days, 160 teams of first-year students (L3) across our Grand Paris, Lille, and Sophia Antipolis campuses took part simultaneously in a hackathon with one mission: **identify a trend before it becomes obvious**.

Labubu, “Dubai Chocolate,” Stanley tumblers... Starting with phenomena that have suddenly become ubiquitous, students were challenged to look beyond what is simply “trendy” and identify the social and behavioral shifts driving their emergence. One central question guided their work: “The right question isn’t: what have we invented? It’s: what has changed?”

To test their ideas against real-world experience, students spoke with Lorine Nanhon, Global Head of Data, CRM & Loyalty at L’Oréal, about how companies identify micro-signals, and with Sophie Fromental, Global Marketing Director at Flora Food Group, about the growing shift toward plant-based products. By the end of the hackathon, four trends had emerged: turning the body into a project; doing things alone, but together; expressing who I am without speaking; and rediscovering the pleasure of not knowing.

Coordinated by Ludmila Striukova, Professor of Management at SKEMA and Director of the Innovation Academy, the hackathon immediately encouraged students to adopt a mindset that will be essential throughout their careers as managers: not simply observing what works today, but learning to detect weak signals, question behaviors, and understand the transformations taking shape. It is also a very practical introduction to innovation: learning to see the world differently so they can anticipate change rather than simply follow trends.

From François Villeroy de Galhau's reflections on major economic and societal shifts to the partnership with the Académie Diplomatique et Consulaire and the hackathon's search for weak signals, SKEMA has set a clear direction for the start of this academic year: to educate students who can look beyond the obvious, better understand the transformations already underway, and anticipate those still to come.

About SKEMA Business School

With 11,000 students from over 130 nationalities, 200 professors, and 66,000 alumni in 145 countries, SKEMA Business School is a global education and research institution that develops committed talent to sustainably transform the world. The hybridization of social sciences and data sciences is at the heart of its model, and global exposure is its operational mode.

Multi-accredited (AACSB, EQUIS, EFMD Accredited EMBA), the school is recognized worldwide for its research, its more than 70 excellent programs, and its international multi-campus structure across six countries: South Africa, Brazil, Canada, China, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, and France.

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