CONSIDER THIS YOUR TWO-YEAR LICENSE TO EXPLORE.

THE FULL-TIME MBA

We are increasingly excited about the improvements, growth, and trajectory of the Full-Time MBA program and I hope that you will join us in this adventure. In the coming months we will continue to offer a variety of interesting study trips, both local and remote, giving our students exposure to business environments and economies around the country and eventually around the world. We are also working on the development of additional curriculum to provide our students with the management, leadership, and critical thinking skills to put them on a path to success in whatever industry or function they choose to pursue. Our Business Career Management Center is aggressively reaching out to develop relationships with companies inside and outside of Utah to help facilitate career opportunities for our students.

I know you will find the MBA program to provide boundless opportunities to flex your management muscle, expand your business perspective, and transform your professional path. We encourage all of our students to fully take advantage of these opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom. Our fabulous new building now provides the physical facility to foster the formation of community and exploration of ideas.

Welcome from Linda Wells

Welcome from Andrea Miller

Welcome from Sarah Johnston

We also tell students that we are here as a partner to help them move confidently through these rigorous and exciting two years. We will stand beside you on your journey to find the career that really motivates you, sweat out the hiring decisions with you and be there to celebrate your victories. Thank you for considering our MBA program. We look forward to helping you maximize your two-year license to explore!

Explore

Director, MBA Program

Director, Admissions, MBA Program

Director, Business Career Management Center

We would also encourage you to look for the concepts of exploration, transformation and customization in all of these profiles. Exploration, transformation and customization define and differentiate the University of Utah’s MBA program, and the student profiles illustrate the many ways these ideas can be brought to life.

Look for Jeff Elkins’ transformation from accounting and international politics to the world of startups with his study trip to the Bay Area. Nina Mohak explores options on a study trip to Cincinnati, meets Utah-alum Proctor & Gamble CEO Bob McDonald, and identifies new career options she hadn’t even considered. Matt Behrend customizes his education by using independent studies and student organizations as launch pads to get exactly what he wants from his MBA.

I hope you will read all of our student profiles for more examples of what’s possible with your MBA. But, above all else, I hope you get inspired! This MBA is limited only by your intellectual curiosity and passion to strive for something great!
Q: Why did you consider and then ultimately choose the University of Utah MBA program?
MB: A huge draw was the level of access with entrepreneurial ventures. As part of the admissions process, I learned about all the different clubs available to students. I applied to Babson, Darden and Ohio State and was accepted to many, but at the end of the day, the University of Utah just had the perfect environment and it led to me where I wanted to go.

Q: What have you found most rewarding about your experience at the University of Utah?
MB: I love the student culture. We have a good number of students in our dual-degree programs, and I like that there are so many people with diverse backgrounds and interests, and I like that they're so serious about their interests.

Q: What do you enjoy most about your involvement in student clubs?
MB: I’m working on Bench to Bedside, which is a program that works on commercializing medical technologies. We learned there’s a huge amount of work that goes into creating drugs, cancer drugs specifically, work. We’re working on a mobile app to create a device/management program. This has been awesome because it has really gotten me out of my comfort zone. They paired me up with second and third-year students in the MD/PhD program, and these guys are thinking about a world that’s completely unfamiliar to me. They identify opportunities, and then I go out and see how we can build a business around it.

I’ve also been involved with the founding of the Master’s Entrepreneur Club. I wanted more opportunity to network with people who can help me in my career, so I talked around and discovered there was no formal club organization for students interested in entrepreneurship. “Great,” I thought, “I’m the president of the club.” I’m talking to all the guest speakers and getting my face out there. It turned out to be a great opportunity. Every week, we get together with other students, and we just talk about ideas for startups. We’re really focused on finding the idea, getting to the value around it, and giving direction to the idea. It’s training for our entrepreneurial thinking.

I also participate in a program at the Energy Commercialization Center, and I’m having a really good experience in terms of learning the commercialization process for big-time ideas that need a lot of funding. That’s not what I’ve been used to in my background, so learning about those ideas has been really valuable.

Q: Tell us about your experience with your classmates.
MB: I’ve worked on two different startups, things that I started just since I’ve been in school. The resources that are available here are just incredible. I’ve spoken with five different investors just to get feedback on the ideas. If I didn’t say “Hey, read up on the U told me to call you,” they wouldn’t give me the time of day. So that’s been incredibly valuable. My plan is to get a company off the ground. Innovation is what’s going to make me happy in my day to day.

Q: What’s ahead for you this summer in between your first and second years?
MB: I’ll probably intern for a startup company. Right now, I’m working with MBA Director Linda Wells a lot, just doing calls with all of her contacts, trying to meet people, find opportunities. Talking to a few venture capitalists, angel investors, a few people running their own startups. I want to make sure I’m in their radar so that when something interesting comes up, I’ll be their first call; I usually approach it like “Hey, I have a few ideas. I want to get some feedback.” They’re usually entrepreneurs, and like to talk ideas, and it leads to a lively conversation. I’m usually passionate about the same things they are, so that’s a good way to build a relationship.

Q: What advice do you have for prospective MBAs?
MB: Find a place you’re passionate about — blowing off steam with a game of ping pong in the MBA student lounge.

Q: How have the environment and resources within the MBA program impacted your entrepreneurial ventures?
MB: I’m working on two different startups, things that I started just since I’ve been in school. The resources that are available here are just incredible. I’ve spoken with five different investors just to get feedback on the ideas. If I didn’t say “Hey, read up on the U told me to call you,” they wouldn’t give me the time of day. So that’s been incredibly valuable. My plan is to get a company off the ground. Innovation is what’s going to make me happy in my day to day.

Q: What’s ahead for you this summer in between your first and second years?
MB: I’ll probably intern for a startup company. Right now, I’m working with MBA Director Linda Wells a lot, just doing calls with all of her contacts, trying to meet people, find opportunities. Talking to a few venture capitalists, angel investors, a few people running their own startups. I want to make sure I’m in their radar so that when something interesting comes up, I’ll be their first call; I usually approach it like “Hey, I have a few ideas. I want to get some feedback.” They’re usually entrepreneurs, and like to talk ideas, and it leads to a lively conversation. I’m usually passionate about the same things they are, so that’s a good way to build a relationship.

Q: What advice do you have for prospective MBAs?
MB: Find a place where you’d get pushed out of your comfort zone, and a place where you’ll be able to expand your thinking. That’s what I want from a degree program. If I can get through every class just playing on my computer, there’s no value.
Q: What was your background coming into the MBA Program?
MB: I was an analyst at an energy consulting firm. I started there when I was an undergraduate and was hired on full-time when I graduated. I was there for four years, and working there was really what prompted me to get my MBA. My job had me looking as a research assistant on a list of research economic analyses, that sort of thing. But during this time, I realized that I really wanted to work more with people and do more real-world problem solving.

Q: At first you decided to keep working while starting the MBA program. How did that work out?
MB: Not good. I really thought I would be able to do both. And it wasn’t that I couldn’t physically do both, but after a month or two, I just felt I had too many balls in the air. Work, school and extracurricular activities... all these components that make a great MBA and I just wasn’t able to get the most value out of any of them. The result was I was putting in a minimum amount of effort on everything. So I finally decided to quit my job and pursue the MBA full-time.

Q: Can you talk about some of the more valuable experience-based programs you’ve been involved in this semester.
MB: I’m working with the Lassonde Center for New Venture Development, working on a videogame for kids with cancer. It was developed by a pediatric oncologist here at the university working with a number of pediatric psychologists. Kids with cancer experience better outcomes if they are able to exercise, but it’s really hard to get kids to do that when they’re stuck in a hospital room. They’re suffering and in pain and there’s no motivation to exercise. The idea is to create a game that kids, for kids, don’t take up a lot of room in the hospital, and gets kids exercising. The goal is to create a positive feedback loop for them. For example, the avatar in the game gets stronger as the kid progresses through the game, to help them feel like they’re getting stronger as well. You know, with the game to help kids create a business plan and a strategy to take this project to market. It’s a unique project because the developer isn’t so interested in seeing a big profit from the game, but he’d like to create a model for more games to be made so that more kids with diseases other than cancer can be helped as well. We’re working to commercialize that game.

I also went to the NSHBA Conference. I really enjoyed the workshop day, where I had lots of chances to get help with my resume and do mock interviews to get another set of eyes. It really helped.

I’m also going on the Bay Area study trip next month. MBA Director Linda Wells is using her personal network to set up a lot of great company visits there. It’s really amazing how much preparation they do to get us into these companies, so we’ll be able to dig down to the really interesting issues pretty quickly.

Q: You have an internship this summer with Target. How did the MBA program help you find this opportunity?
MB: There were a number of ways. We had a career panel, right after school started, in our Career Strategies class and Melissa Paul, one of our second-year MBAs, was talking about the internship she had done at Target last summer. Retailing is completely different from what I’ve been doing in my background, but the challenges of being differentiated and finding ways to think which customers want is really appealing to me. Then I went to the Graduation Career Fair here on campus, and they set up an interview for me on the spot. I met with Janet Haskell, an executive career coach at our Business Career Management Center, before my first interview, and she went through my resume and we discussed do’s and don’ts, and really impressed upon me how important it was to identify the contributions that I could make for Target, and then communicate those ideas in the interview. As part of Target’s Executive Internship Program this summer, I will spend a couple weeks in each department working at Target stores. It’s really exciting, it’s a chance to work with more people, which is exactly the sort of thing I wanted to explore as part of my MBA.

Q: You have an internship with the Lassonde Center for New Venture Development, working on a videogame for kids with cancer. It was developed by a pediatric oncologist here at the university working with a number of pediatric psychologists. Kids with cancer experience better outcomes if they are able to exercise, but it’s really hard to get kids to do that when they’re stuck in a hospital room. They’re suffering and in pain and there’s no motivation to exercise. The idea is to create a game that kids, for kids, don’t take up a lot of room in the hospital, and gets kids exercising. The goal is to create a positive feedback loop for them. For example, the avatar in the game gets stronger as the kid progresses through the game, to help them feel like they’re getting stronger as well. You know, with the game to help kids create a business plan and a strategy to take this project to market. It’s a unique project because the developer isn’t so interested in seeing a big profit from the game, but he’d like to create a model for more games to be made so that more kids with diseases other than cancer can be helped as well. We’re working to commercialize that game.

I also went to the NSHBA Conference. I really enjoyed the workshop day, where I had lots of chances to get help with my resume and do mock interviews to get another set of eyes. It really helped.

I’m also going on the Bay Area study trip next month. MBA Director Linda Wells is using her personal network to set up a lot of great company visits there. It’s really amazing how much preparation they do to get us into these companies, so we’ll be able to dig down to the really interesting issues pretty quickly.

Q: You have an internship this summer with Target. How did the MBA program help you find this opportunity?
MB: There were a number of ways. We had a career panel, right after school started, in our Career Strategies class and Melissa Paul, one of our second-year MBAs, was talking about the internship she had done at Target last summer. Retailing is completely different from what I’ve been doing in my background, but the challenges of being differentiated and finding ways to think which customers want is really appealing to me. Then I went to the Graduation Career Fair here on campus, and they set up an interview for me on the spot. I met with Janet Haskell, an executive career coach at our Business Career Management Center, before my first interview, and she went through my resume and we discussed do’s and don’ts, and really impressed upon me how important it was to identify the contributions that I could make for Target, and then communicate those ideas in the interview. As part of Target’s Executive Internship Program this summer, I will spend a couple weeks in each department working at Target stores. It’s really exciting, it’s a chance to work with more people, which is exactly the sort of thing I wanted to explore as part of my MBA.

Q: One of the primary selling points of the Eccles MBA is flexibility and customization. Have you had the opportunity to take advantage of this benefit?
MB: Absolutely, and in fact, I have a great example from next spring. I’m doing an independent study with Professor Scott Schaefer, who taught our Managerial Economics class in the fall. The idea came from some discussions I had with my father, who is the general manager up at Snowbird Ski Resort. We got to talking about Scott’s class, because Scott uses a lot of skiing examples to illustrate economic principles. So, working with my dad, I’m going to collect a variety of data to analyze some of the big expenses they have coming up. We’re going to perform some analysis to come up with more sophisticated revenue forecasting models, and hopefully help them make better decisions.
Q: How have you been able to plug into the University’s culture of innovation?
JE: In a number of ways! I’m involved in a number of startups right now. The first is attached to my assignment at the Lassonde Entrepreneur Center. I’m working with a neurosurgeon who’s invented a guidance device for implanting spinal cord stimulators. The device reduces surgery time by about 25 minutes, which we project may save hospitals big dollars. I’m working on a team with two MD/PhDs, and we made top ten in the university’s Opportunity Quest competition. Presentations are in January and then it’s on to the Utah Entrepreneur Challenge.

The second startup is also in the medical device arena; my brother and I have come up with an innovative hands-free crutch device. We placed in the top ten in the U’s Tech Titans competition with this entry, and we just finished getting a prototype built. One of the sponsors of Tech Titans is an intellectual property lawyer, so we’ve been talking to him about protecting this idea. It’s something we’ll probably patent, which is incredibly encouraging and motivating!

Q: How are you networking to find and enhance opportunities inside the MBA program?
JE: I was accepted into Connect U, which is a program in which alumni help us out by plugging us into their networks. I think a good majority of our cohort is participating in this program. I also did my own study trip to Boise. Boise isn’t a big enough market for the program to coordinate a full study trip, but MBA Director Linda Wells was fully supportive of a more personalized trip and put me in touch with some of her contacts. The trip turned out to be extremely successful and helpful in interacting with a great network and getting my name out.

Q: How have your classroom experiences impacted your startup activity?
JE: Significantly! I found that I am taking so much right from the classrooms and applying it directly to the startups I’ve been working on. It worked both ways, actually, since I had good experiences from my startups to bring to the classroom discussions, as well.

Q: What’s coming up in your second semester that you’re excited about?
JE: A bunch of classmates are going on a Bay Area Study Trip and we are scheduled to visit a lot of the big players in that area like LinkedIn, Google, Foursquare and Tesla. I’m also excited about the new web analytics class that’s being offered this spring. I’ve always wanted to learn about this and I think it’s really critical for today’s business world. I’m planning on continuing to participate in the Utah Entrepreneur Series by competing in the Utah Entrepreneur Challenge. We’re developing out a full business plan for the idea and executive summary we did for Tech Titans and the Opportunity Quest.

Q: How have you been able to plug into the University’s culture of innovation?
JE: In a number of ways! I’m involved in a number of startups right now. The first is attached to my assignment at the Lassonde Entrepreneur Center. I’m working with a neurosurgeon who’s invented a guidance device for implanting spinal cord stimulators. The device reduces surgery time by about 25 minutes, which we project may save hospitals big dollars. I’m working on a team with two MD/PhDs, and we made top ten in the university’s Opportunity Quest competition. Presentations are in January and then it’s on to the Utah Entrepreneur Challenge.

The second startup is also in the medical device arena; my brother and I have come up with an innovative hands-free crutch device. We placed in the top ten in the U’s Tech Titans competition with this entry, and we just finished getting a prototype built. One of the sponsors of Tech Titans is an intellectual property lawyer, so we’ve been talking to him about protecting this idea. It’s something we’ll probably patent, which is incredibly encouraging and motivating!

Q: How are you networking to find and enhance opportunities inside the MBA program?
JE: I was accepted into Connect U, which is a program in which alumni help us out by plugging us into their networks. I think a good majority of our cohort is participating in this program. I also did my own study trip to Boise. Boise isn’t a big enough market for the program to coordinate a full study trip, but MBA Director Linda Wells was fully supportive of a more personalized trip and put me in touch with some of her contacts. The trip turned out to be extremely successful and helpful in interacting with a great network and getting my name out.

Q: How have your classroom experiences impacted your startup activity?
JE: Significantly! I found that I am taking so much right from the classrooms and applying it directly to the startups I’ve been working on. It worked both ways, actually, since I had good experiences from my startups to bring to the classroom discussions, as well.

Q: What’s coming up in your second semester that you’re excited about?
JE: A bunch of classmates are going on a Bay Area Study Trip and we are scheduled to visit a lot of the big players in that area like LinkedIn, Google, Foursquare and Tesla. I’m also excited about the new web analytics class that’s being offered this spring. I’ve always wanted to learn about this and I think it’s really critical for today’s business world. I’m planning on continuing to participate in the Utah Entrepreneur Series by competing in the Utah Entrepreneur Challenge. We’re developing out a full business plan for the idea and executive summary we did for Tech Titans and the Opportunity Quest.

Career Goal: Feed my innovation fix
Q: Tell us about your motivation to pursue an MBA.
MB: I felt my career had plateaued, and figured it was time for growth and new opportunities. I’m interested in bridging my experiences in the non-profit sector with my business background to make an impact. The University Impact Fund is great for learning how to value companies and identify market niches to find out where you can actually have an impact. So I choose to apply for, and was accepted to, the University Impact Fund.

Q: Tell us about some of opportunities you’ve taken on during your first semester.
MB: My first major decision was whether I wanted to do the Lassonde Center or the University Impact Fund. Having been overseas, I’m really interested in development and how to use private enterprise to make an impact. The University Impact Fund is great for learning how to value companies and identify market niches to find out where you can actually have an impact. So I choose to apply for, and was accepted to, the University Impact Fund. I’m also involved with Recycling Utah through the Board Fellows program. As a Board Fellow, I attend board meetings, work on projects and generally get to see the inner workings of a non-profit, which is really valuable. So I choose to apply for, and was accepted to, the University Impact Fund.

Q: Have you participated in any study trips while in the program?
MB: Yes. I’m involved in the student organization Net Impact, and went to the Net Impact Sustainability Conference in Portland. The trip was coordinated by the MBA program and about 20 MBA students went to the conference. The conference provided opportunities to network with a variety of non-profits, as well as companies from small to Fortune 500. There’s just a lot of interest in sustainability around the corporate world now and this conference really brings it all to light. I decided to use the trip to practice my networking skills and make some great contacts.

Q: What are your plans for summer?
MB: I’m looking at a bunch of opportunities right now, including a program with the National Park Service and another with the Environmental Defense Fund where they partner with large firms to help them become more sustainable. Both of these would be fantastic opportunities and I’m sure I’ll have more to evaluate as the next semester starts.

Career Goal: Follow my passion for conservation by using business skills to help a socially responsible company grow its business.
Q: What was involved in your decision to pursue a Full-Time MBA?

TM: Originally, I thought about doing a part-time MBA, as I had a job that I really liked and thought I might want to keep my job while pursuing an MBA part-time. But ultimately, I wanted my MBA to launch me into the next level of my career and I didn’t see that happening while I was in a part-time option. I knew I needed a full-time program offering, among other benefits, the ability to network with other MBA students.

Q: What other networking opportunities have you taken advantage of during your first semester?

TM: My goals for post-MBA have really adjusted, even in my first semester. While I didn’t get an offer from J&J, I think I learned two things from this experience. First, everyone’s experience is valuable. Everyone in my candidate pool had different strengths that would have been valuable in some way to help J&J achieve its goals. The feedback I got from the J&J recruiters was mainly that I was short on work experience. I came into the MBA program with two years of work experience, but I was competing for spots at J&J with MBAs who graduated college even more recently. I thought I was getting my MBA from the University of Utah.

Q: What are your goals for after your finish the MBA program?

TM: Originally, I thought about doing a part-time MBA, as I had a job that I really liked and thought I might want to keep my job while pursuing an MBA part-time. But ultimately, I wanted my MBA to launch me into the next level of my career and I didn’t see that happening while I was in a part-time option. I knew I needed a full-time program offering, among other benefits, the ability to network with other MBA students.

Q: What was involved in your decision to pursue a Full-Time MBA?

TM: Originally, I thought about doing a part-time MBA, as I had a job that I really liked and thought I might want to keep my job while pursuing an MBA part-time. But ultimately, I wanted my MBA to launch me into the next level of my career and I didn’t see that happening while I was in a part-time option. I knew I needed a full-time program offering, among other benefits, the ability to network with other MBA students.

Q: What was involved in your decision to pursue a Full-Time MBA?

TM: Originally, I thought about doing a part-time MBA, as I had a job that I really liked and thought I might want to keep my job while pursuing an MBA part-time. But ultimately, I wanted my MBA to launch me into the next level of my career and I didn’t see that happening while I was in a part-time option. I knew I needed a full-time program offering, among other benefits, the ability to network with other MBA students.

Q: What was involved in your decision to pursue a Full-Time MBA?

TM: Originally, I thought about doing a part-time MBA, as I had a job that I really liked and thought I might want to keep my job while pursuing an MBA part-time. But ultimately, I wanted my MBA to launch me into the next level of my career and I didn’t see that happening while I was in a part-time option. I knew I needed a full-time program offering, among other benefits, the ability to network with other MBA students.
**Q:** How did you make the decision to pursue an MBA?

NM: I studied economics at Westminster College for my undergrad, finished school, and then spent a year in South America climbing and just experiencing the world. Through the travel I’ve done, I realized that business is really a powerful way to get things done in the world. So, I figured an MBA would be a great next step, and I’m using it to explore a lot of great opportunities.

**Q:** What else have you been involved in during your first semester?

NM: Study trips! I’ve actually gone on all the study trips organized by the MBA program. The big highlight of the Cincinnati trip was the chance to get to know my classmates really well. I got also got to know MBA Director Linda Wells really well.

**Q:** Any surprises from your first semester?

NM: Yes! I’m a lot busier than I thought I was going to be. It’s like drinking from a firehose! A really, really great firehose!

**Q:** How was that different from NSHMBA Conference?

NM: While also great, it was definitely a different experience. I went with about fifteen classmates to the Net Impact conference, also a big conference where the opportunities focused more on issues like clean technology, international development and social entrepreneurship. It’s a little more low-key than the NSHMBA Conference, and really refreshing. The sessions were usually held in small groups, talking about things that I think are really important. It was easy to ask questions and participate in the discussions. It was exciting to see so many business students who are really passionate about making an impact with their careers. These are people who want to make change in the world, and do it through business.

**Q:** You also went to the Net Impact Conference in Portland. How was that different from NSHMBA Conference?

NM: Pierre Lassonde, the founder of the Lassonde Entrepreneur Center, is so pleased with the success of the Lassonde programs in place that he was motivated to increase his investment with the school of business in the form of a social entrepreneurship program. I met with Troy D’Ambrosio, the Lassonde Center director, to research what other universities around the country have been doing in this area, and figure out some way to connect the Lassonde Center’s strengths to a new, unique endeavor. Part of the plan is to use the funds with the funding arm of the University Impact Fund, which together would be pretty cool.

**Q:** You also went to the NSHMBA networking conference. What was that like?

NM: NSHMBA Conference was really great as well. It was a giant, crazy chance to put out great people. Anything that looked interesting, I’d just go up and talk to them. Sometimes it was easy to strike up a conversation with the company, and other times, not, but I was really able to figure it out as I went. It’s a little bit daunting, how do you differentiate yourself when it’s 3:00 in the afternoon and the recruiter has talked to a hundred students already?

One lesson I learned from the NSHMBA Conference was how important it is to engage the other person in networking. I talked to a recruiter from Diageo, the worldwide consumer-goods company, and found some connections through shared hobbies. My family is Romanian and his background was Lebanese, and we hit it off talking about Middle Eastern cultures. We ended up having a great conversation and I shared my resume with him. It’s a lot of great practice — and trial and error.

**Q:** any surprises from your first semester?

NM: While also great, it was definitely a different experience. I went with about fifteen classmates to the Net Impact conference, also a big conference where the opportunities focused more on issues like clean technology, international development and social entrepreneurship. It’s a little more low-key than the NSHMBA Conference, and really refreshing. The sessions were usually held in small groups, talking about things that I think are really important. It was easy to ask questions and participate in the discussions. It was exciting to see so many business students who are really passionate about making an impact with their careers. These are people who want to make change in the world, and do it through business.

**Q:** What are your plans for this summer in between your first and second years?

NM: I’ve narrowed things down a bit for this summer. I have an opportunity to go to Iran, and work for the largest oil pipeline firm there. My Farsi is OK, but I might need to do some additional work on that.

To explore my options, I’ve been meeting with Mike Dzaluz, an executive career coach in the Business Career Management Center, to plan my strategy for summer internships. We’ve built some basic plans, figuring out which directions to pursue — I’m really working on making my elevator pitch and communicating my value proposition. Right now, I’m focusing on a couple larger, Fortune 500 firms, but also on the opportunity to work with some more local firms in industries that are really important to me. It’s exciting to see so many business students who are really passionate about making an impact with their careers. These are people who want to make change in the world, and do it through business.
Q: You’ve been heavily involved in the Case Competition Club. Can you explain what you’ve been doing?
SR: This semester I took a leadership position in the club, helping to manage the numerous case competitions students have access to. This is a club managed by faculty from the management department, and it’s been an incredible opportunity to help prepare students for the case competition environment nationally.

One of the most exciting competitions this semester is the ACG (Association for Corporate Growth) Cup; which primarily involves situations in mergers and acquisitions. Opportunities like that, with this type of network, are just invaluable.

SR: I also went on the Bay Area study trip. It was another amazing experience and I would not have had the opportunity to meet with prominent venture capitalists if it weren’t for Linda. Here’s a great story from the trip:

We had an alumni event at our hotel, and Linda comes up to me and says, “Hey, there’s this guy here I want you to meet. I want you to pitch your idea to him.” Incredibly, he was the lead investor in this company you may have heard of, Intel. So I went and picked John Lin on my startup idea. He said “I love it. Let’s talk.” And then he gave me his business card. Opportunities like that’s what this type of network is all about.

The rest of the trip was also awesome. You wouldn’t think you could get excited about a website selling Christmas trees, but it was one of the coolest visits we had. Balsam Hill with premium artificial Christmas trees featuring trademarked True Needle technology. The company has some really innovative ideas about what e-commerce is. He focuses just on niche products, and has a really interesting portfolio of companies. He works hard to find tiny little niche markets, where it’s not going to cost him a lot to operate in but have significant potential if he can just sell a better product. Pretty impressive. It was really a great learning experience and I had not been pushed in that direction, I probably never would have taken an interest in that company. I walked away thinking “Man, I’d go work for that guy.”

Q: what was your background coming into the MBA program?
SR: I’ve always had an entrepreneurial streak. I spent the last three years doing consulting for large corporations out of Philadelphia. This was a great experience because I learned so much and was running my own book. For me, this MBA is really about gaining the best from what I’ve learned and start applying it to the startup environment, which is really where my passion is.

Q: What else are you doing for this summer? Are you pursuing an internship?
SR: I have quite a few interesting options in play. I have a lease reserved in San Mateo, so I’ll be in the Bay Area regardless of what happens. The first option I’m going to work for is a small startup. MBA Director Linda Wells has a bunch of connections that I’ve been contacting, trying to find out who might have interesting work. Another option is to try to get in with a VC firm for a summer fellowship. In these situations, you get paid to go for 12 weeks and work on your own product, in their office. They don’t take an equity position, but they have the right of first refusal. So I’m preparing application packages to see if I can get my foot in the door for one of these. The MBA program helps by sending introduction emails on my behalf, and it’s just amazing to get the positive responses and feedback on my application.

Q: What are your goals for post-MBA?
SR: My goal coming out of the MBA is to run my own company. With my consulting background, I’ve got a lot of good experience in different sectors, and with my MBA rounding out my education, I feel like I’ve got a solid foundation to jump into the startup world. Also, I’m a huge fan of casual dating and open relationships. Whenever the best opportunity is there, that’s where I’ll go play.
Q: What is your background and why did you pursue an MBA degree?

SD: I’ve lived my entire life in India. I have an engineering degree from a prestigious institution in India where I studied mechanical engineering and then joined a technology-driven company, Tata Consulting Services. We did very large projects such as one for a large credit card firm for whom we developed their extra electronic infrastructure. I did that for about four years, focusing as well on some projects in the world of microfinance, which has always interested me. But I was doing this for the first time that I decided that if I was going to work in this area, I needed to know more about finance, and I figured the best way to shift careers was to get an MBA.

Q: You have been involved in the Social Impact Fund. Can you describe your experience so far?

SD: Yes. I’ve gone through their internship program. It was fabulous. My host firm at the Impact Fund was below what I was used to. The model of venture capital is a large institution that wants to take the lead. It does deals with different kinds of companies, from clean energy to MFIs to healthcare devices, anything that has an impact. I enjoyed it, but I had no luck in finding a deal. We were given cases and asked to analyze and present on part of their selection process. I worked in a mobile company in Kenya. I guess I was as interested in the analysis as in the process itself. The UIF supports the educational process and, as such, they start everyone from scratch. They assume you don’t know anything, which was good for me because I am coming from an engineering background, not a finance background. They taught us how to value the markets, how to do discounted cash flow, different ways to value a company and what factors you need to consider when you think of investing in a company or making recommendations. It’s not just the economics of it, it’s the management. We have been working on deals as we learn. I have been looking at deals for Southeast Asia, and also some startups based in California. We’re looking at different kinds of companies, from clean energy to MFIs to healthcare devices, anything that has an impact. I enjoyed it, but I had no luck in finding a deal.

Q: What other student organizations have you been involved in this year?

SD: I’ve also been really involved in the Board Fellows program. I learned about Board Fellows from Melissa Paul, who is a second-year MBA student. She told us about the different nonprofit organizations that participate in this program, and I chose to work with Ten Thousand Villages. They are a nonprofit organization and they work with artisans from more than 70 countries across the globe, and they believe in fair trade, so the artisans actually have control over the opportunity to sell for the highest possible price. They have a big network in the US and also outside the US. We were working with an organization that had just moved recently to a new location. Board Fellows were helping and donating a space. It’s been a great opportunity.

Q: What are your goals for post-MBA? Have they changed from when you first entered the program?

SD: I’m looking for management consulting and corporate finance opportunities. I have already made some very good contacts from the Impact Fund. My long-term goals have really shifted. A year ago, I would have said I wanted to get a really solid understanding of finance and then go back to India and do my own MFIs. I saw some gaps and deficiencies in those areas, so I thought there was a lot of room for improvement. But now I’m seeing that there’s a fair amount of saturation in MFIs in India, so I’m exploring other things. I’m not sure what I’m going to do in the future.

The time I spent with the Impact Fund really changed my career path. I found this area of impact investing a lot more challenging than technology consulting, and I think there will be a lot more room for growth and doing new things. That’s what I like about it, and why I am interested in a career in finance.

Q: Where there any surprises about the program or your classes?

SD: Well, the teaching here is very different from my previous experience in my undergraduate class, it’s very concrete for the professors to just come in and start writing on the board and giving lectures. But what I have seen here is that it’s very interactive and you can ask a lot of questions. To be successful here, you really have to be prepared beforehand and come ready to contribute. In undergrad, I would study the textbook, come in and communicate with the professors much later. Here, I’ve found the professors are very approachable, always willing to help with the problems or whatever.

Getting an MBA is also fun… people joke a lot. No boring, grim classes here.

Sayani’s favorite spot in the new building – anywhere with a view to the mountains.