

Reflecting on my first year at HBS I am looking back with great fondness on one of the most inspirational and transformational times in my life – inspired by new thinking, shaped with diverse perspectives and enriched with deep and lasting friendships.

After having worked for six years in the renewable energy space across the globe and in various leadership roles I was thrilled to embark onto my two year journey at HBS last fall. My vision was to be able to take a step back and take full advantage of the two years to reflect on my life and career path. Professionally my goals were to strengthen technical and leadership skills, expand my network and also to challenge myself and push my boundaries.

The required course curriculum during the first semester (RC year) covers fundamental business concepts such as Finance, Accounting and Marketing, which I found valuable after having had only indirect experience in some of these areas during my professional career.

Although the case method was somewhat of a cultural change compared to the traditional lecture style in academia in Germany, it is a very powerful way to learn business concepts in a real life scenario. Students prepare the case before class and during the 80 minute class discuss the findings and recommended actions. The insights learned from the debates with class mates based on individual perspectives and experiences are the foundation of this distinct learning experience, hence class participation is the greater part of the final grade.

Despite the busy calendars of professors they are very available for students to meet individually or in smaller group settings to discuss course material, technical questions or to provide general personal advice.

Although the class size of about 900 students felt large at first, within my section ('H') of 92 students we became very close over the course of the first year after having spent every day (and sometimes late nights) together. HBS also strongly fosters cross-section interaction. For example we were assigned to study groups with four students from other sections to discuss cases every morning before class. Other examples of cross-section experiences are student clubs and the FIELD Course. As elected Career Representative for my section I support my class mates in finding their ideal internships and full time jobs, and frequently interact with the CPD (Career and Professional Development) office and companies that recruit on campus. HBS has over 80 different social and professional student-led clubs to bring classmates with similar interests and passions together. To strengthen my financial network and leverage my energy background, I engaged early on in club activities with finance focused clubs and the Energy and Environment Club. For instance I helped organizing the annual energy conference which was a great way to work closely with similar minded second year students and network with industry professionals. During the second year I will lead the club activities of the Finance Club (one of the largest clubs at HBS) as Co-president and will also serve as Co-president of the German Speaking Society. We are already diligently working on inviting exceptional leader to speak on campus. This has by far be one of my highlights - to see and listen to remarkable individuals ranging from Fortune 500 CEOs, entrepreneurs to former presidents of countries who visit HBS or affiliated Harvard University institutions, like the Kennedy School.

Yet another memorable part of the first year has been the FIELD Course (Field Immersion Experiences for Leadership Development), which was launched two years ago. It is comprised of three subsequent modules starting with Leadership class lectures, followed by a consulting-like project for a company in an emerging country, and finally the launch of a business idea. For the second I was assigned to a group of five classmates to advise Citibank Argentina on their strategy to launch a credit card reward program. The project culminated in a 10 day immersion trip to Buenos Aires where we finalized our project and presented to senior management at Citibank. For the third module I worked with other five section mates to launch our own

business idea, an online delivery service for ethnic food and collectibles. This experience has been very inspirational and is unprecedented as part of an MBA program.

Together with my fiancé we enjoy living in Boston. The city offers a great variety of cultural activities and there are plenty of places to travel during the weekends (Vermont for skiing, Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, New York City, etc). Although we don't live on campus we spend a lot of time in and around Cambridge for dinners and drinks with classmates or as part of club and networking activities. This summer will be a very special one for me as my fiancé and I will wed in August in Tuscany. Until then I will be working at Lazard in financial and restructuring advisory in New York.

My course selection for my second year will broadly be in three categories: Finance, Macro Economics and Strategy. Additionally, I am planning to work on an independent project (IP) in close collaboration with the faculty for Entrepreneurial management. The Arthur Rock Center for Entrepreneurship, which is located on the HBS campus, provides an excellent infrastructure to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors.

I feel very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to study at HBS and pursue my dreams and my desire to make a difference in the world. I feel humbled for all the support I was given by friends and colleagues to make this two-year adventure possible. In particular I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the HBS Association of Germany, its Donors and President Stefan Eishold for the generous scholarship and support!

With warm regards from New York,

Lars Gehre