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HBS Class of 2015

Second Year Scholarship Report

When I considered doing an MBA, I was hesitant between a one-year and a two-year program. I have now come to realize that the second year is what makes so many HBS alumni nostalgic of their experience on campus.

First, while most of the curriculum is pre-determined in RC year, students get to choose their own classes in EC year. The school has come up with a complex algorithm that tries to match supply with demand, which with 930 people and over 100 electives can be quite a challenge. My goal from EC year was to explore the breadth of subjects available rather than gain depth in one specific area. I ended up taking some “hard core” classes such as Private Equity Finance or Real Property, which I diversified with soft-skill classes (e.g. Negotiations, Managing Human Capital...) Here are two of my favorite:

SMICI: Strategic Marketing In Creative Industries. Which endorsement opportunities should Maria Sharapova pursue after her first Wimbledon win? How much should an editor bid on a first novel and still make profits? How are Real Madrid and Boca Juniors, two soccer clubs with diametrically opposed models, both very successful at what they do? Is the “House of Cards” model the key to Netflix’s success in the future? Was Beyoncé’s surprise album release the right move? Where else can you have such interesting cases and listen to some of the protagonists talk about their experience managing those very peculiar businesses? SMICI wins the coolness contest among HBS courses hands down.

ALD: Authentic Leadership Development. This course is about finding one’s “True North” as a leader. The underlying theory is that there is no one mold for what a leader should look like. Success in leadership roles comes from being authentic and consistent with one’s values while being aware of one’s impact on others. In the very fast-paced environment that is HBS, I looked forward to reflecting and talking about such deep topics for a few hours every week. Doing so with a group of five incredibly insightful classmates (called Leadership Development Group) made this class one of my highlights at HBS.

Secondly, RC year felt a bit overwhelming to me because of the sheer number of classmates I was surrounded by. EC year was a great opportunity to consolidate some of those relationships I had established. Travel groups were smaller and social life less dependent on what we were supposed to do, but rather what we wanted to do. FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out), while inherent to a place that offers as many interesting alternatives as HBS, was much less present than in RC year.

Finally, after two years, and especially the summer internship, most people have a better grasp of what it is they want to do, or not to do, which is just as important. The summer internship is a great opportunity to experiment. The answers to questions such as: can I handle the lifestyle? Will I find fulfillment in this position? Is this a corporate culture I can thrive in? etc. can be found in those few weeks in the pit. In fact, because I wanted to switch careers and was interested in two industries, I decided to do two summer internships; one right before HBS (a so-called pre-MBA internship) in Management Consulting, and another one between years in Finance. I felt a better fit with the former, so I will be joining a global firm in a full-time position after HBS.

Again, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the HBS Association and Foundation of Germany, especially Mr. Stefan Eishold, for helping me take advantage of this incredible opportunity. It would be my pleasure to be of any support to other fellow Germans interested in the program.

Best regards

Jawad Moutkane