“What I know now that I wish I knew then.”

Tips for success as an MBA student, written by current W. P. Carey MBA students and alumni for incoming students.

WELCOME

Greetings students,

Welcome to the W. P. Carey School of Business Full-time MBA program. Current students and alumni share their advice on preparing for the Full-time MBA experience.

Our Program Operations and the Career Management and Employer Engagement teams are a great resource of support. We are dedicated to providing you with top-notch service that allows you to focus on creating a successful academic experience.

There are immediate opportunities to be an active participant in your education and student organizations. During your time in the program, you will develop relationships with students, faculty and staff. We look forward to working with you over the next two years.
Pradeep Jacob  
Marketing & MSBA  
Class of 2018  

Prepare for the Heat! I’m not only talking about the weather, but also the course. The work is relentless and the pace is unforgiving. However, with the right mindset, it is possible to navigate through this challenging program quite comfortably. First, it is essential to find housing, roommates, and all other necessary services before orientation begins.

Second, I would recommend that incoming students go through the materials that have been posted on Canvas before classes begin. The statistics boot camp was a very useful resource. Third, I recommend that incoming students treat this course as you would treat a full time job. Over the course of the first year, I have realized that consistently working 40 hours a week, including time spent in class is more than sufficient to do well academically. Apart from this, you will have to spend a couple of hours a week on your internship search, posting job applications and attending company sponsored events. To paraphrase Derek Ager, the MBA program can be characterized by long periods of relative comfort punctuated by short periods of terror. With good planning, you would seldom encounter the latter.

Victoria Cohen  
Marketing & MSBA  
Class of 2018  

Organizational skills are critical! Something I do at the beginning of each quarter is sit down with all the class syllabi and map out the assignment due dates on an excel spreadsheet. This way I have a visual snapshot of what assignments are due within the week, month, and quarter, and have a better idea of how to allocate my time across classes.

On that note, be ready to get up close and personal with those syllabi. In addition to providing assignment deadlines, many professors will outline exactly what they want from you (in painstaking detail!) in there. If a professor provides a grading rubric or sample assignment, treat it like gold!
First, recognize just how important interviewing skills are in the program and be prepared to put in significant time each week preparing for interviews (even before having an interview scheduled). It is sometimes necessary to dedicate just as much time, or more, to interview preparation as to studying and completing coursework. By visiting the Graduate Career Center, it will help you to practice these skills, help gain direction in your search, and insight into the positions you are interested in. Second, it is important to build strong relationships with classmates, and be the type of the classmate you yourself would want to work with; your classmates can be lifelong relationships and networks. Third, don't decide/not decide to do a concentration based on just one class, ask yourself why you are in the MBA in the first place and what concentration(s) will best help you to develop to who you want to be? You don't start concentration-specific coursework until quarter 3, so go to the meetings/events of concentrations you don't know as much about during quarters 1 and 2 and find out if they align with your goals and interests.

Munirah Mahyudin
Dual MBA/MSBA, MBA Specialization: Supply Chain Management
Class of 2018

I come from a hot and humid country (Malaysia). I thought I was prepared for Arizona, but I was wrong. The weather here is different, so take care of your skin and body. I had a hard time adjusting to the weather. Sunscreen with high SPF and water consumption are important.
Joseph Madera  
Marketing & Entrepreneurship  
Class of 2018

I did not come into the program with a strong background in statistics, but completing the statistics pre-course work was extremely helpful as the course builds very quickly. If you do not have a strong understanding of excel, I would also recommend taking the excel preparation as it will be very beneficial in many of the courses. Once you are here, don’t hesitate to connect with 2nd year students as everyone is eager to help. The diversity of individuals in our program contributes to the academic experience so be sure to take advantage of learning and working with your classmates, and don’t be afraid to step out of your comfort zone.

Paul Strong  
Entrepreneurship  
Class of 2018

When things get busy (and they will), don’t worry about grades or keeping up with what it can look like everyone else is accomplishing. Focus on learning and working hard towards your goals. Everything else will follow if you do this.
Cristina Torres  
Marketing  
Class of 2018

Do your company research before school starts, understand your strengths & be honest with yourself about what company culture would be a right fit for you. What everyone else is doing doesn't matter.

Prachi Shukla  
Dual MBA/MSBA, MBA Specialization: Supply Chain Management  
Class of 2018

Being able to maintain a schedule is crucial to keeping track of the many things happening at the same time as well as prioritizing what is important. Getting comfortable with small talk and networking is a big part of both informal and formal interactions in the states. Starting to network and find connections within their dream firms as early as possible can make all the difference.

Use the orbit buses until you figure out transportation instead of paying for cabs. The drivers are helpful. Try to stay out of the sun in extremely high temperature. Talk to people living here for recommendations or help with finding stuff. ASU buy and sell groups on Facebook are extremely valuable resources.
Mohammad Rahimi
Dual MBA/MSBA, MBA Specializations: Finance, Supply Chain Management
Class of 2018

I wish I had read the book "2-Hour Job Search" before the program started. Basic knowledge of accounting and MS Excel are also of utmost importance. Having a strong LinkedIn profile before starting the program matters, too. Enjoy the sunshine throughout the year and try to get the heck out of the area during summer.

Nipun Ranjan
Supply Chain Management & MSBA
Class of 2018

Learn MS Office, especially Excel, Word, and PPT before joining classes. These software’s are essential for many subjects. There are many online resources and YouTube tutorials. Make sure your resume and cover letter are in good shape because companies start coming on campus within the first month of your MBA. Do many mock interviews with career coaches as they give very useful feedback. Reach out to the second years as they were in your shoes a year back and give you practical tips. Reach out to alums on LinkedIn and network a lot. Networking is the key to your success.
Varun Nair
Supply Chain Management & MSBA
Class of 2018

I believe time management is one of the primary skills you need during your two years of the program. Be prepared to prioritize things. I would say quick reading skills are crucial. One should develop the ability to grasp the key ideas behind each case without spending too much time on any one. Excel, PPT and Word are necessary and having a good grasp of these tools would help you hit the ground running. As far as job search goes, I would suggest the earlier you start the better. Start building your network as soon as possible, leverage all the contacts that you have and make new ones. It’s also a good practice to read business news and keep yourself informed about some of the latest happenings in your industry or field of interest. Finally, build your perseverance as this comes handy.

Willy Chang
Business Analytics
Class of 2018

Don’t get lost in the immediate chaos during quarter 1 and quarter 2. Grades are important, but so are your relationships with your peers, your professional connections that you make at the career fairs, and your search for an internship. Take inventory of what truly matters during your two years here at ASU.

Phoenix is incredibly large and spread out. In order to get anywhere, you’ll most likely need a car. Within the immediate Tempe area where the University is located, you can get away with public transportation or ride-share applications to get around. However, these options can get pricey quickly especially if you frequently travel between towns.
Ellen Cook
Dual MBA/MSBA, MBA Specialization: Supply Chain Management
Class of 2017

The program is what you make of it. There are a ton of ways to get involved within McCord and across campus. Read the newsletters, intramurals emails, and Facebook group posts if you want to get involved with the cool stuff. You may think you are too busy, but you're not.

Ivette Villalba
Strategic Marketing & Services Leadership
Class of 2017

Don't take things too seriously. Be willing to do things in un-habitational ways. For example, if you're used to scheduling everything to the last minute and get stressed out if things don't happen like you would have wanted them, instead, take a role that is less controlling, especially in teams. You will find that sometimes, working in a group requires more flexibility and understanding than pushing.

The dry heat was/is extremely difficult for this tropical woman to deal with (Puerto Rico, Paraguay, Houston). I don't care what people say about dry heat being better than humid heat, I don't agree.

I'd also say that having a car, or a means of getting to it, is crucial to explore all that Phoenix and Arizona have to offer. Most people in the East Valley are friendly and open. I'd have to say my fears about being subjugated to racism were unfounded. Lastly, outside of WPC, ASU has great events you should attend, especially at Gammage and the Herberger Institute!
1) There is a reason they call it a "Full-time" program. It takes up the full amount of your time. Even though your class schedule may look super easy and simple, all of the extracurricular activities (individual assignments, group work, internship/job searching, clubs) will take up almost all of your free time.

2) Make a rule for yourself as to when you will do no work for the program. Whether that's not doing school related work on weekends, or after 8 pm, or just blocking off a couple of hours each day, you need to schedule your free time.

3) Talk to program faculty and staff. You can find out so much about what's going on in the program just by asking people who work there full time. Don't be afraid to talk to the program coordinator or deans about anything you're curious about.

Lei Zhu  
Dual MBA/MSBA, MBA Specialization: Supply Chain Management  
Class of 2017

On campus recruiting comes earlier than I'd have expected. So start preparation as early as possible. Don't be shy and reach out for advice and assistance from your career coach, peers and any resources.

Tempe is really, really hot even though it's dry heat! Don't expect to walk in the sun for more than 5 mins in the summer (May to Aug) if you are used to public transportation or bike like what I usually do. Either live close to the campus or get a car!
Mudassir Muztar
Dual MBA/MSIM, MBA Specialization: Strategic Marketing & Services
Leadership
Class of 2017

It is okay if you don't know the exact career path you want to take with your MBA; as you learn through the program you'll get exposure to a variety of experiences that will ultimately guide you towards the things you actually like and will be successful in.

Arizona is amazing in that it allows you to be outside in unique landscapes for the entire year. Also, don't forget that Arizona is in a close vicinity to Los Angeles, San Diego, Colorado, Las Vegas, Mexico, etc. so take advantage of that!

Anthony Conyers
Financial Management & Markets
Class of 2017

Prioritize internship and full-time job hunting ahead of your classes. Spend a lot of time not just reaching out to firms or applying to positions, but reflect on your values--where you want to live, hours you're willing to work, arc of your career, if/when you want to have kids, etc.

I moved back to Phoenix from Washington D.C. and NYC. The summers are and will always be brutal--intern in a cooler climate if you can. November to April, however, is glorious. Make sure you trek up to the Grand Canyon at least once.
Moose Fritz
Dual MBA/MSFIN, MBA Specialization: Financial Management & Markets
Class of 2017

Stay humble*. Whether in the classroom or in your internship, you are there to learn, and having an ego gets in the way of that. Most of the people in the class have wildly different life experiences than you do, and some of them have done or seen things you probably cannot even imagine. Also, your classmates are generally pretty awesome, so check the ego at the door and prepare to become a better and more well-rounded person.

An extension of that is being ready and willing to leave your comfort zone. You will learn significantly more by listening to other people and taking in their perspective than you will by trying to insulate yourself from challenging thoughts. If something seems strange, be willing to get weird and run with it. Best case scenario, you learn a new idea or a better way to do things. Worst case scenario, you learn that something doesn’t work, which is just as important as knowing what does work.

Have fun. While you will work hard and be busy, for some people it will be the most challenging and busiest time of their lives thus far, it is also an opportunity to enjoy more than just the serious aspects of being a student. Get involved in clubs like the volunteer council, play intramural sports, and travel.