

# GOING BACK TO BUSINESS SCHOOL

A program for alumni by  
**Bucknell University Alumni Career Services**  
**In Partnership with The Leonard M. Stern School of Business and  
the Bucknell Club of NYC**

**April 21, 2016**

## **Panelists:**

**Crager Boardman '03, The Leonard M. Stern School of Business '12-** Crager is a Managing Director and Chief Operations Officer at Waterfall Asset Management.

**Kristina Kalkanis '12, Currently attending part-time at The Leonard M. Stern School of Business–** Kristina is the Digital Campaign Manager at Questex Media, a B2B media/content publishing company

**Garry Thaniel '04, Harvard Business School '09 –** Garry is the CEO of ONA Bags

**Jessica Keating –** Jessica is the Associate Director of MBA Admissions at NYU Stern

## **Tell us how you decided on your school?**

Crager first started thinking about going back full time. Originally he had planned on working for 2 years and then going back to B-school. He was thinking of applying to HBS, Tuck, Johnson, Cornell, UNC, Texas, and Columbia. However, he found a job he liked and thought he would be there for a long time. He talked to people who owned the company and went to Wharton. They didn't want him going back full-time, but wanted him to go part-time. That is how he chose NYU, due to its great part-time program and location.

Kristina wanted to stay in Manhattan. She thought it was a great place to go to business school. Her decision was between NYU Stern and Fordham. After talking to people at Stern, they made her feel part of a community similar to Bucknell so she applied to Stern. She recommends going to networking events at the school to make sure it's the right decision.

Garry wanted a general management curriculum with a focus on leadership. He also wanted the coursework to be case-based because that's how he felt he was able to

learn best. Garry considered HBS, UVA, Michigan, and Washington University. He feels that every school has a core competency which they are known for and recommends that you know why the school works for you as well as why you feel you can work for the school

### **What were some prep courses?**

Crager took a Kaplan class. He chose that one through networking and looking to see where his friends went.

Kristina took the GRE as an alternative to the GMAT. She also took an online Kaplan GRE prep course. It was nice that the course was online because she could manage it without eliminating a social life.

Garry took the Princeton review course, but in hindsight he would have done Kaplan instead. His reason was they allow you to take a test in a GMAT facility.

### **What would you do differently?**

Kristina would institute a more structured regimen for studying, applying, and taking the prep course.

Garry would give himself more time for the process. He didn't have a chance to allow people vet applications and essays well enough. Alternatively, he was able to really focus by giving himself a deadline of 6 months.

### **Any unexpected benefits you discovered?**

Kristina wasn't expecting B-school to have a lot of extracurricular activities and clubs (Guest speakers). Also there were weeklong study abroad opportunities at Stern, i.e. take a course in Europe or anywhere in the world.

Crager got an opportunity to travel to Budapest for a week because of B-school. This allowed him access to amazing professionals working in the industry right now.

Garry knew he benefited tremendously from HBS. He said the people there were awesome. They would challenge him in what he was saying -- not just professors but also students. He was able to travel, network, and have access to alumni, professors, and everyone associated with HBS.

### **What do you remember as best experience?**

Kristina took a class from an adjunct professor who is the President of BuzzFeed. She felt it was awesome to have someone so influential to talk to in her class.

Garry felt one of his best memories was leading a service effort in New Orleans after Katrina. He spent two weeks in New Orleans on a project that he helped coordinate

throughout the year. They provided healthcare to the working uninsured and it was amazing to see that they were in tears out of gratitude.

Secondly, Garry was part of a program where he was a mentor for an NFL / NBA program. He really enjoyed hanging out with all the guys. It was great because they were talking to him about playing football with the Patriots.

### **How did B-school help in your career?**

Since Crager went to NYU he was able to stay at a company he liked before and after having his MBA. He feels he this has allowed him to be very successful. B-school gave him confidence which helped him to succeed in his company.

Kristina felt like she was really putting herself out there in B-school which has helped her confidence presenting material to people. Also by going part-time she sees herself approaching things differently at work.

Garry felt B-School really increased his network opportunities. It also changed how he looks at business and analyzes businesses.

### **The Admissions Counselor speaks to admission process at Stern:**

Jessica stated that the admissions process for part/full time are similar, however, the Exec MBA program is in a different office. She feels the full-time students are looking to make a shift in their careers while part-time students are looking for advancement in their career.

What they consider for candidates for both programs are academic transcripts, work history, resume (Standard), two letters of recommendation (one coming from current supervisor).

The first essay focuses on what you are looking to gain from an MBA and what you are interested in after you leave school. They are thinking about your career growth, what you've been up to, and the function of your position

The second essay is a personal expression essay which is really open-ended. This is an opportunity to introduce yourself to classmates at Stern. Many people have provided various formats including videos, music, as well as traditional essays. However there is a size requirement since someone tried to send a door, and there should be no perishable items.

For the part-time program there may or may not be an interview, however, for the full-time there is definitely an on-campus interview before a decision is made.

If you are selected for an interview, about 70% get accepted into the full time program.

They require GRE or GMAT.

Following are some suggestions on how to research B-schools:

- Checking out the school online is a great first step
- Sometimes schools go on the road to meet students, check the schedules when they might be in your area. If they are coming to your area it is to your advantage to go talk to recruiters.

When narrowing down list:

- Speak to students who went to the B-school (Bucknell.edu/ACS has a list of alumni willing to talk to other alumni about the B-school they graduated from).
- Check the network that the college has online via LinkedIn
- Look at the courses they offer to make sure they have your specialty
- Try to sit in on a class at the B-School, this will give a better idea of what it is like to be there

Words of wisdom

- Students have had success with connecting to alumni
- Definitely reach out to your college network
- Networking is a huge part of successfully leveraging an MBA
- Start your research early
- Visit the school/campus
- Prep for exams
- Start narrowing down list early

### **What final advice would you offer to audience?**

Crager offered that self-reflection is a big part of it, not really different from the undergrad admissions process.

Kristina believes that soul-searching and networking are important. Don't let your liberal arts degree stop you from applying to B-school

Garry advised that if you are going to apply, be serious about it. Really carve out time to do it. Know that because you went to Bucknell you are different at HBS. A lot of Bucknellians will self-select out of HBS, so don't do that. Also, don't simply rely on a good GMAT score or great academics. Every piece of the application process is very important and the interview is a huge portion.

### **Audience section for questions:**

#### **What are the age ranges of people who are applying to B-school:**

The average years of work experience before starting B-school is 5 years. For Executive MBA programs it is 14 years.

### **What is time commitment for a part-time program?**

To complete a part-time program it is usually 2- 6 years, the average is 3-3.5. If you try to do it in 2 years, you don't really have a life outside of work and school.

### **GMAT scores are valid for 5 years and I took it 4 years ago, does that matter? In other words, is there preference on when GMATS are taken?**

As long as it is valid that is okay

### **What is the application timing for Stern:**

You need to check the website to confirm the dates per the program you want. Full time students start only in the Fall with a class size of about 200. The part-time students start in either the Fall or Spring with a class size of about 310. However, all classes are mixed (FT and PT) after a student's first semester

### **Percentage of MBA students with less than 5 years?**

There is not a requirement for work experience, but students get most value out of the program seem to have some work experience. It is just easier to collaborate with your classmates if the team has differing work experiences. This is why it makes sense that 5 is the average number of years of experience. However, Kristina had 2/2.5 years of work experience before going to B-school and Garry had the same.

### **Is there a time in your career where you were very thankful for going to business school?**

Garry responded that yes, working out in Chicago for Sears in their leadership program and then completing business school helped him transition to a new field. Having the degree offers flexibility in your career that is very beneficial. You are not limited or boxed in regarding what you can do. Having an MBA gives comfort to the person hiring you and giving you a chance to stretch yourself. In other words, it makes you an "explainable" hire.

Crager liked the flexibility that an MBA offers when viewing options for your career.

### **What is Stern's approach to experiential learning?**

Basically you will get a lot of real world experience while in the program. Because it is in NYC some of the professors are leaders in their industries.

### **Can you compare full-time MBA student to Undergrad life?**

Garry stated that HBS has a huge class so there is a lot of social stuff going on. HE said basically it is a more mature version of college. However, Dartmouth is just like college, ha ha! It really depends on where you go and what kind of environment is around you, i.e. where you live.

**How frenzied was the recruiting process?**

The full-time program is more focused on recruiting post-graduation than the part-time program. The Office of Career Development at Stern helps students create a resume and offers mock interviews. Recruiting is structured. As you get further into the program, companies come to campus and do a ton of programming such as coffee events where you will get a feel for what the company is like. There are many opportunities to submit resumes, and interview for jobs.

**How much more money do you get with an MBA?**

It is best to check out the school's website see exactly what the numbers are.