Hi everyone, and welcome to our webcast, MBA Student Insights: Families and Partners at the GSB. I'm Alice Martins. I'm a second-year MBA student here at the GSB, and I'm joined today by Andy and by Mai. Like me, they have families while studying here.

We're going to talk today about the student experience on campus and answer as many of your questions as we can. To submit a question about what it's like to be a student, just click the chat button at the top of your screen, enter your question, and click send to all panelists. We won't be talking today about the admission process, the application, financial aid, but staff from the MBA admissions office will answer those types of questions directly in the chat box.

So let's begin with some introductions. Andy and Mai, please start by telling us a bit about yourselves, where you're from, what are you doing – what were you doing before the GSB, what are you going to do after? So Andy, if you can kick it off.

Happy to. Hi, everyone. Thanks for joining us today. Super excited to be here. I'm from the United States, from Salt Lake City, Utah, and before coming to the GSB, I worked in private equity at a lower middle market fund that's pretty small, but a lot of fun. And currently, I'm a second-year student getting ready to graduate in a few weeks, unfortunately. And after the GSB, I'm going back into the exciting world of private equity.

Mai?

Hi. My name is Mai. I'm from France. I used to work in Paris, but originally from southeast of France, Aix en Provence. Before my MBA, I was an engineer. I was managing an R&D unit in the telecom industry. And post-GSB, I will go into the automobile space.

Yes. Hi. As for myself, I am originally from Brazil, but I grew up in Belgium. Before the GSB, I worked in finance, and a couple of years in consulting. And after the GSB, I'm going to join a large beer company in an entrepreneurial role.

So what about each of your family situations? For example, are you married? How many kids do you have? Can you talk a bit about that?
Andy: Sure. Yeah. So I'm married. My wife and I will celebrate our tenth wedding anniversary this fall. So we've been married for a long time. And it's been up and down, but really exciting at the same time. And we have three kids, one of which is two months old, so it feels a little new still. We've got a five year old boy, a two year old girl, and a two month old girl. So I had – one child was – the middle child was about four months old when we came to the GSB, and now she's a little more than two, and the third child was just born a few months ago here during my second year.

Mai: So I'm married, too. This year hopefully we're going to celebrate our seventh anniversary.

[Laughter]

Alice: You will. You will.

Andy: Yeah.

Mai: I have two children, two daughters. They're now two and four years old. When I started the GSB, one of them was only about seven months old. So it was a big struggle to deal with two kids under three, but we survived. And my husband works in the city, in San Francisco, and he commutes every day from campus.

Alice: As for myself, I am a single mom. I have a five year old daughter. She, when we arrived at the GSB, she was three years and a half. And yes, her dad lives in Chile, so he's been visiting a few times. But basically, I've been here alone with her.

Okay. Well, let's kick it off with some questions. Shall we? What opportunities are there for partners and kids to be part of the community at the Stanford GSB?

Andy: There's a ton of opportunity, for sure. It depends on how much you want to be involved as the child, obviously, or as the spouse or partner. Transitioning from the normal life before coming to the GSB and to the GSB was actually a really hard transition, because everything is new for everyone in the family, including the children. In particular for the student, as myself, I can say that I came into this really exciting community of the GSB where I was surrounded by really intellectual classmates who all had big ambitions and were exciting to hang out with and get to know. And at the same time, my family stepped into the community of the broader Stanford community, because where we
live here on campus, we were surrounded by other graduate students who also have children, from across the university. So my wife came into a community where she was immediately welcomed by other spouses and students who have children, and my children were welcomed into a community where there's a lot of other kids running around whose parents attend Stanford or work for Stanford.

And so the transition was hard in many regards because it was new, but it was also great. And I think Mai can maybe speak a little bit more to what opportunities there are for them to get involved.

Sure. So I agree with Andy. The transition was hard, especially because we were moving internationally, and I thought that I could treat business school like work. It's actually a bit different, because a lot happens outside of the classroom and outside of working hours, where you actually socialize and get to know your classmates more. So we realized that childcare, on campus daycares, didn't work well for us.

And so for our second year, we decided to hire a nanny that made things way easier. So the kids can always play in the courtyard with other children from families who are living in Escondido Village as well. So this is really the nice part.

My husband works during the weekdays, so he doesn't mingle with other significant others that much, but he goes to most of the parties with me. He always feels welcome. And there have been times where he went on his own and I was busy with something else. So it’s a very inclusive community in that sense.

And I'd like to add as well, as far as formal opportunities to get involved, there are two clubs on campus at the GSB. One is called Biz Partners, and is for students who have a partner or significant other here, and those significant others gather together and do things I think on a weekly basis, lots of fun activities.

There's also another one called Biz Kids, which we have all participated in here, where it's all the students who have kids get together on a regular basis and do fun things either here locally, or they even go out and have fun excursions out into the city or otherwise. So my children love going to Biz Kids. They're surrounded by other kids whose parents go to the GSB as well, and
it's just a lot of fun. And you get a budget from the school to do those activities. It's a lot of fun.

Alice:
Yes. And also the SA, Student Association, organizes a lot of activities where kids and SOs are invited to. So for example, tomorrow – no, the day after tomorrow, we're going – we're all going to Disneyland, and it's partially sponsored by the GSB. And we're taking our kids, obviously, and our partners.

So that's going to be great. And there's tons of activities like that. There's an annual fair. There's a carnival. There's a lot of activities where kids and SOs are invited as well, and they are glad to participate.

Andy:
It's actually kind of funny, because every time my son comes to school, it's for a party of some sort. And so he has this misperception of what I do at school. He thinks every day when I come it's just a fun party. So it's been a lot of fun to bring my kids to school with me.

Alice:
Well, let's go to another question. How did you know when the right time was to apply to the GSB?

Mai:
I think that honestly, in my case, I knew that I wanted to move on to a more international career, and this was not something that I could do easily with only a French degree. I was also very tired of the weather in Paris, especially in winter times. And I wanted to move to California. And yeah, I think that at that time, I was a mother. I was almost turning 30, and I wanted to tell myself that life was not over, and I still deserve this kind of gift to myself. So I talked to my husband way in advance about this project. And then we prepared almost two years before I entered the school.

We prepared the application and our move. He focused on networking in the Bay Area and in California in general, so that he would be able to find a job more easily if I got accepted to one of the schools in California. So I'd say it was a time that worked for both of us, and the desire to expand our geographical horizons.

Andy:
I think it's obviously a very personal decision for everyone. In some ways, it's very logistical. How old are your children? How old are you? Do you want to be in school when you're older,
younger, etcetera? But it really is an individual decision.

You can certainly see the average age – I think the admissions committee publishes that information – and take that into consideration as well. One thing to note, that as parents, we are somewhat of an anomaly amongst our classmates here. I believe there's – I don't know, my estimate is probably somewhere around 15 to 20 students who are parents, maybe even fewer.

Alice:
There's only four – three moms? Four moms?

Mai:
So four moms when we entered the classroom, and now there's another mom who had her first child.

Andy:
Out of 410 total students. So we're small in number. So think about that as well and make the decision for yourself. But without doubt, it's a fantastic place to be as a family. My family has loved it here the last two years. We're actually really sad to be done, because it's really just a paradise for families.

Alice:
I think for me, the moment to decide, I actually waited a year. So I was going to apply for the class of 2015, and I waited a year because of my daughter, because I thought that it would be easier if she was a bit older. And I think I made the right decision. I – well, me and Mai were really close friends, and I saw her those first two years for the kid is very hard, and if you don't have someone to be there all the time with you, I think it's pretty difficult. I had my mom the first two months, but still, as my daughter got older, it became a lot easier.

So this year has been far easier than last year, because – just because she's older now, and she's very independent, so it's much easier for me.

Okay, let's move on to the next question. How do you balance your academic experience with spending time with your family? Do you feel you miss out? How about you, Andy?

[0:10:18]

Andy:
It's definitely a really challenging balance. I compare it to work. So when I was at – when I was working before business school, when I was at work, I was at work, and so in my case, my wife knew I was at work. She knew I couldn't come home to help out in the middle of the day. She had that expectation.
But what's difficult, I've found, at school is unless you're in class, a lot of your schedule is very flexible, which has a pro and a con. On the pro side, it's flexible, so you can choose how to spend your time. But the con side is you can also choose to be at school rather than at home, and when you do that, you can't help but feel a little bit guilty sometimes.

And so I found it difficult to balance that emotional struggle between trying to be at school, trying to socialize, go to club activities, recruiting, etcetera, all on my own schedule, versus trying to be home more. And I've constantly struggled with trying to find that right balance. When I first got here, to your point earlier, I tried to make it like a job. I tried to tell myself I would come in around 8:00 in the morning and go home at 5:30, and I've done a pretty good job at doing that, so I'm home every day for dinner, sometimes home for lunch.

And I try not to do any work, school work, that is, after about 5:30, until the kids have gone to bed. And then once the kids go to bed, then I'll plug back in and do some more homework. So it's a challenge, but it's also one that you can manage, because it's so flexible.

Mai: I think I tried to optimize as much as I can, so I do all my homework during weekdays at the library at school. I try to not bring back too much work at home. I think that when I didn't have a nanny, I missed out a lot on the social activities. I'm an extrovert. I love going out. I love partying. And if you don't have someone in the evenings to babysit, it can be pretty hard, especially as the rates here in the Bay Area, can be pretty high.

But since I've got someone to help me at home and I can do my homework during the day, right now, I don't feel I really miss out on anything particular, or at least not something that I'm really dying to do.

[0:12:16]

Alice: Yeah, I also – I get that question a lot, especially because I'm a single mom. I don't really feel I miss out on a lot. What I did do is try to mingle sort of my home life with my student life. So for example, group projects, when people can't meet during the day because scheduling is very difficult at the GSB, I invite people over at my house. And so I tell my daughter, look, these are my friends. We have to do work for school. You can go watch a movie or you can go play outside. And then we do the group project. And
people have been really receptive to it.

Then also at night, sometimes – my neighbors are moms at Stanford. They're both PhD students. And so we watch each other's kids to go out at night. I don't go really far. I mean, I go to Palo Alto or I go on campus. But we actually watch each other's kids from our own house.

So that has been really helpful, and that has allowed me to participate in a lot of the events. Also, we help each other out amongst GSB students all the time. So the community really helps organizing solutions for you to not miss out. So once you get that down, I think there's no reason for you to miss out on anything that you really want to do.

Mai: And everyone like finds a solution that works for themselves, and so some people are more social than others, or like more comfortable with having people over than others. And we'll find a solution in the end.

Alice: Okay. Well, let's move on to the next question. Nurseries and primary schools. Are there any nurseries on campus and/or where else, and what are the costs like?

Andy: I believe there are several options. I know of at least a few myself. My son attends a school called Bing Nursery School, which is a preschool for children ages I believe two up until five. And believe it or not, it's actually really hard to get into. My friend who had his kids there joked that when he – his kids got into Bing, he decided to apply to Stanford, because there's many people who put their kids on waiting lists for a long time.

So if you have children in the ages of two to five, or you plan on having children in that age range when you're here, I encourage you to look into Bing Nursery School very early and get them on a wait list. But it's a phenomenal school. It's a play-based model where the student to teacher ratio is a really good number. I think it's like five students per one teacher. And everything in the school is there for the children to explore their own creativity and learn how to interact with classmates and solve problems themselves. And so I've been very impressed with this school.

It is quite pricey. To be honest, I don't remember the exact amounts. You can look that up online, obviously. But something to
note is there is financial aid available, as these preschools are not just for students who have kids, but it's also for people in the local community, at least Bing Nursery School is. And as a student, full time non-working student, we actually did qualify for financial aid to help my son go to Bing Nursery School. So it was a lot more affordable than I thought it would be. And that's my experience.

Mai:

Most of these options are particularly good for people who have nannies or a stay at home spouse. When you're on the MBA schedule and you have a working spouse or you're a single parent, I think it's very hard to accommodate the schedule of those on-campus facilities.

So I started with this kind of option when I arrived at Stanford, and quickly realized that it wasn't going to work. It's because I'm in this very rare case of being a student and a parent with a working spouse. But there are options, and if you put them early on the waiting list, once you know you're admitted, especially – this is when I recommend everyone to – every parent to apply for round one, especially if you're international. So that gives you time to put children on different waiting lists.

Andy:

That's a great point.

[0:16:08]

Alice:

I actually applied round one, and the day I got accepted is the day I put my daughter on five different wait lists. And so I had already figured it out way before I applied, but then I was waiting for the answer to actually put her, because you have to pay a small fee to put them on the list.

And then I came here for admit weekend, and when I came here for admit weekend, I took two days to go lobby at the schools. So I visited all of them, and then I tried to lobby with the director of the school, because the waiting lists are very long. Eventually got a spot in three different schools, and I picked one off-campus. The reason is that as Mai mentioned, the Stanford schools, I mean, there is a way to accommodate them, but the difficult part is that they don't provide food.

And so the school I put my daughter actually provides her breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack. It's almost like a dinner. And so for me, that was a big plus.

Mai:

And the hours, too.
Alice: And the hours as well. I can drop her off as soon at 7:30 in the morning, and I can pick her up as late as 6:00 PM.

And, well, she's loved it. It's the same play-based model. I think most of the schools in this area have this play-based sort of model, and it's really, really nice. My daughter loves it. Every time I come early, she doesn't want to leave. She loves the school.

Mai: The kids need to be at least three or three and a half years old, right?

Alice: No, two. Two and a half.

Mai: Two and a half. And at that time, my younger didn't qualify.

Alice: Yes. The kids – for this school, it's called College Terrace. It's part of the PACC, which is the Palo Alto Community College or Community Schools – Community Centers, I think. There are several sites. The College Terrace site is the closest one to campus.

And it's for kids as of the age of two and a half. I really recommend it. It is kind of pricey. There is some financial aid if you are an American citizen. If you're an international citizen, the financial aid options are pretty limited. It's around $1,500.00 a month for a full time schedule.

Andy: And for anyone who has older kids, there is an elementary school here on campus as well. It's called Escondido Elementary. It's just down the street from where we all three live, which is called Escondido Village, and it's a great school. The kids walk, and the weather is perfect, so it's just a phenomenal option for those kids as well.

Alice: Yeah. And they have an after school program which is right next to the school. I looked into this option as well as my kid was getting older. So they have an after school program, so the kids can actually go from the morning and from 9:00 AM, I think, and they can stay in the after school program until like 5:00 PM. So it's pretty good.

Okay. Well, next question. I think we've talked about it some, a bit, but let's go over it again. So where do you – where do we all live? Is there housing for families on campus. And are pets allowed?
Andy: We all three live in Escondido Village, which I mentioned earlier is the graduate housing for people with kids. There are some single students who live there, and there also some married-without-kids who live there as well, but it's primarily those who have families with children. If you have children, I believe the policy is you're guaranteed housing if you so choose to live in Escondido Village.

Mai: Yeah, for now.

Andy: For now. They're all town home style, where you don't – you share walls, but not an upstairs/downstairs with another family. And there's a two bedroom option and a three bedroom option. The building itself – the buildings themselves are actually kind of old, but the community is phenomenal. I think Mai mentioned earlier they all surround a courtyard, and the courtyards all have fully enclosed playgrounds. And so my kids walk out our back door and they play outside all day long, every single day. And it's just really a fantastic playground for the kids. So that's a great option for those who want to live on campus.

Mai: And pets are not allowed.

Alice: Well, pets are not allowed. There are ways.

[0:20:00]

So I have two friends who are from Brazil and they brought their pet. And so you have to apply that you need the pet –

Mai: As a service animal.

Alice: – as an emotional support, or as a service dog. So if the dog –

Mai: Yeah. This is America.

Alice: Yeah.

Alice: [Laughter]

Alice: And so you can – if you really want to take your pet, there are ways, but it's challenging. It's not easy.

Andy: I do know some classmates who chose to live off campus for this reason.
Andy: If you have cats or dogs that are family members. And so they choose to live off campus. And one thing to note is that on campus housing is subsidized relative to the same size apartment off campus, and so from a financial perspective, it's much more favorable to be on campus. But those who have animals who do not want to part ways with them for these two years chose to live off campus as well.

Mai: I left my cat with my parents-in-law.

Alice: Does Stanford help partners find work opportunities? Maybe this is something that –

Andy: My wife is a stay at home mom, but that being said, I know that they do actually help – I know that there's opportunities for spouses or significant others to come actually to the GSB and receive career counseling, and the GSB helps place them. I've heard of several classmates who use that route, and found jobs either on campus, or even in the local community. So only from secondhand experience I've heard that it's a great opportunity for the spouses as well.

Mai: My husband didn't use it, but I've heard about it, too. He networked way in advance from friends to find a job here.

Andy: And there are even some of my classmates whose spouses found great full time jobs because of the GSB, as they were able to tap into the network that their husband or wife was able to access.

Alice: Yeah. That's true.

Andy: One thing that the GSB stands out for among many other schools, the alumni network is incredibly strong, incredibly tight, and very responsive. And I've heard that is the case as well for spouses of students, as they reached out to say “my spouse attends the GSB. Can we talk?” And more likely than not, that opens the door for them as well.

[0:22:00]

Alice: What made you choose Stanford instead of other schools?

Andy: It's a big question. There's plenty of great schools obviously all around the world. For me, there were a lot of reasons, and I'll go over a few that I think are relevant to our discussion. One is similar
to what we've already been discussing. It's just the family lifestyle. I looked at the living arrangements here in Escondido Village, and I thought about the day to day life my spouse and children would live while I was in an intensive MBA program, and I thought about which one of these programs would be most enjoyable for them, essentially.

And I honestly couldn't find anything that would even compare to Stanford. And now, looking back after the last two years that have gone by, I think that's absolutely spot on. The opportunity for the family here is incredible. So that was a big reason why.

I'll maybe share another one and then let you two answer it as well, but for me, I came here to visit Stanford during the admit weekend, after I had been admitted, and the culture here was one that I didn't really find elsewhere, which was one of inclusiveness and creativity and fun. The students all come from all over the world, obviously, and they're all equally ambitious to go and change the world. The GSB has this mantra, which is change lives, change organizations, and change the world, and it's more than just a slogan, because the students here really embody that.

And I saw that as an admit when I came here for admit weekend, and I just loved the environment, and I felt like I couldn't help but become a better person by being here for two years. And that's absolutely been the case since I've been here.

Mai: One of my reasons was totally tied to what you said first, Andy, about family life here, and there would be housing on campus. I wouldn't need to worry about finding something from France. So that was a big plus.

And then I really wanted to be in California for the weather, so there were not that many options. And I also wanted to stay in a technology related area, so being in the Silicon Valley and the Bay Area totally made sense for me.

Alice: For me, I was really drawn to the tech, getting to know more about Silicon Valley, the tech culture – which really – I mean, when you're here, you just get the buzz, and you really feel it. And also the weather for me. Just as an example, me and my daughter, I think there's only been four days in the last year that we haven't biked to school. And we bike to school when it's a little bit rainy. It's like, hmm, let's take the car? But it's almost never. It's very
nice. I think that was for me the big plus, compared to other schools on the different coasts, and even the schools on this coast. I think the living arrangements were a lot better here. That was kind of the reason.

Andy: Perhaps one more element that we haven't talked about yet that's important to understand Stanford as far as why people choose to come here – Stanford tends to brand itself, rightly so, I believe, as a school that focuses on interpersonal dynamics.

Mai: And leadership.

Andy: And personal leadership development. Rather than prescribing a specific leadership style according to some past CEO or some other leader, they encourage all the students while they're here to find their own leadership style, and they provide an environment, between classes and activities and trips and other things, that allows you to explore your personal leadership style, and to think about how your actions and how your words and how your style influences other people for the good and for the bad.

And the culture here is very much feedback-oriented, and so while you're here, you receive a lot of feedback as far as how you're being influential, whether good or bad. And the idea is that over the course of these two years you come out a better leader for yourself, a better leader for others, according to your own style, as opposed to getting a better sense for how other people lead, for example. I think that's a big part of the culture here.

Alice: And you start applying those things as well at home, I think.

[Laughter]

Alice: Some of the learnings from touchy-feely – it's one of the famous Stanford classes – I've started applying them with my daughter, and it's actually a really positive evolution, I think.

Andy: Yes. I think that parents have an unfair advantage in practicing leadership, because we go home every day and we have to persuade our children to do things they don't want to do. And so as I've learned different leadership styles here at school, it's been interesting to try them out at home and see whether they hold water or not.

[0:26:00]
Alice: Okay. So let's go on to the next question. How much flexibility is there when you schedule your classes? I would say in the first quarter, none.

Mai: None.

Alice: The first two quarters are actually pretty fixed. I think in the second quarter you get to choose one elective. Other than that, the first two quarters are very fixed, and you have to be aware that you're going to be busy from 8:00 in the morning until 5:00 in the afternoon every day.

After that, it gets a lot more flexible. So I decided this year not to take any 8:00 AM classes anymore, which has meant that I've been giving up on some classes, but I prioritize it, because I especially enjoy the morning time with my daughter – taking her to school, taking time to have breakfast together, talking about the previous day, talking about what she's going to do today – I feel it's like a nice bonding moment. So I have prioritized that, only taking 10:00 AM – well, later than 10:00 AM classes. I don't know if you guys have any experiences like that.

Andy: My first year I took a couple of evening classes that I really wanted to take, and while I enjoyed them, they took a big toll on my family as well, because I was gone every Tuesday and Thursday night for my second and third quarters. And so I made a goal my second year not to take evening classes, which was completely doable. But to Alice's point, that meant I passed up on some classes that I thought were interesting. It's really a unique time where your schedule is not back to back, if you choose to take classes on different days or times, and so I'm often able to go home in the middle of the afternoon for a little while, help out, and then come back to school. And so it's been pretty flexible, for the most part.

Mai: Yeah, so not – so flexibility is not only for parents, but also for maybe classmates who are working on their own venture, for example. I worked part time during my second year, so I had some flexibility to arrange my schedule around that. I also avoided evening classes last year, just because I didn't have anyone to watch my kids for these classes.

But there are so many interesting classes to take, it actually helped me choose my classes because the list was shorter.

[0:28:13]
Alice: I actually – I had I think a month in the first year where my daughter wasn't here, she was at home with her dad, and I actually felt it was very – it was difficult to prioritize. So when she's here, at least I have some focus. Okay – I want to be home at that time, because I want to spend time with her. But when she wasn't here, there were so many things, and I ended up doing a lot of things that I really didn't want to do, because I just didn't have that focus anymore. So I think in a way what Mai is saying is that it really helps you kind of prioritize and focus, and, I mean –

Mai: Be more intentional about what you –

Alice: Exactly.

Mai: – choose to participate in. Yeah.

Alice: Two more minutes. So we're out of time. Before we go, Andy, Mai, thank you so much for coming. But do you guys have some final words of advice for our prospective applicants?

Andy: Given the audience, I would suggest that you think about this as a decision you make as a family, and whether that means your family is you and a partner, or you and your children, as it really is an experience for the entire family. And I think that because it is an experience for the whole family, it's a phenomenal, enriching opportunity that our single and/or non-parent students, classmates, don't have the opportunity to experience. So think about it as a whole family experience as opposed to just a singular education for yourself, and talk with your family about what matters to them, and what kind of experience they want to have at this stage of their life. And if you decide to apply and you get in, I guarantee you'll love it.

Mai: I agree with that, and then I'll add talk about it with your partner early. So I talked about it at least two years in advance, and then gave him a week to think about it, because it was a big decision. And also apply round one if you're international.

[0:30:00]

Alice: I would say apply round one, put your kids on the wait list for schools, think about having someone the first quarter, bringing maybe a grandparent or, I don't know, someone who wants to help out. Having someone that helps out the first quarter will be useful.

Mai: Unless you have a stay at home spouse.
Alice: Yes, unless you have a stay at home spouse. But I think even then, like to help the transition, the first two, three weeks, I think it's probably a good idea.

Alice: Thank you all for participating, and sending us some really good questions. You can learn more about the MBA program on the GSB website. The application for the class starting in the fall of 2017 will be available in June. If you have questions about the MBA Program, you can continue to submit them in the chat box. The staff will be answering them for the next 15 minutes. Thanks again, and have a great day.

Andy: Thanks everyone.

Mai: Have a great day.

Alice: Bye bye.

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