Allison: Hello and welcome to our conference call, “MBA Admissions Insights: Considering a Joint or Dual Degree.” Thanks for joining us. My name is Allison Davis, I'm Associate Director in the MBA Admissions Office, and I'm joined by my colleague, Mary Oleksy, Associate Director, Joint and Dual Degree Programs.

Mary: Hi, everyone.

Allison: In the next 30 minutes we'll be talking about what to keep in mind as you consider pursuing a joint or dual degree. We'll start by reviewing some of your options as a joint or dual degree student, and then we'll discuss some questions that you may find worthwhile to ask yourself before pursuing a joint or dual degree. We'll wrap up by answering some of the questions that you all submitted in advance.

So, Mary, let's start off with the basics. Most of this is on our website, but let's review it here briefly. To begin, can you tell us the difference between a joint degree and a dual degree?

Mary: Yes. So in a joint degree there's a reduction in MBA units and some MBA units may either be double-counted towards both degrees or counted towards the other degree. In order to graduate with a joint degree a student needs to meet both sets of degree requirements, and I want to note that it takes an additional one to three quarters beyond the two years for the standard MBA. In contrast, a dual degree program is when a student pursues a second degree with any other graduate program at Stanford University that we don't have a formal agreement with. There is a reduction in MBA units, and this allows a student to start earning credit towards their other degree program. I want to note that there's no double counting of units, and students complete the MBA in two years when they complete a dual degree.

Allison: And there are even more options, right?

Mary: Yes. So beyond what's offered at Stanford, students also may pursue degrees with selected professional schools at other universities.

[0:02:01] Right now our list includes public policy programs at Harvard, Princeton, and Johns Hopkins, along with the Harvard Medical School, Yale Law School, and Yale Medical School. And all of these are listed on our website.
I want to note that we don't have formal dual degree agreements with these schools, but we do partner with them informally to offer these as study opportunities. And what does this mean for you? It means you need to do the legwork for these dual study opportunities; you will need to inquire with each school regarding its policy and its timeline for the programs.

Allison: And why would somebody typically be interested in pursuing more than just an MBA?

Mary: I think in today's complex world there is more and more recognition of the intersection and interplay of business with fields like law, education, technology, and medicine, just to name a few. Therefore, we know a student's interests and goals may span multiple disciplines, and we want to nurture that by providing flexibility and an opportunity to simultaneously explore other academic areas. So it may be helpful to know that twenty-one percent of our current MBA students are pursuing a joint or a dual degree.

Allison: And be aware also there are specific application instructions, depending on what type of joint or dual degree you're interested in. For example, for the JD/MBA, the MD/MBA, the joint masters in computer science, and a few others you would use essay B, which asks “Why Stanford?” in the online MBA application, to support your rationale for the joint or dual degree, while for the joint masters in education you're required to upload a personal statement in the joint degree section of the MBA application. Again, all this information is on our website, but you should be aware of some of these differences ahead of time.

Mary: That's absolutely right. Again, I encourage you all to read our website, the GSB website, as well as the website of the other program you're interested in, because there are specific instructions, depending on the degree.

[0:04:08] And in many cases you need to apply separately and you need to be admitted to both programs. So for example, our JD/MBA Program with the Stanford Law School falls into this category. And then in other cases, such as the joint master’s degree in education, we will forward your application and personal statement to the Graduate School of Education. So please do your homework and read the website.
Allison: There may also be different tests required. For example, the MBA Program accepts both the GRE or the GMAT, but the School of Engineering will only accept the GRE for master’s degree programs in computer science and electrical engineering. And if you're applying as an international student the MBA Program will accept the TOEFL, the PTE, or the IELTS, while the School of Engineering will only accept the TOEFL.

Mary: Yes, all correct. And again, specific requirements for each program are listed on the websites, and so you just want to make sure you're familiar with that.

Allison: Mary, I think we should also mention that applicants should be mindful of when to apply. The MBA Program has three application rounds with deadlines this year on September 21, January 10, and April 5. However, other degree programs may only have one application deadline, typically in mid-December. The reply date, which is the date by which you must accept your offer of admission, may also vary. So you don't want to find yourself in a situation where you have to decide if you're accepting your offer of admission to one degree program before you know if you've gotten into the other degree program.

Mary: Yeah, I really appreciate you highlighting that. If you're applying, for example, to the computer science or electrical engineering joint degree programs I really recommend that you apply to the MBA Program in round two.

[0:06:01] So again, this is something to be aware of. You want to make sure you check for each degree program not only the application deadlines, but also the date that you'll receive your admission decision and the dates where you must accept or decline your offer of admission.

Allison: Mary, let's talk about your role in working with students who are interested in pursuing a joint or dual degree.

Mary: So I work with both current students and admitted students. For currently enrolled students I provide academic advising and support with navigating both degree programs. I also offer general advising sessions for admits and students who are considering applying for a joint or dual degree and want to talk through those options.
Allison: And just to be clear, you work only with MBA students once they're admitted to the MBA program, and with current students who are pursuing or are interested in pursuing a second degree. Your role is not to advise applicants or prospective applicants.

Mary: Yeah. Sorry, that is correct; I only work with admits and students.

Allison: All right. Now why don't we back up for a moment and talk about some questions that you out there should be asking yourselves as you're getting ready to apply for a joint or dual degree. Answering these questions for yourself now can save you time later in the application process.

So of course, first you need to ask yourself “Is a joint or dual degree right for you?” And how would you suggest people think about that, Mary?

Mary: Yeah, and this is important to spend some time thinking about. And I suggest that you start at a high level, so let's start with a vision. And I know that this is going to change for you many times, but what is your vision today for your future career, and do those career dreams include opportunities or roles where a specific degree beyond an MBA is either required for you to get your foot in the door or be successful in that position. So you want to think about that.

Another thing to think about is how important is having those letters, the MS or the MA, after your name. Sometimes it matters and sometimes it doesn't. If the MA or the MS letters after your name are not as important, you want to think about what's the content, the experience, or the context that you need to learn in order to pursue your vision.

I would also spend some time reflecting on what you hope to gain from pursuing an MBA and from pursuing a joint degree, and is there room in this vision you have of what your MBA is going to be like for the trade-offs that you're going to need to make when you're pursuing a joint or dual degree program. Because there are some choices that you'll have to make, and you can't say yes to everything.

You'll also want to think about are you at a place in your life where you can make the time and the financial commitment to stay for additional quarters beyond the two years required for the MBA,
because that can be significant. So do you have personal or family commitments that you need to consider when you’re making this decision? But I think all of those are important high-level questions to think about.

**Allison:** Great. Next, “How do I decide which joint or dual degree to apply to?”

**Mary:** We have a lot of interesting programs here, and so I think once you have a clear sense of what's the subject area that you're interested in, go do your homework. I would do some research and deeply explore both the structure and the course requirements of the program. And the question to notice is when you read through these classes do you feel excited about it? Maybe not every single class, but you want to test for a sense of alignment between the program offerings and your learning goals. So trust your gut.

Something else you want to think about is your competitiveness as an applicant. So in general I believe you should always throw your hat in the ring for a degree program that you're interested in. That being said, as with the MBA application, it can also be a significant time commitment to pull together a compelling application for a joint or a dual degree.

It can take hours to prepare for the exams, requesting recommendation letters or writing your responses to an essay question. So if it's available I would take a look at the admissions criteria or statistics for the student body of the program you're interested in to assess [whether you are] a viable candidate for this program, and would this be a good use of your time.

And I want to highlight that, right, the advantage of doing a joint or a dual degree program is that you're going to blend your learning and you're going to be more efficient with your time on financial resources. But the challenge is that you have to prioritize and make some choices around what is it that you're coming here to learn, what's the experience you want to have, and how can you fit that into the allotted time that you have.

**Allison:** Great. Good advice. Okay, people should also think about timing, and ask themselves, "Should I apply for a joint or dual degree when I'm applying for an MBA, or wait until I'm already a student at Stanford?"
Mary: It's an interesting question. So if your decision to come to Stanford depends on being accepted to both degree programs, then yeah, you need to apply for those both in advance of enrolling. But if you're not totally sure and you know you want to do the Stanford MBA regardless of whether you are accepted into a second degree program, you could wait, and you could wait and apply during your first year at the business school to the other degree program and then make your decision.

Allison: How many students do apply after they're already here?

Mary: About half of our students pursuing a second degree do that. So 50/50. And just as a reminder, the application requirements, like test scores, essays, et cetera, all of those things are the same whether you apply in advance or whether you wait until once you're a student here.

Allison: Last, “If I'm accepted to a joint or dual degree how does the timing work? Which program should I start first? Do I even have a choice?”

Mary: So my famous answer, it depends.

[0:12:00] It depends, and I would refer you to the website, to our website, to see the pathways and options. For example, medical school students always start at the med school, and most JD/MBAs start at the law school. But other programs, such as E-IPER, the Masters in Public Policy, or the MA in Education, all of those students will start at the GSB first. For programs like electrical engineering and computer science, it's more of a personal preference of where do you wish to start.

Allison: Great, Mary. All right, let's move on now to answering audience questions. And again, thanks to so many of you for submitting questions in advance.

So first question, what are the financial aid opportunities for joint and dual degree students and how do they differ from regular MBA students?

Mary: Yeah, this is a really good question. So for students pursuing a joint or dual degree here at Stanford, you're treated the same as an MBA-only student when it comes to determining financial aid eligibility. Financial aid here is awarded based on need, and one
thing to think about is depending on which degree you are pursuing, it may be best to start at the GSB first, as we will provide financial aid, including fellowships for the entire time it takes to complete your joint degrees. This is a discussion you can have in more detail with our financial aid office after you've been admitted.

Let me also note, for those of you considering study opportunities outside of Stanford, you are eligible for financial aid from Stanford only during the time that you are here for the MBA. And so the other institution would be responsible for any financial aid you're receiving while you're attending their program, and so you would need to apply separately for financial aid from that institution.

**Allison:** Right. Are most joint degree students people who studied related fields in undergrad?

**Mary:** So not necessarily. Our technical degree programs, like computer science and electrical engineering tend to have the most direct correlation between undergraduate and graduate experience.

[0:14:08] But other programs such as education, E-IPER, or public policy all have a broader spectrum of undergraduate backgrounds.

**Allison:** Will schools confer with each other during the joint degree admission process?

**Mary:** Allison, I'm going to defer that one to you.

**Allison:** Okay. Sure. The admission decisions are made separately. We do ask on our application form if you have applied or are considering applying to a joint degree and which degree. So we are aware that you may have applied to another program. For dual degrees students need to apply and be accepted to the other program separately and then notify our office. In any case, if you're admitted to the MBA program and any second degree program, whether it's a joint or a dual degree at Stanford or one of the selected study opportunities outside Stanford, Mary will be available to answer your questions and help you map out your schedule of how you'll pursue the two programs.

Next question, “Are there a specific number of spots available for each joint or dual degree program?”
Mary: There are some programs that have MBA-specific cohorts, so in particular education and E-IPER will typically accept approximately 20 to 25 students each year. The cohorts for the other programs are really based on who they want to accept, so there is no set number.

Allison: Okay. Can you discuss the computer science joint degree and the various careers that people who have graduated with that degree go into?

Mary: So the CS joint degree is a young program, we're going into our third year of existence, and in speaking with our current students there is something I want to highlight for all of you. So students tell me this is not a program for students interested in being product managers.

[0:16:04] What this is is a program for students who wish to take a deeper dive into a specific area within computer science. So I would advise you if you're thinking about this program, please, go explore the computer science website and take a close look at the areas of specialization, because you want to make sure that what they're offering matches your interests.

And regarding careers, we actually only have one graduate of the program at this point, so I don't really have data yet to share about the career paths.

Allison: And, Mary, we should also probably mention in terms of undergraduate backgrounds for computer science that they really do need to have a technical undergrad degree, is that right?

Mary: Yeah, they should be highly quantitative or technical, so computer science, applied math, engineering, but something in that genre.

Allison: Right. Or physics, I guess, is one that I think is acceptable.

Mary: Mm-hmm.

Allison: So again, take a look at their website, but they are looking for people with – to be a competitive applicant you do need to have a technical undergraduate degree.
All right, next question, “If I join a joint or dual degree program would I later be able to drop one and focus on the other, or do I have to follow through with both no matter what?”

*Mary:* This is also a “depends” question. But let me say in general it's a difficult position to be in if you're in a joint degree program and you're not sure if this is the right path. And that's why doing your homework now on alignment and program fit is so important. And in general if a program is no longer a fit it's likely that you would be able to withdraw; however, depending on the timing, there can be significant implications on your degree progress and graduating in time. So this is a decision to be made carefully and is definitely a decision that students would consult with me before making.

[0:18:00]

*Allison:* And I think this might be an example of a situation where you might wait to apply once you're already an MBA student here and you kind of get the lay of the land and what the workload is and then apply as a first-year student to that other degree program.

*Mary:* Yeah, I agree.

*Allison:* How demanding is it to take a dual degree if the second degree is from Stanford also, and this person is thinking of the MA in either education or public policy?

*Mary:* So I wanted to address the difference between demanding versus commitment and challenging. So taking on a second degree, it's a commitment, and if you're fully aware of the ramifications of that choice in the beginning it shouldn't be a painful one. From an academic perspective, all of our students have been academically successful in our joint degree programs. So what you're really navigating in regards to demanding or challenging is what electives are you going to take when and how do you spend your time outside of the classroom when you have homework, class preparation, and other activities that you want to do. So it's really more around priority management and time management than it is about overall demanding.

*Allison:* What about the more technical degrees, like electrical engineering or computer science, how demanding are they?
Mary: Yeah. Those are I would consider more demanding, especially in regards to time. So for example, students have shared with me that one class can sometimes be 20 to 25 hours of work outside of the classroom. So this is not a degree for the faint of heart.

Allison: All right. Okay. “May I apply to a joint degree after being accepted to the MBA program? Is it more competitive than applying to the regular MBA program?”

Mary: So I think we've spoken to this already, that yes, you can apply after. And it is not more competitive than when you're applying during the MBA Admissions cycle. As mentioned earlier, the application requirements are all the same, regardless of when you apply.

[0:20:05]

Allison: For programs that require travel between two different universities, how well can students really create a strong connection to the Stanford community?

Mary: So when we talk about connection to the community I think what we're really talking about are student relationships. And from what I have seen, students have been able to maintain a strong sense of connection through these relationships. What I also notice is students tend to be fully immersed and present in their actual location. So if they're here at the GSB they're fully here at the GSB, and the same is true for the other program. And so if you're at your other institution you're taking full advantage of the resources and the people that are there, so I don't think you have the same sense of missing out here.

And all of our students still have access to all of the GSB's online resources and also staff are available to connect over the phone or video chat. So I think students can remain as connected to the GSB as they want to be.

Allison: Students have told me that it's really a chance to enlarge their own community and they pretty much end up sort of doubling their network at not only two different universities, but two different departments on campus.

Mary: Yeah.
Allison: Another question here, “I would love to learn more about how distinct or integrated we should make the applications, especially with regard to the essays. Is some overlap in our responses to the essays okay?”

I'll go ahead and answer that one. MBA Admissions only reads the two essays that are required for our application, and those are this year "What matters most to you and why?" and "Why Stanford?" We would expect that you would address your interest and your rationale for the second degree in the "Why Stanford?" essay. The other degree program typically does not have access to or read the essays required for the MBA.

[0:22:03] So yes, there will, of course, be some overlap in the essays as their first separate audiences.

I'm not quite sure if this person is asking how much overlap there could be between the two MBA essays, the "What matters most to you and why?" and the "Why Stanford?" That's really entirely up to you. Both essays are read by the MBA Admissions office. How distinct or integrated the two essays are, of course, depends on what you're writing about. So for example, if what matters most to you relates to your reasons for pursuing two degrees there could be overlap in the topic. If what matters most to you is distinct from your interest in the two degrees there may be no overlap in the essays.

Here's a question about JD/MBA. “For JD/MBA students do you have enough time to establish strong relationships with both your GSB and Stanford Law School classmates,” which we sort of addressed, but any further comments there, Mary?

Mary: Yeah. I would just say yes, there is time, in part because students typically spend one full year at least immersed at the law school, and then another full year immersed at the GSB, so you are able to connect with your colleagues. And I think right in the blended years is where it's a little bit more challenging because you have two communities and two full sets of activities as options.

Allison: Here's a question about a master’s in education. “Can I apply separately to the MBA and the MA in education, so in case I'm not admitted to the GSB I can still pursue the MA in education? If I am able to apply separately the same year and I am admitted to both degrees, can I pursue them as a joint degree?”
Mary: Mm-hmm. This is a good nuanced question. So the education, the MA in Education/MBA program is only for students who are admitted to both programs.

[0:24:05] So if you are not accepted to the GSB you would need to apply to a different program at the Graduate School of Education. And I would encourage you to visit their website, as they'll have more information on the options.

Allison: Another common question we get, Mary, about the School of Education is if the joint master’s with education includes a teaching credential, and it does not, correct?

Mary: Yes, that is correct. Although the Graduate School of Education offers a teaching credential, it is not part of the joint masters program.

Allison: “Will pursuing a dual degree burn out students?” And this student is interested in MS in computer science.

Mary: So let's talk about what causes burnout. In my mind burnout is taking on too much without the resources to make it sustainable. So yes, the computer science degree program requires extensive hours outside of the classroom, and that means you need to be willing to prioritize and make tradeoffs in order to find a sustainable path. But again, I spoke about this earlier, if there's alignment between the program and your goals then there's a connection, and so those tradeoffs shouldn't be too difficult to make.

Allison: “For students who are interested in doing both the MBA and a Masters in Public Policy at Stanford, is less than the current average work experience for an MBA, which is four years, acceptable?” So if somebody has three years or two years is that okay?

This is an admissions question, so again, I'll take that. There is no requirement for the number of years of work experience for the MBA Program or for any joint or dual degree program as far as I know.

Allison: “How many students per year pursue a degree with the Harvard Kennedy School concurrently with an MBA from the GSB? And if somebody is applying to the MBA program in this coming cycle, would they be applying to start in 2018?”
Mary: So we have approximately 10 to 15 students each year that are doing the program with the Harvard Kennedy School. And a recommendation in regards to applying for the GSB is that you should be applying for the year that you wish to start.

Allison: And so somebody would apply to Harvard Kennedy this coming cycle and then-

Mary: Mm-hmm. They should wait until next year to apply to the GSB.

Allison: Okay, got it. What have graduates of Stanford's joint master’s in education accomplished as a result of their experience at Stanford?

Mary: So I think what you're asking here is what careers have these students gone on to. Let me give you a sampling of the areas. So they've gone into tech startups, international schools, charter schools, higher education, administration, and education investing, just to name a few.

Allison: Okay. Well, we're almost out of time. If you didn't get your question answered today please feel free to contact our office by e-mail or phone to ask your questions. Before we go, Mary, any words of advice for our listeners today?

Mary: Yeah. So I think pursuing a joint or dual degree can be a wonderful opportunity and it's something to be done with purposeful reflection and intention. Given that for many of you coming to graduate school is a one-time occurrence it really makes sense to be efficient with your time, to maximize your interdisciplinary learning, and to make use of your financial resources. So my best piece of advice for you is try to get as clear as you can on what you want to learn and then just make sure that the program you're applying to meets that need, so your expectations are realistic and aligned and hopefully they're met. Good luck on that.

Allison: Thank you, Mary. And thank you to everyone out there for joining us.

An audio recording of this conference call will be posted on our website in the next few weeks. The previous three calls in our
MBA Admissions Insights series are already posted there, so take a look at those.

The current application is now available on our website. Again, there are three application deadlines: September 21, January 10, and April 5. On our website you'll find videos of webinars and a calendar of events offered both on campus and around the world. We look forward to meeting you online or in person. Goodbye for now.

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