[0:00:00]

Marco Chan: Well, we're going to get started. So, hi and welcome to our webcast, MBA Student Insights, LGBT at the GSB. My name's Marco and I'm a second-year MBA student here at the GSB and we'll be talking about the LGBT student experience here on campus, and trying to answer as many questions as we can. To submit a question to us about what it's like to be a student here, just click the Chat button at the top of your screen, enter your question and click Send to All Panelists.

So, click the Chat button at the top, enter your question and enter Send to All Panelists. We're not going to be talking about the admissions process, the application or financial aid but there are staff from the MBA Admissions Office that are going to answer those types of questions directly in the chat box itself. Right, so first thing's first. We're going to start off with some intros. I have Win and Marcela here. Why don't you start by telling us a bit about where you're from, what you did before coming to the GSB and what your goals are after graduation?

Win Chesson: Awesome, I guess I'll kick us off. My name's Win Chesson. I'm so excited to be on this panel. I grew up in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Before I came out, I went to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, for undergrad. I studied Women's Studies, Gender Studies and Sexuality Studies.

And then I went to work in New York City for an LGBT rights non-profit called Immigration Equality. So, all of my professional experience prior to the GSB was actually focused on championing LGBT equality, especially for immigrant communities of the United States. And I'm a career switcher, so I'm not exactly sure what's next for me but I'm really excited to be at the GSB to have so many amazing new opportunities. And, so, ask me in a year where I am.

[0:02:00]

[Laughter]

Marco Chan: Marcela.

Marcela Ochoa: Hello everyone. Also very excited to be here. My name is Marcela, I am from Mexico. I went to Monterrey Tech where I studied Industrial Engineering, then had a more traditional background doing management consulting for two years. But I'm now, after the
GSB, going to go work at the Nature Conservancy which is an environmental non-profit, and I'm very excited about that. Also glad to be here today.

Marco Chan: Perfect, thanks Marcela. And so as for myself, like I said, my name's Marco Chan. I'm a second-year here at the GSB, but coincidentally just like Win, I'm a dual degree student. I'm in Public Administration at the Kennedy School [at Harvard University] as well. In terms of before school, I studied Romance Studies. Or actually, I'm from Canada, so you have NAFTA up here.

[Laughter]

And I also lived for a while in Macau. In terms of educational background, I studied Romance Studies at Harvard, and then worked at Bain & Company in consulting for a couple of years. I was at the World Bank for a bit in International Development and then long-term, I'm considering either LGBT advocacy full-time, or I'm also really interested in Canadian politics and policy.

Win Chesson: Awesome.

Marco Chan: Very dissimilar things.

[Laughter]

All right, so with that, why don't we just get started with some questions that the audience has submitted. So, why don't we start with the first one. What is the LGBT community like at the GSB?

Win Chesson: Do you want me to start?

Marcela Ochoa: Yeah.

Win Chesson: So, I should start by saying, I love the GSB. And one of the most important communities for me since I've gotten here has been GSB Pride, and that's kind of like the all-inclusive MBA1, MBA2, MBA3 –

Marcela Ochoa: [Laughs]

Marco Chan: MSX, PhD.

Win Chesson: Yeah, the one-year students, PhD students.
And I think it's because they host a retreat very soon after you get onto campus, so as you're kind of establishing yourself and trying to make friends with section mates, it's nice to break away from that for a minute and get to meet not just people of your year or outside of your section but also get to meet – start friendships that are MBA2s. I met both of you at that retreat and that was just really meaningful. So, that's kind of how it started for me.

Marcela Ochoa: Yeah.

Marco Chan: Cool.

Marcela Ochoa: I really wanted to let Win go first because as he mentioned, I'm an MBA3. The program is usually two years as I'm sure you know, but I'm a joint degree candidate with the School of Earth, Energy and Environmental Studies, so, EIPER. So, I wanted to provide the historic perspective.

[Laughter]

And it's been really exciting to see how the GSB Pride community has changed. There were fewer of us when I started and it was more, in a way, a more homogenous community and I'm really excited to see now – I hope you talk about prom where you got to wear drag, and I just –

[Laughter]

– see, the conversations and the experience here being so much more inclusive and stronger and again, coming back to the fact that I'm an MBA3, it's really exciting to make friends with the first years even now after my friends graduated now with the second-years. And GSB Pride has really been at the core of that.

Marco Chan: Yeah. I think – as for my thoughts on what the LGBT community has been like here, I'll offer two things. I think the first is that for me, partly because my social and my professional interest has been the LGBT community, it always feels like home base.
Marco Chan: So, it's nice that we have a group where it's big enough that, to your points, there's quite a bit of diversity in our group in terms of work background, where people grew up, ideologies even. There's enough of that but it's also a tight-knit enough group where I feel like I really do know every single person to one degree or another.

[0:06:00]

So, it's nice to have – we get together every Thursday for drinks and different people's houses, we have events all the time. We'll go together to different pan-Stanford or local San Francisco LGBT events, so it's nice to have that community. And then, I think the second thing I'll share is that – again, to what Marcela said, I think frankly everyone's kind of surprised by how international our LGBT experience is. We have people from China, India, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Mexico.

[Laughter]

Brazil. So, I think it's really enriched discussions that we've had, particularly with allies, around what it means for us to think about inclusion and diversity in our own personal lives but also in the workplace. To all these different places that people are going to – people from the GSB will ultimately end up back at. So, that's a piece I'll share on that. The second question that we have, is how did you know it was the right time for you to get an MBA? Why wasn't it five years ago, why wasn't it two years later?

Marcela Ochoa: I thought, again, being in management consulting, I thought that I was under a deadline to apply before my two years were up. It turned out maybe that wasn't quite what I thought it was, but I just thought I had to do it at that point. The right time is probably when you feel it's the right time. I'm super glad I got to do it then, because the GSB has really allowed me to leverage what I had learned in consulting, but really transition to a career that's very meaningful to me. So, in a way, I wanna say the sooner the better.

[Laughter]

But, whenever it's right for you.

Win Chesson: For me it was – if you kind of, rewind it back seven years and asked me would I be getting an MBA, I think my answer would have been absolutely no. But the more I worked in the LGBT rights world, the more value I saw as the organization I was working for partnered more and more with Fortune 500 companies.
And, when I decided to come back to school it was after an enormous victory for our community. And I think the United States Supreme Court issued the Windsor decision and one of the three things Immigration Equality was working on was being able to apply for a green card for your same sex husband or wife. And so once we won that key victory, obviously there's a lot more to do, but it was this turning point moment where I got to reassess and kind of figure out, what do I want to do next.

So, for me it was kind of marked by that milestone, and I always loved school so the idea of doing something that could both help me gain new skills, new knowledge at a moment of uncertainty. So, it kind of seemed too good to be true.

Marcela Ochoa: [Laughs]

Win Chesson: And I remember I visited Stanford and I had this feeling like I just stepped on to the GSB campus – I don't know if you all felt this, but –

[Laughter]

I loved it immediately. Everything was beautiful, but there was this town square and people were waving across the quad and it was just – it seemed really like a cozy community and so I think that that also kind of accelerated the – okay, this is where I wanna be now.

Marcela Ochoa: [Laughs].


[Laughter]

And I'll say in particular, it just felt like the right time after a couple of years of my previous work, to just do some soul searching about future directions and my values. So, keep it there. The third question that we have is – I like this one – so how did you know the GSB was the right school for you? I think we touched on that a little bit, there's a magic moment, but…

Marcela Ochoa: I mean, I met people when I was considering applying to the MBA program and I met people who had been to different schools. I just
found myself being more attracted to the way that GSBers express themselves.

[0:10:00]

And I remember in one of my essays I wrote that what I liked about Stanford is that people talked about dreams and not just goals. So, it just – there was this aura of excitement and following your passion and trying to do something good for the world and not just yourself. And that just… yeah, I was very attracted to that.

Marco Chan: Yeah.

Win Chesson: Yeah. I think – I mean, I – when I visited it was just a feeling that I had. I think that that was maybe a piece of it, but I couldn't quite identify it. I don't know. It's hard to answer that specifically.

Marco Chan: For me it sounds funny, but it was actually going to one of the presentations that the GSB admissions officers do around the cities. So, I was working in Atlanta at the time and I went to the presentation there. And what struck me about what she said and what the alumni who came into the presentation were like, was that this is a place where we think about – where people are empowered to think about, I think, how success is different from meaning and that by pursuing meaning at some point you'll find success. At some point you'll be able to sustain yourself and your material needs. And so worry about your passion and worry about your spirit and worry about your – hone in on those values and that's what's important.

And I think getting the option of my soul searching presented to me that way was just so compelling. I was like, I don't – I'm kind of done with achieving for achieving.

Marcela Ochoa: Mm-hmm.

Marco Chan: I'm done with ticking boxes. I really do want to go to this place where the peers, the structure, the institutions, the courses are gonna push me to do what is truly important and meaningful. So, once I saw that butterfly cocoon slide on the presentation –

[Laughter]

I was like, yes, that's right. All right, more questions. This is fun. How receptive are employers to LGBT students? Do they host events, are their career panels that are LGBT oriented?
[0:12:00]

Win Chesson: So, I – as a career switcher – so, in my old job in LGBT rights diversity in that context was the straight people that worked for us.

[Laughter]

But I was really – I feel like as I'm pivoting to much more traditional things, at least for the summer, I felt like it was an incredible advantage to have the LGBT targeted networking. All of the consulting firms, a lot of the banks did targeted dinners or receptions on campus or nearby. Specifically for LGBT students, so I feel like kind of as a way to get a little – to have an internal champion at any of the companies, especially if you're going to a more traditional pathway for the summer, I felt like it was a total advantage.

Marco Chan: Yeah.

Marcela Ochoa: Yeah.

Marco Chan: I guess we both worked in industries before where we were on the other side.

[Laughter]

Marcela Ochoa: Yes, but from the other side of that I can tell that it really helps when you attend these events and the access that you get to people who are working there and partners and so on. So it's really – it can really make a difference for going into traditional careers.

Win Chesson: And even just reaching out to alums that – if you know the company that you're interested in for the summer, if you have one additional filter that you can try on and I found that – I mean, GSB alumni have been so responsive but the LGBT alumni have gone above and beyond every time that – 100 percent of the time.

Marcela Ochoa: That's – yeah, that's a great point and absolutely true. As I was doing this job search, I completely relied on LGBT alumni. For contacts and so on, so great point.

Marco Chan: Yeah. I think I'll just add that Reaching Out MBA is another great resource for folks that are of – at this life stage and looking at different business paths. So, it's an organization that serves MBAs and prospective MBAs who are LGBTQ identified. So, there's a
conference every year. We went, it was tons of fun. I think it's in Dallas this year.

[0:14:00]

It's also a great chance for us to connect with both LGBT employers and other LGBT MBAs and prospective MBAs from across the country. Well, North America.

So. All right, we'll do the next question then. Do any of the classes address LGBT issues? I can jump into this one because I'm actually working on an extension that came out of LGBT content in the class.

So, I took a class here on campus – it was called Advanced Topics in Philanthropy. And, as a part of that, I wasn't presented with a particular case or something that was LGBT focused, but as with most classes here, I had a lot of latitude in deciding what my assignments were going to be on and how I was going to focus my own lens and my own experience of the class. So, I ended up writing a longer paper about LGBTQ philanthropy, which then the professor went and said, "this is super interesting, it's very contemporary and I'd like to actually extend this and turn it into teaching material." So, I think the class at some future point will actually have that as something to teach with. But that's one way that I infused, by myself, LGBT content in class. And professors are – as long as you're working with something you're excited about – professors are super happy to let you do what you want.

Win Chesson: Yeah, I'm not aware of any explicitly LGBT classes at the GSB, but I know that you can take classes anywhere at the University and that some of – there are LGBT themed classes outside of the GSB that we're allowed to take.

Marcela Ochoa: Yeah.

Marco Chan: Yeah.

Win Chesson: But I'm not aware of any –

Marco Chan: Actually – oh, there is right, I'm in the class right now.

[Laughter]

JD [Schramm, GSB lecturer] would smack me if –
So, I am in another course right now called Reputation Management. And actually, as a part of that, very recently we've had two back-to-back LGBT speakers come in.

Win Chesson: Oh, wow.

Marco Chan: So, one was Raymond Bron who's a Stanford undergrad graduate, who came in and talked about his online activism on LGBT rights with YouTube.

[0:16:00] And then a second speaker who came in and talked to us about how you manage your reputation at the frontier of a movement. She was a GSB alum who played a huge role in the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell. And so she actually walked us through that experience and related it back to the class. So, I actually have had some LGBT specific curriculum.

And then the next question. So, how does being an LGBT student at the GSB relate to your next career move? And another way of putting it, how important is it to be openly LGBT and being in an organization that's going to support that part of your identity?

Marcela Ochoa: That's really a good one. I think for the first part, as we said, for traditional careers, there will be events and you can always reach out to alumni. But in terms of how it's important to be in an organization that will support it, I think just personally, I mean, I couldn't bear any longer to work in an organization where I had to be in the closet. It's just – there's so much energy that you have to pour into hiding things and making things up and it deters your – the type of relationships that you've had. So, again, I didn't go into this job through an LGBT channel, but I definitely made sure that I'm honest and open from the beginning about my sexual orientation and my identity and I think in the end that's a little bit of a personal decision for each one.

Marco Chan: Mm-hmm.

Marcela Ochoa: A little bit, hopefully, a decision to try to be a little bit [of an] activist and help the next person. But yeah, I mean, there's so much research saying that you have to be yourself in order to – you have to be authentic and that's also something that the GSB places a lot of emphasis on.
Just authenticity and how that helps build your leadership style and bring others to support you. So, yeah, that's my take.

**Marco Chan:** Anything that you want to add to that?

**Win Chesson:** I mean, I really agree with the authenticity piece. For me, it would be a deal breaker if I thought that the employer didn't support LGBT – I mean, they could – even – I almost would say that for me they'd have to have 100 on the HRC Index, that measures how well companies do. But, for me I did kind of – I'm going to Goldman Sachs this summer and I recruited through the traditional channels. But I feel like part of what was successful there was I also used the LGBT network to get the inside scoop of – I see the HRC score, but what's it really like? And then also knowing about how they partnered on the LGBT stuff I had done before school, really gave me the confidence to believe in the score that they had. But, I just can't imagine for me being able to do it, because all of my relevant experience is really gay.

[Laughter]

**Marco Chan:** It's your resume.

**Win Chesson:** So I wouldn't – yeah, so I'm kind of automatically outed based on what I do and there's – I think that there are companies where that would not be that helpful, or regions of the world where I might – it might be much harder for me to work. But I'm – for me, I'm willing to make the sacrifice.

**Marcela Ochoa:** And I – if you let me –

**Win Chesson:** Yeah.

**Marcela Ochoa:** I'll even add that what you just said, that you wouldn't even consider working at a place that wasn't accepting of your identity, that's a great privilege.

**Win Chesson:** Yeah.

**Marcela Ochoa:** And, coming from a country that's a little bit more conservative, in some places around that, yeah, it strikes me as something that's really a privilege and in part, something that can come out of this experience.
Marco Chan: Yeah, and in fact we had an event with allies yesterday, where we were – it was basically a workshop where we had dialogue between LGBTQ students and allies at the GSB…

[0:20:00]

...talking about what have your experiences been like on the ally side and on the LGBT side in the workplace in particular. And one ally mentioned her struggle around – she worked in a very conservative and traditional industry where someone who was LGBTQ identified really stood out by his or her actions. And so she struggled to say, what is my place in that? And so, that for me really underscored – different people are going to have different priorities and tradeoffs, where they are in their own coming out journey, so I don't want to minimize that either.

That's something that, yeah – I think we've talked about but I want to really make sure it comes through in the conversation. That it is very individual and contextual.

Win Chesson: And it's something that we – I mean, we've talked a lot about, just kind of casually over drinks, like on – Marco mentioned that often times on Thursdays a lot of the LGBT students will get together. And there's a couple of our classmates that want to work in the Middle East, or that are going back to home countries where it's not quite as safe to be openly LGBT and how do you navigate that? How do we support one another, talking about should I come out to my supervisor – my supervisor is super – however that works.

Marco Chan: Yeah.

Win Chesson: And so, it's a tricky question but it's one that I think people are really actively…we want to support one another.

Marco Chan: 100 percent. So, thinking about the next question. How big is the LGBT community at the GSB? How big is it in on the campus at large, and what kind of support or involvement or interaction does the rest of our class have with the LGBT community here?

Marcela Ochoa: Again, I'll provide the…

[Laughter]
...historical perspective, is – it's another part of what's been so amazing. I think I've seen it double from my class to your class.

Marco Chan: Uh-huh.

Win Chesson: Wow.

[0:22:00]

Marcela Ochoa: And then, I don't know how it was, but your class seems even larger, and definitely louder. [Laughs].

Marco Chan: Yeah.

Marcela Ochoa: But, yeah, so there's a good group as you said – I don't know the exact numbers or anything.

Marco Chan: Yeah, so I – it's a little tricky because obviously it's something that is self-identified. People self-identify or don't in different contexts. But what we did report out, and is available through Reaching Out, is that I think we're about five percent of most of the classes. Which, I think if I remember the list, was actually pretty high.

Marcela Ochoa: And then I'm glad there's also a question about the campus at large, because I've enjoyed Grad Q so much. Grad Q is the LGBT student association for all graduate schools, so that includes Stanford Law School, Med School and all the other PhD and advanced degree programs. And I met so many interesting people there. I feel sometimes like my fellow GSBers didn't get this great opportunity to meet so diverse – so many diverse people, like the social psychology department, law students, everything. I just really appreciated that.

Marco Chan: Yeah, that's true, and actually coincidentally, tomorrow night, we are having – every once in a while, all the LGBT folk in the area take over a straight bar in Palo Alto. So that's actually tomorrow night.

Marcela Ochoa: [Laughs].

Marco Chan: It's a pretty sizeable community at the GSB, throughout Stanford and in the immediate South Bay Peninsula area. And then of course, I used to live in San Francisco myself, so I go up to the city fairly often to see friends that are there. And so, there's obviously that community as well. And then, to the second part of that question, what kind of support or involvement does the rest of the
class have with us? I think we've alluded to this a little bit with some of the ally events, but anything else you'd want to add to that?

Win Chesson: I'll just say that for me it was so striking to how different it was to step back into a university environment and have had so much change.

[0:24:00]

From when I came out to when I went to university where I think it was a much more hostile – I mean, there were supportive pockets, but I don't know that it was as welcoming as I've felt welcomed here. And I think about every – so, every – once a week there are two people from your class will give what's called a Talk, and they tell a lot of their life story. And obviously, every so often, one of those people is LGBT and I feel like the conversations that get sparked through that institution of Talk, which is one of my favorite things about Stanford, have been really moving for me. And then also just the way that – I think the support that I have just from my section and how they've welcomed in my boyfriend. So, they call all of our partners SOs here and I feel like he's been welcomed in so warmly by all students.

Marco Chan: 'Cause he's lovely.

Marcela Ochoa: He's amazing.

[Laughter]

Win Chesson: Thanks.

[Laughter]

I think so too. But I think that really says a lot that he – there are people, straight people in particular, reach out to him before they reach out to me and I love that. Just because I feel like it's kind of like a sign of how things are really changing.

Marco Chan: Yeah.

Win Chesson: And that feels really different from when I was an undergraduate.

Marco Chan: Yeah, I think – I'll just add that – it's not – the GSB is really diverse, right, and we mean that in all kinds of ways. So, I don't want to paint over the fact that there are people here with different
political points of view, with different ideological leanings, but I think one thing that's been super positive about the GSB is that kind of authenticity. And the really, I think, inquisitive culture that we have. Because I have had lots of heart-to-hearts and relationships with – conversations with people where we have disagreed.

[0:26:00]

So, I think the best example would be a classmate of mine, and a friend, posted something on Facebook following the Supreme Court announcement of same-sex marriage in the United States, where he disagreed.

And we ended up having a very frank, two-hour lunch about what that meant, how that landed on me, how his statement made me feel. And we walked away actually finding more common ground than I expected. And we're still close friends, and I still play with his kids. So, I appreciate those kinds of exchanges because I recognize that the disagreements and the shifting political winds will always be, in some way, a part of our future. So, I appreciate having the community here to have that really open, candid dialogue, if anything.

So, moving on to the next question, is GSB Pride purely social, or do we take on advocacy work or do other activities?

Win Chesson: We were kind of talking about this actually before this video session started, because we were thinking about – there's a lot of things that a Pride group could do. We could do education around topics, around HB2 [North Carolina legislation regulating use of restrooms] and what that means for business, or panels for straight allies. We could do networking stuff for helping each other get jobs, we could do social stuff which we do a lot of. And then another thing I think we do a lot of is – if you think of people – for some of our classmates, this is the first time where it's really been safe for people to come out. And so, thinking back to when I came out, how important having a supportive community but also other support resources.

I think that's one thing that Pride does that's not exactly social, but providing all kinds of support for coming out and what does that mean for the workplace, what does that mean in your social life, with your family.

Marco Chan: Yep.
Marcela Ochoa: Yeah.

Marco Chan: Good point.

Win Chesson: And then also advocacy around events like HB2, which we haven't done as much of.

Marco Chan: Yeah.

[0:28:00]

Marcela Ochoa: And then, I would kind of call the – all the events here dealing with allies kind of, advocacy/education.

Marco Chan: Mm-hmm.

Marcela Ochoa: And, another one of the things I'm really excited to see in recent years, the way it used to be more of a social club. It's evolved, and I've seen it every year and with other clubs, always kind of evolving to the needs and the – what people are excited about.

Marco Chan: Yeah. I'd say it's fairly dependent on the group of people that want to take action. I think with most clubs here, they're fairly open. You'll find that all the clubs have ten leaders, because everyone wants to be a leader.

[Laughter]

But I think that works out in a way where you share work and people really take their own personal initiative. And so, I think, for example when our year took over the leadership – we asked the people that were there, here and incoming, if five years from now when you graduate, what will have Pride have done for it to be memorable in your experience? And then we executed off that and much of that was social and much of that was in support. Some of it was education, so it'll change a bit year to year.

Win Chesson: I think what for me has been really important has been an emphasis on building a community, whatever that means. And so, I feel really connected to the LGBT people. I think particularly in my year, but really at the GSB.

Marcela Ochoa: Also in your third year?

[Laughter]
There's other people you know.

*Win Chesson:* First, second, third.

*Marco Chan:* All right, whoa. Time is – well, time really does fly. I think we're almost out of time, but before we go, Win, Marcela, any final words of advice for folks that are thinking about applying to the Stanford MBA? Especially if they're part of the LGBT community?

*Marcela Ochoa:* I'll just shoot a couple out there. Reach out to co-workers if you have – if you know someone who's LGBT and has attended business school. They can be great sources of wisdom. More generally, just really take some time to enjoy the process of writing your essay.

I think part of the decision to come here was that I had to think so hard about it, but at the end I really felt like I knew myself better. So, it can be hard but really enjoy it. Talk to other people about it, take the opportunity to get your – get to know yourself better. And, yeah, I hope you enjoy it.

*Marco Chan:* Thanks, Marcela. Win?

*Win Chesson:* I really agree with that. I think, one thing I wanna flag and I know we're not talking about financial aid, but there are specific LGBT scholarships that are not necessarily specific to Stanford, but knowing about the Point Foundation for me was really helpful. And then there also is LGBT specific money at Stanford, so if you're able to be out, I think that that's – I just wish that that had been flagged for me. And the second thing is, I love talking to potential applicants about what you're thinking about. So kind of following on your advice about, if there's someone that you can reach out to and ask a little bit, to get even more of a peek into their experience and to follow up with more questions. I definitely recommend doing anything you can to have those conversations as you're going through the application process.

I think my quick tidbit is just to be authentic to your identity.

For me, like I said, my professional interest is in the LGBT community and so of course, that's gonna show up at length in my application, of course that's gonna show up in my essays. That may
or may not be the case for you, depending on how you want to live and express that identity and your values. So, put down what makes sense for you. There isn't a magic formula with your identity, nor with anything else in the application. I really think it is very holistic. So, on that note, we'll thank both of you for joining us.

And also everyone in the audience for participating.

[Laughter]

I think we're all here because we love the school, and we love our community and we'd be super excited to see some of you apply and ultimately come here. You can learn more about the MBA program on the GSB website.

[0:32:00]

So, the application for the class starting in the fall of 2017 is going to be available in June. So, 2017, starting then, application will be available in June. And if you have questions about the MBA program, you can continue to submit them in the chat box.

And there will be staff from the MBA Admissions Office that are going to answer them for about the next 15 minutes. But, that's it for us, so thanks again and have a great day. Thanks for joining.

Win Chesson: Thank you.

Marcela Ochoa: Thank you.

[End of Audio]