Tolu Alabi: Hi and welcome to our webcast today on MBA student insights, Women at the GSB. My name is Tolu Alabi and I’m a first year MBA student here at the GSB. And today I’m joined by Rishi Lilly and Val Young who are both second years and about to graduate. We’ll be talking about the student experience here on campus and we’re here to answer as many questions as you might have. To submit a question just click on the chat button at the top of your screen, put in the question and click send to all the panelists.

So today we won’t be talking about anything related to admissions process or the application or financial aid. But staff from the MBA admissions office are here to answer your questions. You just type the question into the chat box. So let’s start with some introduction. Rishi and Val please just tell us a little bit about yourselves, where you’re from, what you did before the GSB and what you’re looking to do after graduation.

Rishi, you can go first.

Rishi Lilly: I’m from Texas born and raised, went to University of Chicago for undergrad and then spent four years in Chicago doing executive search where I helped build additional health practice and then came here. And after school I’ll be doing health tech.

Tolu Alabi: Nice. Thank you. Thank you, Rishi.

Val Young: Hi. I’m Val and I am from New Hampshire originally, went to Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. I graduated in 2008. Shortly thereafter I moved to DC and I spent about six years after college before coming to business school in politics. Most recently I was in the U.S. Senate as a Chief of Staff. Over the summer I worked at the Boston Consulting Group in San Francisco so I’ll be going back there after graduation. I am interested in hopefully starting something on my own at some point but spending a little time in consulting before figuring out exactly what my career path with be.

Tolu Alabi: Nice. Thank you, Val. So for me again I’m Tolu Alabi. I’m originally from Nigeria,

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... and I moved to the U.S. about seven years ago for college. I went to Grinnell College in Iowa. I double majored in computer science and math and after that I worked as a programmer at Goldman
[Sachs]. And then I did that for two years and then came to the GSB last September. After the GSB I’m looking to remain in technology but do something more like business development related versus being a programmer or software engineer on the tech side. So let’s get started with questions from you guys. So the first question is what’s it like for women at Stanford both inside and outside the classroom?

Val Young:

So I think I was pleasantly surprised actually by the sort of climate and atmosphere for women here. Our class, at least the class of 2016, I’m not sure about the class for the next year, was about a 60/40 split male to female and we had one of the highest percentages of women at the GSB in history and so that’s been really nice. I think that I have found a really supportive group of male and female friends here.

I definitely have found there are some challenges coming into a place that or into an industry sort of as a whole that has been historically male dominated and I think the GSB and the student body are working through that and sort of making progress as we go along. And I’m happy to obviously talk about that a bit more. But by and large I’ve actually found it much more inclusive than I even anticipated coming in so that’s been really nice.

Rishi Lilly:

I think the thing I’d add on to that is I think starting our year we started – we have this Women in Management [WIM] board and we started having formal members who are men, WIMen, join, nd we’ve had such a huge movement of guys being involved in WIMen. And you just feel –

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the support for what used to be considered women’s issues as just issues that we all talk about and we all think about. So there’s definitely an open environment to talk about what it means to be a working mom or two, or just like a working parent rather than saying working mom and conversations like that which is really great and refreshing.

Val Young:

I actually was thinking of one other thing that there’s been some really great formal stuff that Stanford has done. I think informally one of the things that our classmates have really pushed is diversifying some of those kind of side conversations and group meetings and things particularly about entrepreneurship in the startup world. So I think we found in the first quarter, maybe first two quarters there were a lot of male groups that were having
informal and formal conversations about entrepreneurship and for whatever reason women weren’t really as integrated into that. And I think women were having their own separate conversations.

And I know a few classmates of ours made a very concerted effort to start bridging those two groups together, start thinking about forming startup teams together and just kind of allowing that ecosystem to cross over between male students and female students. And that has been something I’ve really appreciated going forward because I think those are the informal networks and informal groups that start to really make a big difference as you move through your career.

**Tolu Alabi:** Thank you. Very good points. So the next question is how do you think about timing to get your MBA in terms of stepping out of your career for two years and possibly starting a family someday?

**Rishi Lilly:** I can start with that one. I think getting your baby is a little bit similar to having — or getting your MBA. [Laughter] Yes, exactly. Getting your MBA is a little similar to having a baby which is there may be no perfect time. I think one time when it is a really good time is if you want to pivot and especially with regard to having a family. I know a lot of families actually have a baby while they’re at the GSB —

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maybe in the second year because that seems like a good transition point. So I guess my advice would be figure out first is this something that you really want? Is this something that’s going to benefit your career and then really think about how and why? And then just after that if you want it and if you want a family too just decide how you’re going to start piecing those things together. It will never be perfect. The timing will never be great but you can do it.

**Val Young:** I would say as somebody that got married in my first month of business school I would echo Rishi’s thoughts that like the best laid plans always go awry. So I had worked for about six years before I came. I think again to Rishi’s point it felt like I had had some really awesome and interesting accomplishments and I was ready for some new challenges. I think spending some time thinking about when and why you want to go is really important and I would sort of prioritize that.
The family stuff I think is tough for women at any point in this, in our careers at business school and career trajectory thereafter. And it’s something that you and your family and your partner have to spend some time thinking about. I think that business school, it will fit into your life wherever you need it to fit into your life. If you’re doing something like I’m doing which is kind of going into a consulting firm where you’re going to have a couple of years where you may want to not have kids at that point in time, you may want to think about applying a year or two earlier then you might.

I mean I’m 30. I’m probably slightly on the older side at the GSB or average older. And it is something that we thought about at one point. Like when will we graduate, when do we want to have a family. So I think you make it work but it’s something that you may want to at some point look to the future and start backing out and saying what are my goals because I think your family goals are as important as your career and your education goals –

and you should just make sure that you’re thinking about those two things in tandem. But I will say I think the GSB is a place where you can accommodate whatever you choose and whatever needs to be accommodated in your life. So don’t let it be a hindrance but I would be thoughtful about it.

Tolu Alabi: That makes sense. Thank you. Next question is are there unique opportunities for women in the MBA program who are interested in pursuing a career in the nonprofit sector?

Rishi Lilly: That’s a great question. I don’t have – I did not pursue a career in the nonprofit sector. I think you might have a –

Val Young: So I came from the government sector which is different but related. There is the social innovation career services center [Center for Social Innovation – CSI] and I think that they have done a really great job at building out a pretty robust both curriculum for folks that are interested in nonprofit management, sort of social innovation type fields. And then they have a special certificate that you can apply your credits towards and I think some really great counselors and advisors that have had quite a distinguished career in those fields.

So I would say I’ve kind of like dipped in and out of that a little bit. I will be getting the certificate. But I haven’t probably utilized
it to the degree that some of our classmates that are very focused on nonprofit sector have. That said I think through 390s which are our independent studies through the CSI program and a few others there’s a lot of opportunities to both within the curriculum and outside the curriculum design sort of study and internships and externships that allow you to get involved in the nonprofit sectors. You may have to be a little bit more creative if they’re not tech or they’re not San Francisco or Palo Alto affiliated or located. But I think that there is – there’s a lot of support here and a number of resources –

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to help you be successful.

Tolu Alabi:

Yeah. Thank you for that. Just one thing I would like to add is actually about the social innovation trips. So we have social innovation trips just like every other study trip. But these trips are just concentrated and focused on social innovation. So we have – I know we have a bunch to countries in Africa. So we have ones that are Rwanda, Uganda, maybe South Africa next year. And men, women included, they all go on these trips. But these trips are a good example of how you actually get to see the practical applications of different products and different innovative ideas on people’s lives and how it actually impacts people in Rwanda, Uganda or Kenya. So like that’s a very, very unique opportunity that you can explore if you feel interested.

Rishi Lilly:

And I don’t know if there are any women specific opportunities. I do know that two – Alina won an award, right, for social innovation and some and a scholarship for the GSB. Also Alina I think and Ashley, right, are starting their own nonprofit business. And so there are women killing it at the GSB in the nonprofit sector.

Val Young:

And there is – I don’t want to misspeak because I don’t know enough about the specifics but there is a good amount of matching funds and fundraising available for students that over the summer want to do nonprofit work if they’re working at a 501C3 and also obviously like really great loan forgiveness programs for those that go into nonprofit work after the GSB. So those are two things that I’m sure the admissions and other staff members here could talk about in more detail. But there’s quite a bit of financial assistance that’s provided as well.
Tolu Alabi: Thank you. So the next question is how many of the teachers and faculties are women? Do we have – do you know a percentage?

Rishi Lilly: I don’t know the percentage. I do know that some of our most rock star faculty members are women. We have Maggie Neale for negotiations. I’m actually doing independent study with her. She’s an incredible human being, fantastic researcher. We have Deb Gruenfeld,

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Rishi Lilly: who with Amy Cuddy they did the work on power poses. And those are two of my favorite professors. Do you have –

Val Young: Yeah. I would say candidly I think there are not enough women faculty at the GSB. My intuition tells me that that is probably true across most of the business schools, certainly most of the top business schools. I think the GSB – I know in their dean search and in other communications that we’ve had with the administration has really focused on being particularly proactive about increasing the numbers especially as we get up to the tenure level. It’s not I think where many of us would like it to be in a perfect world.

But there are some really fantastic women and I think they get a lot of support. Anne Beyer who was my first year accounting professor won the distinguished teaching award from the students one year, which is the student given award to the best teacher at the GSB. So I don’t have a number and percentage. I think the percentage would be lower than what most of us in this room would like it to be. I think that’s a problem sort of across the board in academia at this level and in this sector. But it’s something that we talk about quite a bit, the administration talks about quite a bit and is trending in the right direction.

Rishi Lilly: I do think women faculty are celebrated here too.

Val Young: Yes. Definitely. For sure. I mean they’re doing amazing things. Some of them far outshine their male colleagues and their male peers but I think in a perfect world there would be more of them and I think there will be more of them as time goes on.

Tolu Alabi: Another faculty who is doing great work, Carole Robin.

Rishi Lilly: Oh yeah. Carole is fantastic.
Tolu Alabi: Amazing. Yeah. Well, thank you for the very honest answer. Next question, what has been your favorite experience at the GSB?

Val Young: Mine is TALK.

It’s not a – I mean there’s been a million classroom things and a number of professors that I’m super close with. But my favorite thing about the GSB is TALK which we do – the whole school and community is invited but mostly you do it with your class and it’s kind of like Moth Radio Hour if anyone has ever heard of that. It’s basically 30 minutes or so or an hour once a week at night where everyone packs into the MBA lounge and two people give about a 30-minute talk of their life, whatever they choose to focus on.

It’s in those moments when I’m at the GSB that I’m like just reminded of what a wonderful fantastic community we have. And I feel most grateful for being here, for getting to know these amazing classmates, for hearing stories that are so different and so impactful. And I think that’s something that will stick with me for decades.

Rishi Lilly: I want to add on to that and then I’ll share my favorite. I think another really special thing about TALK is how people are able to share things that they wouldn’t usually share in a different setting. And in creating that it’s not only a safe space for that but also celebrating it and loving it and bringing us all closer. It’s a really wonderful and I think unique thing that we have here and I’m sure other places have it as well but it’s really special.

For my favorites, I just love getting to know my classmates. And that sounds silly probably. But as Val said they are – each person has something incredible to share and just warm wonderful personalities. There are very few people that I wouldn’t want to spend time with. And so any of the activities around that – so we have small group dinners where first year you can – you are in a lottery system and you get a randomly assigned to you can host a small group dinner with randomly assigned people so you get to know different people in the class.

And that was one of my ways to get to know people whom I usually wouldn’t run into and I really loved that experience. Some of my really good friendships today came out of that.
Tolu Alabi: Thank you.

Val Young: Tolu, you can say C for C. She killed it.

Tolu Alabi: She killed it, being the head of C for C. So C for C is Challenge for Charity and it’s –

Val Young: I’m just kidding.

Tolu Alabi: No, actually it was C for C. I really like it. I’m working so hard to be on leadership for next year.

Rishi Lilly: And you also like the CMC committee I know.

Tolu Alabi: I like CMC. But anyways C for C is a sporting event that happens hosted by Stanford where west coast business schools are invited to compete in different sports. And Val was in charge of that this year. It was amazing. I played basketball in college so I brought my basketball skill.

Val Young: Yeah.

Tolu Alabi: And I helped Stanford.

Val Young: I didn’t play basketball in college but I also brought my basketball skills.

Tolu Alabi: Yes. And we killed it. We killed it. Yeah. It was really fun.

Val Young: Yeah. It’s the culmination of a yearlong fundraising and volunteering competition among nine west coast business schools. And then we use the weekend to kind of like celebrate and bring everyone together. So there’s 1,300 students that come to the GSB and it’s a fantastic weekend.

Rishi Lilly: It’s really fun.

Val Young: Yeah.

Tolu Alabi: We end with dance, with a dance competition and it’s just like, just amazing.

Val Young: Yeah.
Tolu Alabi: Ok. Next question. Has any particular club including but not limited to the women in business school had a tangible impact in your career in terms of giving you new opportunities that you might have not otherwise found.

Rishi Lilly: So the clubs are a great place to get new opportunities, any of them, all of them. The way it works is a lot of jobs are funneled through the Career Management Center. But each club has specific connections with people in their industry and so sometimes jobs go directly to the club leaders and funnel that way. So definitely if you want to be in healthcare join the healthcare club. If you want to be in VC join the VC club. It’s a great way to do it.

In general, our network is incredible and you should use it. So and I’m just talking about your classmates. So even more so than the club if there’s a company that you really want to work at forget if they have a job open. Reaching out to a classmate who either works there or knows someone who worked there and can give an intro actually really helps especially if you want to pivot and your resume wouldn’t scream “I am the person for the job.” It’s a really good way to get a foot in there and to advocate for yourself. So I would strongly recommend doing that not only at the GSB but in life in general, figuring out how you can use your network to get you into new places.

Val Young: I think that’s true. I’m a member of the VC club though I don’t have immediate plans to go into venture capital. And there’s been just some amazing lunches and dinners and opportunities to meet and network with people that I would not probably have had otherwise had if I hadn’t been in the club or climbed onto dinners that some of my friends host. In the immediate term that’s not something that I’m going to probably capitalize on but long term these are some really cool, fun, interesting relationships and interactions with people that I otherwise would never have been able to make the connection with.

Tolu Alabi: Thank you. I think we have lots of questions so we’ll try to answer as many as possible. The next one is do you have any plans to transition into a new industry or new role after your MBA and how do you think the GSB has prepared you so far?

Rishi Lilly: So I have very strong opinions on this topic. Yes and yes for me. I am currently still interviewing both – I said earlier I’m going to be working health tech, either health tech or tech. I’m in the process
Tolu Alabi '17, Rishi Lilly '16, Val Young '16

If you come to the GSB or anywhere and you know that you want to pivot, do not take a breather on that. You need to figure out what you want to do, what steps will get you there and start mapping that out immediately. This is something we talk a lot about MBA2 year. There’s a lot of do whatever you want during the summer, la la la. And that can be wonderful and you may still want to do that and will not regret your decision. But you need to do it with full knowledge. You can – if you want to make a huge pivot using that summer to do it is really key. It’s much easier to get a summer internship in a new function and new role or either/or or both than it is just to do it full time later. So just think about that.

The next thing I’d say prepares you [is] your classmates who can help you prepare for the interviews which is extremely helpful. Since they’ve done the jobs before they’ve probably interviewed people for those roles before. It’s really helpful to leverage that. And then on the other side some classes really help you. If you’re going to go into a job where you’re going to have to do financial modeling and you’ve never done that before, take financial modeling. If you’re going to go into operations take operations. Make friends with the professor. Get to know more about the subject. It’s really upon you though to know what you want to get out of the experience and to be really focused about getting it.

Val Young: I would add, so I went into consulting which was totally different than what I’d done before. I used both the consulting club, the Career Management Center, alumni, a ton of GSB alumni that are in different firms to both learn about, sort of show my interest in, and then prepare for interviews. I think that in particular our classmates that offer to do case interviews with me were some of the most meaningful and helpful that I got. So I think that is sort of facilitated in part with Career Management Center, in part separately through the consulting club and just people giving their time. So I think that that is true across a number of industries.

And it’s just my experience with consulting. I would also say I’ve been working through Startup Garage on a startup with another classmate of mine. Startup Garage is a really great class if you’re
interested in starting something and that sort of design thinking takes you through a couple quarters of really going from 0 to 60 on a startup. And that has been really fantastic as far as just introducing me to entrepreneurship, connecting me with investors and leaders in the field and other students that are doing something similar. And so that as a class I think has been an unbelievable crash course in entrepreneurship which is something that long term I hope to get into. And it’s definitely been kind of giving me the training wheels almost to go and do it on my own.

*Tolu Alabi:* Thank you. The next question is, are there any specific initiatives whether classes, leadership coaching or any of that that’s helped prepare women students in particular for a career in traditionally male dominated industries?

*Val Young:* Acting with Power, right?

*Rishi Lilly:* Yeah.

*Val Young:* Yeah. That’s good. I mean I think WIM [Women in Management] focuses on it quite a bit through different programming and conversations that they facilitate. I think that there are some really cool classes including the one we were talking about with Deb Gruenfeld which is called Acting with Power which is all about understanding how you present, how you take power, give away power. I think some of the things that we think about when you think about women not speaking up in meetings or how you sit in a meeting or how you approach a difficult conversation.

*Rishi Lilly:* There’s Women in Entrepreneurship.

*Val Young:* Yeah. That’s been a great class actually.

*Rishi Lilly:* Yeah. Which is focused. I don’t know that there are a ton of initiatives focused on women getting into male dominated industries. There is –

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there are male dominated industries and if you’re a woman who wants to get into that all the support in the world to get you there including male classmates who were in or will be in those industries, professors who I know have helped some of our female colleagues and classmates get into those industries such as private equity search.
Val Young: I think Women in Entrepreneurship is a great example that is a specific class. So there’s Professor Fern Mandelbaum who’s in investing, angel investing, venture capital, a few other things. She hosts a class specifically around encouraging women to get into entrepreneurship either by starting something or getting into the investing side and brings in a ton of women in the valley and also men in the valley that are really supportive of getting more women involved in those industries.

And that is sort of soft skills like meeting these people, hearing from other people that have a similar world view to you and being able to picture yourself in that role and also some really tangible conversations that we had amongst us about what’s holding women back from being in those industries, what would you look for, how do we start to change the culture. So that’s a great example. There’s also a lot of programming around women through the CMC and others just about public speaking. And you can get one on one coaching and things like that so –

Rishi Lilly: And negotiations.

Rishi Lilly: There’s a lot of support.

Val Young: Yeah.

Tolu Alabi: Certainly. Thank you. Next question, do you have any insights on what the experience is like for partners joining their girlfriends or wives at Stanford especially given the location of Stanford and the living experience here on campus?

Val Young: I have a fantastic GSB SO, significant other husband, who lives on campus with me. So I live in Escondido Village. I have this awesome one bedroom which is so below market rate in Palo Alto it’s incredible. If I could squat there for the next ten years I would stay.

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And I think so my husband – it is definitely different having a male significant other, like a male SO than what is more traditional which is female SOs probably. My husband loves Palo Alto which really helps. He says it’s like our country club that he gets to come home to. He works in the city. He has made a great network of both other male SOs and then some of my male classmates. It definitely took a little bit of time to get himself into the
He takes the Cal Train into San Francisco. It’s not a perfect commute but tons of people do it.

He had a really good support network. I think the best thing for him which has been so great is he has been able to tap into the GSB network for his own career ideas and transitions. So he recently moved from energy clean tech to health tech and really utilized the GSB network for that, both the SO community and the student community. And I think that what has been the nicest thing about this is my GSB network has become his GSB network and we get kind of double the network which is really nice.

_Rishi Lilly:_ I’m going to give a slightly different take. I also I have a significant other. He’s long distance, lives in Chicago, my fiancé, and so I will say it’s hard.

_Val Young:_ Oh yeah. It’s definitely hard.

_Rishi Lilly:_ It’s hard. Like you go from maybe living together, spending a lot of your time together even if you’re working really hard, to being thrown in a completely different environment where a lot of your time is spent meeting new people, doing new GSB things and it’s really – it can be really hard to integrate both of you to live in that world. And I just want to acknowledge it’s hard because I think it would be hard at any business school. I’m actually pretty sure it is just given the experience. But just be aware of that and talk about it and talk about how you’re going to work with that. It’s just a difference in lifestyle, a difference in the time you can allocate to your relationship. It also-

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I will say something. In some ways it’s been easier because he’s long distance so he doesn’t have to hang out with GSBers all the time. He has his own group of friends. And in some ways it’s harder because at this point Val’s husband has friends inside and outside of the class whom he also loves who have become part of his family. And that happens around second year. So he never quite got there but he never had the roughness of me not being at home all the time because we were just apart.

_Val Young:_ Yeah. I mean it’s definitely a challenge. You have to spend a lot of time thinking about how you allocate your time. I think the one thing you’ll realize at business school is that time is a precious resource. And so when you have a relationship you need to figure out how you fit that in with all the other stuff that you have going
on. But lots of people are doing it. There’s lots of people talking about it.

*Tolu Alabi:* Thank you.

*Rishi Lilly:* We all survived it.

*Val Young:* Thrived even.

*Rishi Lilly:* Yes.

*Tolu Alabi:* So unfortunately we’re almost out of time and we still have many questions. But just to summarize this, Rishi and Val what would be your final pieces of advice before you graduate? What advice do you have for people watching today and I guess for me too since I’m going to be a second-year next year.

*Rishi Lilly:* I think the one thing that I’ve gotten out of the GSB and I would say that it starts with the application, is this idea of authenticity which I find Mike Ding talks about. But the GSB focuses a lot on being introspective and being really true to who you are and aligned your both professional and personal values and desires to that. And that’s – and it starts with the application, like what matters most to you. Really think about that question. I did a lot of introspective research when I did my essay and that really helped me figure out what I really wanted out of the GSB, out of life, out of my personal life and helped me pave a path forward and I would say do the same –

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for you to do the same ‘cause that journey will just continue when you’re here.

*Val Young:* Yeah. I think I would echo a lot of what Rishi said and in addition what made me choose the GSB was the community. I think this is the best place in the world. It’s the most fantastic group of people and supportive group of people. In your application and when you get here remember that you are an important part of that community because of the unique things that you bring. I think I spent the first quarter or half year even worrying that I wasn’t like business school enough or that my background in government wasn’t valuable enough.

And as I’m leaving and reflecting I’m realizing that I had so much to offer, I have so much to offer that my classmates have a lot to
learn from me and I have a lot to learn from them. And so I would say come in with the confidence that – and apply with the confidence – that you will bring so much to the community yourself and also remember that you have so much to learn from the people that are here. And I think that when you can embrace that give and take you’ll be in a place to really capitalize on all that the GSB has to offer.

Tolu Alabi:

I echo everything Rishi and Val said. I’ll just add something that I heard from someone which blew my mind. So applying to the GSB most people see it as a marketing exercise, marketing themselves and trying to showcase all the great things you guys have done which I’m sure are great things. But they perceive it more as marketing. But rather you should see it as accounting where you’re trying to take stock of yourself. So you’re trying to take stock of your strengths and areas you want to improve on. So yeah, you’re trying to display those strengths but you also want to be aware of what you want to get out of the experience. Like those parts of your life that you want to change or you want to improve. So even though you want to get into the GSB you want to make sure it’s a good match both for you and for the GSB. And just like Rishi and Val said you want to come through authentic in your essay and in your application. Just be yourself.

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Let your personality shine and just –

Rishi Lilly:

We want to get to know you.

Tolu Alabi:

Do accounting. Yeah. Do accounting, not marketing. So thank you. Thank you both for joining us today.

Val Young:

Of course.

Tolu Alabi:

Sharing all this wisdom.

Rishi Lilly:

Thank you for joining us.

Tolu Alabi:

Thank you very much for joining us. You can learn more about the MBA program on the GSB website. And the application for the class after, for the class starting in the fall of 2017 will be available in June. And if you have any questions about the MBA program you can submit them in the chat box as you’ve been submitting them and the staff from the MBA admissions office are available
to answer your questions within the next 15 minutes. Thank you very much again and have a wonderful day. Bye.

Val Young: Bye.

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