Mentors ease the transition for incoming MBAs.

Entrepreneurial MBAs win start-up funding.

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MENTORS EASE THE TRANSITION FOR INCOMING MBAS

Embarking on an MBA program can be a stressful endeavor filled with completing summer assignments, readjusting to an academic environment, moving to a new area, and meeting new people. To ease the transition, the Broad Full Time MBA Program pairs incoming MBAs with first-year students and Broad alumni who can offer sage advice—and a listening ear.

David Studley, a second-year student who manages the pairing of mentors with mentees, says the program was started as a way to offer new MBAs an opportunity to talk to someone who understands their questions as they transition into the MBA program.

“The Broad program is based on being small and close-knit,” says Studley, a graduate assistant in Broad’s admissions office. “The mentor program helps connect the two classes and lets incoming students get acquainted with all the new faces they see when they arrive.”

Current first-year MBA mentors and alumni mentors are paired with incoming students with the same academic concentration. The program can be particularly helpful to students who have been in the workforce for a number of years as well as international students who are adjusting to a new country and may not be familiar with the American education system.

Peter Hosken, a first-year student with a supply chain concentration, got to know his mentor, Eric Hall, last May prior to entering the program. Both are from upstate New York and became fast friends, often getting together for lunch or dinner.

“Eric has been through everything I’ve been through,” says Hosken. “He’s given me advice on everything from where to live to what parking is...
like on campus to what companies I should target. Having that person as a resource is invaluable.”

Hosken recently was paired with his own mentee and says he looks forward to filling that role for someone else.

“I’m here to answer any questions and try to give him as much information about companies as possible,” says Hosken. “It’s important for all incoming MBAs to have a game plan and know what they want.”

For Angela Pope, an MBA student with a human resource management concentration, her mentor Allyson Kowalk also served as a role model. Kowalk, a member of the Broad Women MBA Association inspired Pope to join as a first-year student board member and she also interviewed with the same company where Kowalk did her internship.

“Having the same career interests, I did a lot of things she did,” says Pope. “It felt like if I followed in her footsteps I’d be successful.”

Pope also communicated regularly with her alumni mentor Drew Abbey, who works in human resources for Frito Lay, part of PepsiCo.

“I actually spent several hours on the phone with Drew to prep for interviews,” says Pope. “I got a lot of good insight about what he does and what it’s really like.”

Honest first-person advice is one of the most helpful aspects of the mentor relationship, according to Pope.

“I felt like I was more prepared and more confident going into the program,” says Pope. “It was important to have someone well connected who could introduce me to people. I had an automatic network.”

On left, Mentee, Angie Pope, discusses the value of the mentor program with her mentor, Allyson Kowalk.
It’s every entrepreneur’s dream to present a business plan to a panel of esteemed venture capitalists and business leaders for a chance to win start-up funding. That scenario became reality for the students competing in the Broad College’s inaugural MBA Business Plan Competition held March 24 at Michigan State University’s Henry Center for Executive Development.

The competition was also open to students outside the Broad College and included other MSU graduate students and undergraduates. Each five-person team was required to have at least two MBA members and be led by an MBA student. The competition was organized by MSU’s Center for Venture Capital, Private Equity, and Entrepreneurial Finance, in collaboration with Broad’s Institute for Entrepreneurship and the Broad MBA Program.

Zsuzsanna Fluck, associate professor of finance and organizer of the competition, says she was blown away by the popularity of the competition in its first year, which drew 19 teams. Fluck also was impressed with the talent and creativity that came out of the competition.

“I love it when people collaborate and start thinking about new businesses,” says Fluck, who also is director of the Center for Venture Capital, Private Equity, and Entrepreneurial Finance. “This is the future. The age of large companies is more or less over. We’re entering a new age with entrepreneurial companies driving the landscape and creating jobs that will turn around Michigan’s economy and hopefully keep graduates in the state to nurture new talent.”

Prior to the competition, the teams participated in three preparatory lectures that coached them on how to create a successful plan for financing and were mentored by faculty and industry professionals.

The stakes were high as teams competed for the $3,000 prize awarded to the winning plan. Second and third prize awards were $2,000 and $1,000, respectively. In the end, a team that proposed a smart phone application that tracks multiple personal data apps to optimize productivity won the competition. Dean Stefanie Lenway presented the first place award to the team consisting of Rob McElmurry, Emily Dickinson, Xin Zhao, Suyash Jain, and Shelley Szalay.

Rob McElmurry, a first-year supply chain student, proposed the idea for the app his team named MeTrak.

“I’m an excessive tracker of my own information and I had been looking for something like our product,” says McElmurry. “These apps are prevalent for tracking productivity, sleep, health, and fitness. We wanted to put it all in one area to track it and analyze the data and how they interact.”

The competition forced teams to use right-brained
thinking and drew on elements from marketing, finance, accounting, and supply chain.

“This was a chance where you could really be creative,” says McElmurry. “It’s great for people with an entrepreneurial mindset. You got to see an idea come full circle as you try to create a product.”

For Emily Dickinson, a first-year human resource management student, the experience was as rewarding as her team’s win.

“This was the best thing that formed me as a business leader,” says Dickinson. “We had to work with new teammates and manage the creative process while organizing our ideas into a clear, concise, actionable business plan. It was stressful but also incredibly fun.”

Another member of the winning team, first-year supply chain student Xin Zhao, says winning the funding validated his team’s hard work and thoroughness.

“It shows if you work with a group of people who are passionate, you can do great things,” says Zhao. “If we can develop this app, it could end up benefitting hundreds of millions of people.”

The team isn’t finished sharing their idea. They were invited to present their business plan during the Broad Executive Forum in Chicago in May.

Other top business plans
Second prize went to Spartan Green Technologies, whose business plan promoted a green adhesive bonding technology for auto parts. Third prize was awarded to Electronic Release, a company whose electronic dog leash provides a new and humane method for training dogs.

About the judges
A panel of distinguished MSU alumni entrepreneurs and venture capital investors from around the nation chose the winning business plan. They included: Matthew Growney, managing director of Rudyard Partners and CEO of Isabella Products in Boston; Anne Hiller, senior director of Ipswitch in San Francisco; Chris Sugden, managing director of Edison Venture in New Jersey; John Webb, principal of JAM–Just Add Marketing in New York; and Peter Woodford, administrator of alternative investments for the State of Michigan Retirement System.

Learn more about the Broad MBA Business Plan Competition at ie.broad.msu.edu/centers/cvcpeef/cvcnews.
Second-year Broad MBAs are preparing to embark on careers at some of the most respected companies throughout the nation. They look back at their time in the Broad College’s Full-Time MBA Program and look forward to what’s next.

For Muralidharan Kandasamy, who has a finance concentration, his newfound love of American football played a major part in his internship experience and subsequent full-time offer from Nike. Kandasamy, originally from Chennai, India, has always been a die-hard cricket fan, and when he started the Broad MBA program, he instantly got hooked on Michigan State University football. He’d even written his admissions essay on his desire to earn his MBA and learn the game of American football.

His passion for sports and adeptness with prediction markets earned Kandasamy an internship at Nike. Despite having a finance focus, he says one of the biggest advantages the Broad program offered him was a better understanding of marketing and how U.S. consumers behave.

“During my internship, I had to sell the concept of prediction markets to Nike,” says Kandasamy. “I used Google search index and data mining on Facebook, where fans were talking about their favorite NFL teams, and was able to show how these things affect online sales.”
His model so impressed his employers at Nike, they extended his internship and later offered him a position as a senior demand planner. Kandasamy hopes to be placed in the NFL division.

An internship also led to a full-time offer for Karthik Singaraju, who has an engineering background and is concentrating in supply chain. Singaraju, who’s from Pleasanton, California, is excited to head to San Maron in his home state where he’ll work as a strategic sourcing business analyst for Chevron.

“I’m really looking forward to the MBA Development Program there,” says Singaraju. “It’s a challenging assignment to learn the business in six to eight months and show results. But the people at Chevron are great, especially the executives. They’re the kind of people I want to emulate in my career.”

Singaraju credits Broad’s strengths in all three areas of supply chain—operations, logistics, and procurement—for setting him up for success in his field. He also points to his graduate assistantship experience working with databases and research methods alongside Professor Brian Jacobs for preparing him to work in an organization like Chevron.

Diane Knisely, originally from Pickerington, Ohio, says the Broad program’s specialization in human resource management was a major draw. She secured a rotational position with General Electric and will start work in Erie, Pennsylvania.

“GE offers leadership development in HR, which is pretty highly esteemed,” says Knisely. “It’s a great place to start a career.”

“The program encourages individuality, and the support from faculty and career services was invaluable.”

Knisely, who received her undergraduate degree from Ohio State University and spent two years with AmeriCorps after graduation, attributes her development during the MBA program to her classmates and the team-oriented environment.

“I learned as much from my teammates as I did from my professors,” says Knisely. “The program encourages individuality, and the support from faculty and career services was invaluable.”

Joe Sidor, who interned with Ford and subsequently accepted a full-time position from the company, credits Broad faculty for preparing him for the demands of delivering presentations in a corporate environment.

“I came into the MBA program with a finance background and I had a lot of technical skills,” says Sidor. “Things like practicing and delivery of presentations with Professor Elizabeth Bain, as an individual and in a group, prepared me with behavioral skills I needed.”

Sidor, originally from the Detroit area, looks forward to returning to Ford, where he feels he fits well with the team-focused culture.

“Everyone there is motivated with a purpose,” says Sidor. “With the recent upheaval in the auto industry, Ford took things in a different direction and everyone is on board with their philosophy. The people are just genuine, and honest, and accessible.”

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Ryan de la Rambelje, who’s concentrating in supply chain, accepted a full-time position in Detroit with Deloitte Consulting. The position is ideal for Rambelje, who wanted to break into the auto industry and whose wife is from Kalamazoo.

According to de la Rambelje, the Broad program prepared him well for Deloitte’s case-based interviews and interest in people with team leadership backgrounds.

“The team-based aspect of the program was the reason I decided to come to Broad,” says de la Rambelje. “Deloitte was looking for individuals who like that and perform well as part of a team, so it’s a good match.”

Prior to entering the Full-Time MBA Program, de la Rambelje worked for the U.S. State Department doing secret service detail for foreign dignitaries and U.S. diplomats, including Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, as well as working on fraud and counter-terrorism efforts.

Alison Kelly, who received her undergraduate degree in hospitality business from the Broad College, will be moving to Chicago to work in a marketing position at Sears.

Prior to receiving her full-time offer from Sears, Kelly did an internship with the company where she was a part of the sporting goods online team, working with vendors on the product mix and coordinating the marketing schedule.

“After my internship, Sears asked me to stay an extra week and I had an offer before I went back to school,” says Kelly.

In her full-time position, she’ll be doing similar things, but with a broader scope.

According to Kelly, gaining a general knowledge of all areas of business during the program—supply chain, finance, accounting, and marketing—was great preparation for her merchandising role. Even more important for Kelly was finding a company that was the right fit.

“Finding a company with the right culture that clicks with your personality takes time,” says Kelly. “My interview with Sears was truly the first time where I’d felt I was entirely myself and I think that was a good sign.”

Kelly says she’s looking forward to getting back into the business unit at Sears, where there’s a lot of potential to get involved and make changes.

“Sears is a well-known name but they look for opportunities for improvement,” says Kelly. “They’re always looking for new ideas and new blood and young MBA talent.”

Her experience at Broad set her up for success in her role at Sears, according to Kelly.

“Broad challenges you to look at things in a new way,” she says. “The culture here encourages you to bring new ideas to the team.”
Q: What brought you to the United States from Israel?
A: I was actually born in the United States and left when I was 3-years-old. I was raised in Haifa, Israel, where I lived until I was 25. Two weeks after I got my undergraduate degree I packed a bag and came to New York to stay with my aunt. I wanted to gain some experience in the United States and apply to business school here.

Q: How did you find out about the Broad MBA Program?
A: I had been in New York for 10 months when I met Paul North from the MBA program at a recruiting event. I applied to Broad and got accepted. I didn’t even know where Michigan was on a map before that, but I got a good vibe from the people. MSU is exactly how I imagined it would be. It was a dream come true.

Q: Have you gotten involved in any organizations at Broad?
A: I was elected vice president of international affairs in the MBA Association and I’m a member of Broad Consulting and Spartan Consulting. Those have been great for helping me develop social and professional skills and meet more people in the program.

Q: Did you experience any culture shock coming to Michigan?
A: My first question to people was, ‘Why are you so nice?’ People aren’t like that in New York, and Israel is even worse. So I wouldn’t say I had culture shock. I really liked meeting people from other countries like India, China, and South Africa.

Q: What are your plans for summer?
A: I have an internship with Intel in Portland, Oregon. I’ll be working in their global sourcing department. Right before my internship starts, I’m going to study abroad in Eastern Europe for two weeks with 35 people from the program. Then I go directly to Portland.
The Year in Pictures
The Broad College’s Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation is a hotbed of business activity, creating opportunities for faculty and MBA students to assist companies of all sizes throughout Michigan with becoming more competitive.

The institute, created in 2006, works to advance and promote entrepreneurship at MSU and throughout the state through research, education, and outreach.

One of the major entities within the institute is the Demmer Center for Business Transformation, which acts as a hub for business transformation for Michigan companies that want to expand. Within the center, faculty and MBA students work closely with companies looking for education, outreach, and research that can help them transform their business processes, with a focus on lean manufacturing practices and quality management.

The center was created with a $5 million gift from Michigan business leader Bill Demmer, whose relationship with the Broad College inspired him to help the state’s business community access the tremendous resources available in the college, from faculty experts to students to a wealth of research and educational opportunities.

“Broad MBA teams have worked with the Demmer Corporation for years,” says Shawnee Vickery, professor of operations and supply chain management, director of the Demmer Center, and Demmer Legacy Fellow. “Bill Demmer was so impressed with their work on developing a strategy for his corporation that this was really the impetus for the grant. Bill thought it would be great if companies could access MSU faculty expertise that could assist them with being more competitive.”

The center offers companies strategic planning services, helps implement lean flow and quality management practices, as well as provides access to faculty experts in a range of disciplines who can assist with specific challenges.

Jim Manley is the managing director of the Demmer Center and is responsible for forming relationships with companies who may want to work with the center. Manley meets with company leaders to assess their needs and works to build teams of MBA students, faculty, staff, and upper-level undergraduate students.

Manley, who spent a significant portion of his career in Michigan’s auto industry and also as a private consultant, says the center’s goal is to work with a broad range of businesses and is in

New Center Cultivates ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES
talks with companies that include a small hardwood manufacturer, a food distribution company, a machining company, and a biotechnology firm.

“For Michigan at large, if we can help these companies get stronger and prepare MBAs with opportunities to learn and practice and master skills, the state’s economy should grow,” says Manley. “Michigan has the workforce and the know-how. It’s poised for a comeback and the Demmer Center can be a part of that.”

While companies benefit from Broad’s talent base, MBA students benefit from working on real-world business challenges that can have a real and positive impact on the state’s economy.

Some of the companies collaborating with the Broad College include Spartan Motors, Sparrow Health Systems’ Pharmacy Plus, Quality Dairy, Demmer Corporation, and Peckham Industries, among others.

A team of MBAs currently is collaborating with Peckham Industries, a nonprofit vocational rehabilitation organization that offers job training to persons with disabilities. The Broad College and Peckham received funding from the Michigan Initiative for Entrepreneurship and Innovation for students to create a start-up business for a line of food products the company can manufacture and sell. A competition to be held in the fall will offer MBA and undergraduate students from various MSU colleges the opportunity to present their product ideas to Peckham representatives, who will choose the winners.

“These kinds of collaborations provide students with hands-on experiences with projects that have a strategic impact,” says Vickery. “Our MBA students are often working side by side with higher-level managers of companies. This is also great experience to share with potential employers during interviews.”

Currently, the center is creating a lean apprenticeship program in which selected students will be trained to assist companies with implementing lean flow practices within their production or services systems.

“Ultimately we want to ensure that there’s a good match between our students and the companies we work with,” says Vickery. “The college is very hands-on to create a high-quality experience for companies and for students.”

Second Year student, James Ko, managing director of the Demmer Center, James Manley, Professor Shawnee Vickery, and First-Year MBA student, Kody Miller begin discussions of lean manufacturing practices.
The summer months leading up to the start of the Broad MBA Program are precious for incoming students. In addition to completing required assignments, it’s also the perfect time to get in touch with a Broad mentor and start thinking about a game plan for meeting companies coming to campus in the fall.

Kody Miller, a first-year supply chain MBA student from Arizona where he had worked in business operations for a construction company and for a motorcycle shop, offers tips on completing summer assignments in preparation for the first semester.

Miller stresses the importance of completing the Harvard Business School online modules—like short interactive classes with practice problems. Looking back, Miller says he would have completed the optional Microsoft Excel module because lots of first-year classes use Excel, from statistics to accounting to finance. “Incoming students should definitely do all the required modules,” says Miller. “They helped familiarize me with concepts we used from the start. Professors expect a level of understanding in areas like accounting and statistics and we jumped in at a deep level right away.”

The amount of course work can be overwhelming at first, especially for students who haven’t been in an academic setting in a long time. Miller says the amount of work was more daunting than the difficulty level, but by using time management resources like Outlook calendars to better allocate his time, he adjusted to a routine and learned the expectations of his professors.

Aside from required assignments, Miller advises incoming MBA students to put lots of thought into crafting an outstanding résumé. Incoming students have the opportunity to speak with a career adviser during the summer and have their résumés critiqued over the phone. “I definitely would’ve spent more time getting my résumé in good shape before classes started,” says Miller. “Recruiting begins almost immediately in the fall and it would’ve saved me a lot of time and stress. Advisers are available...so take advantage of that.”

Miller also stresses the importance of crafting a résumé that tells a story. “You need to let interviewers know who you are, where you’ve been, and where you want to go,” says Miller, who accepted an internship offer from AT&T, where he’ll be working in lead fleet operations management. “Once I got that down I got a lot of offers. You need to understand what you want from the MBA program and from the companies you want to work for.”
As the son of dairy farmers, Assistant Professor of Marketing Clay Voorhees has come a long way from his roots in rural Massachusetts, but he’s never forgotten where he came from. Voorhees says seeing his parents work multiple jobs just to pay the bills instilled in him a strong work ethic and also the motivation to pursue his education and enter into teaching. And it may be the reason he still starts the day at 5:30 a.m.

He’s not the only son who left the family farm. Voorhees’ older brother, Jake, is an investment banker in Boston and his younger brother, Arlo, is a poet living in Portland, Oregon where he also teaches creative writing at the college level.

After earning his doctorate from Florida State University, Voorhees headed north to Michigan State University, spending the past six years at the Broad College.

In addition to teaching marketing courses at Broad, Voorhees conducts research that focuses on customer loyalty and customer experience, including the assessment and optimization of customer loyalty programs. He’s worked extensively with companies in hospitality and retail industries to promote long-term loyalty among their customers by auditing and improving their rewards programs and, since moving to Michigan, has expanded to working with some of the state’s automotive companies.

Students who take Voorhees’ marketing courses sometimes get more than they bargained for. Right before the end of the fall semester, Voorhees announced to a group of marketing students that they would have a chance to visit the Detroit’s North American International Auto Show in January—where they’d present to a panel of auto executives.

The Broad reputation is a major reason Voorhees loves working at MSU. “The atmosphere and culture here is my favorite part of being at Broad,” says Voorhees. “It’s great to be around intelligent, down-to-earth hardworking people who don’t have the stereotypical ego. Everyone puts their team and MSU above themselves.” ☝️