

Creating a Global Perspective

MBA CLASS REFLECTS AN INCREASE IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

With almost a quarter of this fall's MBA class coming from international countries, this strong global perspective is adding an important dimension to the classroom, particularly as businesses of all sizes enhance their global strategies. Jennifer Smith, director of admissions for the Leeds School, says, "The goal is to add more global diversity to the classroom, and we are thrilled there is going to be a higher percentage in the program this year."

This fall's MBA class reflects a 13 percent increase in international students with a large number coming from Asia. The reputation of the Leeds School has grown significantly as alumni spread the word about the education they received and the programming available.

"Our alumni are our best marketing tool," Smith says. "Most international students can't come to visit campus or go on a tour, but they get an understanding of the program and a feel for the campus by hearing the story through alumni."

The Leeds School has alumni in 43 countries outside of the United States.

Many international MBA students are focused on entrepreneurship, Smith says. In their home countries, many of the students' families run businesses that they hope to take over once they gain a stronger business perspective from their education at Leeds.

There is also a huge emphasis on sustainability. Some countries are 10 to 20 years behind the United States in terms of sustainability practices. "Those are issues they are concerned about and want to make a difference with in their countries," Smith adds.

Let's meet some of these international MBA students at Leeds.



Davide Giardini

Born and raised in northern Italy, Davide Giardini participated in a foreign exchange program in high school that allowed him to study in Massachusetts for his senior year. That experience led him to Roger Williams University in Rhode Island where he earned a BA in environmental sciences in 2010. During his senior year he studied for a semester at Hawaii Pacific University, allowing him to intern at Hawaii's largest commercial printing company.

"The company I interned for was really big in sustainability, and had won many green and environmental awards," says Giardini, adding that the paper recycling program set up at the company was one of the only on the island. "I learned a lot about the organization's business models, but also to be able to provide an environmental impact."

Upon graduation, Giardini joined the Hawaiian company. A year later he joined the Hawaii Green Business Program, which assists and recognizes businesses that strive to operate in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. But in this position, he realized he wanted to learn more about entrepreneurship.

"I want to get practical business experience from my MBA studies at CU," he says.



Abdullah Almashayekhi

After graduating from King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Saudi Arabia with a degree in marketing, Abdullah Almashayekhi worked at the university as a graduate assistant. But with a vision for the future, his ultimate goal is to get a Ph.D. in marketing.

"The Leeds School has a flexible curriculum for my area of study," he explains. "And the school has a great reputation for being a good business school."

With the opportunity to tailor the program to his interests, Almashayekhi is looking forward to improving his English skills and learning from the marketing methods and people in the United States. "It's always great to meet new people and learn from them," he says. "I want to learn a bit about the U.S. culture."

Almashayekhi hopes to return to Saudi Arabia once he earns his MBA and Ph.D. and be a marketing professor at the university there. He says professors often engage with companies on large projects in the community, which would allow for great business connections.



Ivars Grinbergs

With seven years of experience as an industrial engineer working in the financial services industry in Chile, Ivars Grinbergs realized now was the perfect time for a shift in his career.

With a desire to study abroad and friends who were familiar with the University of Colorado and the Leeds School, he discovered the MBA program fit well with his experience in investment funds and energy as well as entrepreneurship. Grinbergs is the co-founder of *Purofondo* sports magazine.

"I'm looking forward to learn about entrepreneurship, energy and real estate, and also try to gain experience in the sports industry," he says.

The smaller class sizes for the MBA program also attracted Grinbergs because it will allow him to develop relationships with classmates and gain more experience from the program.

"It's really important to gain the knowledge and experience from the university. For me as an international student, Chile will value my education."

Did you know?

Forever Buffs are worldwide. International chapters of the Alumni Association include:

Beijing, China Tokyo
Hong Kong Shanghai
Saudi Arabia

Visit www.cualum.org/services/chapters.



Naotaka Ikeda

After graduating with a bachelor's and a master's degree in civil engineering, with a concentration on transportation, Japan native Naotaka Ikeda volunteered at a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. It was there he discovered that its infrastructure often lacked basic transportation items like traffic lights. "This experience motivated me to help developed nations improve it," he says.

After his volunteer work, Ikeda worked as a management consultant for Accenture and most recently as a senior engineer for Metropolitan Expressway in Tokyo, which constructs and manages expressways.

As the company begins to expand its operations overseas to countries including Thailand and Indonesia, Ikeda wants to learn more about discussing and negotiating across cultures. That's what led him to the Leeds School for his MBA.

While he's engaged to learn as much as possible from his studies at Leeds, his focus is on learning enough to be able to help expand his engineering market overseas to help with transportation infrastructure.



Jattana Wajananawat

Born and raised in Lampang, Thailand, Jattana Wajananawat says the Leeds School has developed a worldwide reputation for having a strong program. "The Leeds MBA program will provide me with the skills and expertise to bridge the gap between where I am today and where I want to be in the future," she says.

Wajananawat earned a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in finance from Kasetsart University in Bangkok. Since graduation she has been working as a financial analyst for a food and beverage company in Thailand.

With a focus on entrepreneurship and finance for her MBA at Leeds, Wajananawat is excited that the proximity of the campus is near many U.S. markets, which will provide her with exposure to aspects of finance to expand her skills. She hopes to gain a broad understanding of different industries and sectors that will help with her global outlook.

"After graduation, I plan to be an investment banker. I am drawn to the use of finance to assist companies to achieve their goals," she says. "I will be a key player, building sophisticated financial models and working with clients to advise them on deals such as mergers and acquisitions."



Eiad Shalabana

With a strong MBA program at Leeds, Israel native Eiad Shalabana says the opportunities to gain hands-on experience in the global finance world from the program was a key part of his choice to attend CU-Boulder.

"I consider the fact that the school is located in Boulder as a great advantage, considering the positive approach the businesses in the city have towards the Leeds MBA graduates," he says.

Shalabana earned a bachelor's degree in management from Ben-Gurion University in Israel and has worked in the investment banking sector as a retirement consultant. His work allows him to specialize in customer retention and marketing of long-term savings.

While Shalabana's interest at Leeds is in investment management, he's excited to explore a variety of fields in order to gain knowledge in more areas, such as social responsibility and real estate. "I plan on gaining experience in working with American investment firms in order to get a taste of the world's largest stock market work environment," he adds.