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SPECIAL: FOCUS ON THE MAGNOLIA LEAGUE LAW SCHOOLS

DATE: FALL 2012 ISSUE: #27

Focus on The Magnolia League Law: LL.M. Programs in the Great Southern Universities

By Marian Dent, Dean, Pericles

A magnolia is that magnificent tree with broad green leaves and creamy white flowers that seems to thrive in the warm climates of the South Eastern United States. Well, if the North East can have its Ivy League, named after its ivy covered buildings, then clearly the South's collection of great classic universities has to be named for this magnolia, which can be found prominently gracing the campuses of all these universities.

Sadly, Russian and CIS applicants consider studying in the Southern schools much less frequently than they envision studying in the Ivy League schools like Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth and University of Pennsylvania. The South also has great classic universities, and the warmer climate and lower cost of living in the region can be a significant added bonus for choosing these schools. Plus, Russian students are a rarer, and therefore more precious, commodity, so likely to be viewed more favorably by admissions committees.

There is no official "Magnolia League" listing of course, leaving me free to pick my favorites from among the many universities that can be found in the region. Last winter I had the pleasure of visiting the law schools at the University of Virginia (Virginia) and Duke University, in North Carolina (Duke). These two are definitely charter members of my Magnolia League list. I would also include University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill), Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia (Emory), Vanderbilt University, in Nashville, Tennessee (Vanderbilt), and Tulane University, in New Orleans (Tulane).

This article will introduce you briefly to all of them, focusing more on Duke and Virginia, since I was able to conduct interviews there.

But first, I would like to explain my focus on LL.M.s and make some basic comparisons.

In keeping with our audience of mostly Russian applicants, this article is about Southern universities' LL.M. programs—one year Master of Laws degrees. In U.S. legal studies, this is a secondary degree program to their main, three year, Doctor of Jurisprudence, or J.D. degrees, which most U.S. students must take in order to practice

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Unsolicited Advice from Uncle Al: Issue 2: Interview 101

A column by Dr. Alexis Melteff, our curmudgeonly Professor Emeritus whose advice has guided a generation of Pericles students and other young professionals.

Always remember, friends, that the first impression is the lasting one, and you only get one chance to make that all-important first impression, so make it count in your favor. The way you dress is important; so is the way you look the interviewer in the eye; your posture, your handshake, your aplomb, your resume are all factors that can work for you or against you.

Preparation. There are pages and pages of information available on the schools you have selected. Read the material on the Internet, find or send away for booklets and prospectuses, and pour over them until you know them very well. If you can quote some part of the material to the interviewer during your interview, you will score a huge number of points, so make this an absolute priority.

Dress. For women: business attire. Ideally, this means a business suit, a light colored blouse, hose, and closed toed shoes with medium or high heels. Go easy on the jewelry and the perfume. For men: Blazer and slacks, or business suit, white shirt, conservative tie, dark socks, shined shoes. Not too much aftershave.

Walking in. Turn your cell phone off before you walk into the office. Arrive as though you are an expected guest, but not as though you own the office. Try to smile, but don't grin for no reason. Before you walk in, clear your throat so there is no hesitation or gurgling when you introduce yourself. Extend your hand, (make sure your hand is dry), shake the interviewer's



University of Virginia Law School Library

See Interview 101, page 6.

School	Minimum TOEFL Score	Website	E-mail
Chapel Hill (UNC)	100	http://www.law.unc.edu/	unc_llm.director@unc.edu
Duke	100	http://law.duke.edu/	international@law.duke.edu
Emory	100	http://www.law.emory.edu/academics/llm-program.html	admission@law.emory.edu
Tulane University	90	http://www.law.tulane.edu/index.aspx	hmarinar@tulane.edu
Vanderbilt	100	http://law.vanderbilt.edu/prospective-students/llm-program-/index.aspx	llm.program@law.vanderbilt.edu
University of Virginia	98	http://www.law.virginia.edu/graduatestudies	gradadmitlaw@virginia.edu

law in the United States. LL.M. degrees are taken by students wishing to specialize in a particularly complex area of law, and by foreign lawyers who want an introduction to U.S. law that they can take back to their home countries. Thus, most Russian lawyers want to take this degree, rather than the J.D.

Comparing LL.M. Programs

Because of its secondary status for the bulk of U.S. law students, rankings services mainly rank the J.D. programs. A few LL.M. rankings are starting to be developed, but none are comprehensive or universally respected. J.D. rankings though, don't accurately reflect the potential quality of your LL.M. experience, because LL.M. students have different needs and priorities. Additionally, in a quest to keep J.D. rankings high, some schools with high J.D. rankings might decide to spend money on J.D. resources to the detriment of LL.M. resources. Thus, here we will try to compare some key points.

Size/Ratio

One way to evaluate the seriousness of an LL.M. program is to examine the size of a school's LL.M. program in comparison to its J.D. program. A larger ratio of LL.M.'s to J.D.s shows that LL.M. students have more financial clout, and may be considered more important than they are at schools where the LL.M. program is comparatively smaller. This doesn't mean a particular school with a small LL.M. enrollment neglects LL.M.'s of course; it just means that it would have less incentive not to.

In the Magnolia League, Duke has the largest LL.M. program, with almost 100 students, in comparison to 220 entering J.D. students each year. A J.D. program is three years, so one must multiply that 220 figure by three or a bit less to allow for attrition, but this still means that one in every six or seven law students at Duke is an LL.M. Vanderbilt's LL.M. is also large comparatively. They have only about 40-45 LL.M. students, but their J.D. program contains less than 500 students spread over the three years.

On the other end of the spectrum is Chapel Hill, which welcomed its first ever LL.M. program last year, with only six students. That's small compared to any size of J.D. class. It has plans to expand, of course. Virginia also has a small ratio to J.D.'s, with about 40-50 LL.M. students compared to a total J.D. enrollment of around 1000 students. It has no plans to expand the LL.M.

Separate or Mixed Classes

Another factor to think about is whether LL.M. students take courses together with J.D. students or whether LL.M.'s must take entirely separate classes. Although there are some benefits and drawbacks to each approach, I think courses where J.D. and LL.M. students study together give foreign students a better experience because studying with J.D. students helps LL.M. students to integrate better into the law school community and to make more friends. All our Magnolia League schools mix their J.D. and LL.M. classes. Tulane has some additional, specialized courses that are designed only for LL.M.'s if those LL.M. students study in one of its concentrations. Starting this year LL.M. students are on a separate grading curve. But in general, even at Tulane, the courses are mixed.

Required LL.M. Writing Courses

Aside from most other courses, research and writing courses should be taught separately for LL.M. and J.D. students. Legal research and writing is difficult for LL.M.'s because they are usually studying in a second language. LL.M. students have different needs from such courses, and if they are to be graded together with J.D. students, they will generally look poor in comparison.

To my mind, writing courses should also be required. Much as you might or might not like to write, a required legal research and writing course for LL.M. students is a good thing because legal employers seek out candidates with strong legal writing skills.

Most of our Magnolia League schools have separate, required legal research and writing courses for LL.M. students. The exception is Emory, which merely "highly recommends" students to take a research and writing course, although it looks like students may get some writing training in their introductory course (see below). Virginia explains that students who can score well on the Virginia English Language Proficiency Exam (offered by the University)

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The slightly Stalinesque architecture of Duke Law School

can skip their required LL.M. legal writing course. I wouldn't recommend skipping it though, because Russian law schools do not generally teach legal writing and it's worthwhile to study legal writing formally.

Introductory Courses

Russian applicants should also examine whether a school has other special preparation programs to help LL.M. students in transitioning to U.S. legal studies. All of our Magnolia League schools have a required special course introducing the American legal system, although the coverage and length of such courses vary widely. Tulane is unique in requiring this course in the summer before students enter the regular academic year program. The others require it over the course of the fall semester or over the first weeks of the semester. This fall Emory started offering a "bootcamp" type of crash course in US Law.

In addition to a mandatory introductory American law course, Vanderbilt also introduces students to American legal studies with an optional, four week Legal English course offered over the summer, by teachers who specialize in English as a second language. Students who want to can continue Legal English during the academic year. Emory also emphasizes English language, with optional, individualized Legal English instruction and accent coaching.

Duke also has a unique approach to helping students come up to speed in English. It says that many of its incoming LL.M. students attend one of the summer school study programs Duke Law School offers each year for both American and foreign law students. One is in Hong Kong and one in Geneva. The credits from these summer schools can be used towards the LL.M. degree (though not toward the N.Y. Bar exam). Those whose language skills or legal background is a little weak might instead attend the Summer Institute on Law, Language and Culture, a program in Raleigh-Durham designed especially for foreign law students.

Specializations

Before choosing an LL.M. program, you also want to make sure that you aren't prohibited from taking certain courses that you might want, and that a wide range of courses are offered in areas you want. Some LL.M. programs are specialized, offering mainly career track courses that relate to the specialization. Other programs are general, allowing you to explore a wide range of courses.

Each type of LL.M. has advantages and disadvantages. If you choose a general program you have more flexibility and can develop your own course of study more or less freely. A more specialized program could prevent you from taking courses that may interest you but are outside the specialty. On the other hand, in a specialized LL.M. program you can be assured that the school has some expertise and a number of courses in that specialty, and you will have that specialization marked on your degree for potential employers to see.

Fortunately, all our Magnolia League schools have at least one option for general LL.M. studies.

Tulane, Duke, Vanderbilt and Emory also have specialty LL.M. programs available, which will be discussed in the sections on those schools.

Clinical Course Availability

LL.M. students are sometimes prevented from take clinical courses that might interest them. Clinical courses are those in which students represent actual clients under the supervision of a professor. It can be tricky to allow LL.M. students to participate in these classes, because sometimes state bar association rules prohibit it or require certain background courses to be completed before students can represent clients in court.

Virginia tells us about this problem. Virginia prohibits LL.M. students from taking most clinical courses because those that require court appearances require prior courses in civil or criminal procedure, which LL.M. students seldom take. The exception is Virginia's International Human Rights Law Clinic, which I'm told is very popular with LL.M. students.

Vanderbilt also has an International Law Practice Clinic that many LL.M. students take.

At Duke, which has a very strong clinical program generally, LL.M. students are allowed to take clinical courses, but on space available basis if they are not filled by the J.D. students. Duke has no special international law clinic, but there is a clinical program in environmental law in which some LL.M.'s participate, and there is a "Community Enterprise Clinic," where LL.M. students, alongside J.D. students, may be giving business advice or helping small enterprises to incorporate.

Credit and Writing Requirements

Keep in mind what kind of course load and writing requirement you will have

during your LL.M. program. U.S. law schools work on the "credit" system. A course can be worth anywhere from one to six credits, depending on the number of class hours and study load of the course. Most courses are two or three credits. All the LL.M. programs in the Magnolia League except Duke and Vanderbilt require 24 credits. Duke requires only 21 credits to graduate, although most students take more at no extra cost. (24 credits is the minimum number required to be eligible to take the New York Bar Exam.) The Law and Business specialty at Vanderbilt requires 27 credits, while other specialties require the usual 24.

The credit load can feel a lot different, however, depending on whether or not you are required to write a thesis or "substantial piece of written work" outside of the normal credit load. Chapel Hill does not require any substantial written work. Nor do some of the specialized concentrations offered by Emory or Tulane. Duke and Virginia both have a substantial writing requirement for all LL.M.'s, although both schools say that most students handle this by taking a seminar course that requires a lengthy paper. Vanderbilt has a choice of a Thesis Track, where students complete a thesis under the supervision of a professor, or a Law and Business Track, in which there is no writing requirement but 27 course credits.

Job Placement

Of course, a key to taking any LL.M. program is what you can do with it afterwards. I would never advise any Russian lawyer to join any U.S. LL.M. program that did not allow LL.M. students to use the services of the school's career services department to help him find a job. Fortunately, all our Magnolia League schools do allow LL.M.'s to use career services, although to differing degrees.

Most of the schools participate in an annual LL.M. international student interviewing event in New York, in which LL.M. students from all over the United States interview with international organizations, companies and law firms. There are actually two such fairs, one at Columbia and one at NYU, and which one students attend depends on which one the school has joined. Duke, Vanderbilt and Tulane participate in the NYU fair. Virginia participates in the smaller, but more elite, Columbia one. These "meet markets" are a benefit, of course, but not nearly enough on their own.

All the schools encourage LL.M. students to seek career services help in compiling an appropriate resume. Some also

have interview training, which is worthwhile to use, and video taped interview practice, which can be enlightening.

Duke clearly wins in the LL.M. placement and career services department, as it has a dedicated career services person, Oleg Kobelev (Ukrainian by origin) who works just with international students and international placements. With a network of international employers, including Russian ones, Duke has a very high placement rate for its LL.M. graduates and students interested in international work.

Vanderbilt also has a career services person dedicated to LL.M. students. Although that person was unavailable for comment, Cynthia Coleman, Associate Director of Admissions, said that their placement rate has been quite successful over the 12 years of their LL.M. program, and their LL.M. graduates work for law firms in 19 different countries. She says several LL.M. graduates work at firms in New York, and several more work at firms in Nashville.

Tulane University also has a career services office with a lot of international experience.

Bar Exam or Transfer Availability

Finally it's important to know whether LL.M.'s can take the state bar examination in the state where they have studied, or whether LL.M. students who do well can choose to transfer to the J.D. program, in case they decide to emigrate to the U.S. permanently for a career. Keep in mind that, subject to certain complex requirements that are beyond the scope of this article, most LL.M. programs offered entirely in the United States in which students have taken 24 credits or more, will entitle an LL.M. student to take the New York Bar Exam. But each state has its own admissions requirements, and many will not permit LL.M. graduates to take the bar and practice law. That can be important if a student likes the city where he is studying, and wants to stay there. Tennessee and Louisiana allow LL.M. students to take the bar. North Carolina and Georgia, and, as of this year, Virginia, do not.

You are not completely out of luck for emigration in North Carolina and Georgia,

however, as Duke and Emory will consider outstanding LL.M. students to transfer to the J.D. program in special cases. The winner here goes to Chapel Hill though, as it has a set policy that those graduating with grades equivalent to those of the top 1/3 of the second year J.D. class can automatically transfer their LL.M. credits into a J.D. program.

Vanderbilt simply gave me a concrete example: their one and only LL.M. student from Russia transferred into the JD program and now works for a law firm in Delaware.

Those are about all the points that can be easily compared between schools. Now I briefly look at some of the intangibles about each school, the university environment, the location and other benefits and drawback, school by school.



Duke University Chapel

Duke University

I will start with Duke, which, since I happen to like shady trees and slightly rugged scenery, is my favorite among the Southern campuses. Jennifer Maher, the Associate Dean of International Studies, was nice enough to show me around the campus, on December 23, when most of the campus had gone home for Christmas. Her

going out of her way like that is the kind of friendly attitude I found with everyone I have met at Duke.

The feeling you get at Duke is the feeling of being in the country. It's not true actually, because Duke is located in the relatively large city of Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, a hub of the U.S. banking, internet, med-tech and pharmaceutical industries. The city has a small international airport with a direct flight to London (from which transfers to Russia are easy). But, when flying in, people ask themselves "where's the city?" All they see are trees.

The area is really three cities that have more or less expanded into each other over the years. Raleigh, Durham, and the somewhat smaller town of Chapel Hill, in total contain almost a million and a half residents. The area is sometimes are known as "the Triangle" after a "research triangle" of high tech industries attracted by the science departments of three major universities in the area.

The Duke campus is huge—so large that they even have an 18-hole golf course on campus. Mostly, though, it is tree filled, with blue stone buildings hidden away in a pristine, forested environment. The Duke Chapel crowns the shady campus. It's hard to believe that it was constructed in the 1930s. Its neo-gothic architecture, with all the towering spires and flying buttresses that this style entails, gives the impression of stepping back in time to a more inspirational age.

Duke has all the accoutrements you would expect from a world class university in a major city. There are theater shows, musical concerts in all genres, and a thriving art community. Above all, though, sports and the outdoor life take precedence at Duke. Undeniably, Duke "Blue Devils" basketball is an institution treated with reverence around campus. You must attend at least one game if you want to consider yourself a true Duke alumnus. Hunting, fishing, hiking and canoeing are also favorite pastimes in the Raleigh-Durham area.

Duke's law building is quite modern, and actually has slightly oppressive architecture. It turns out it was designed

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by a Russian architect, and its grey concrete and glass structure does look a little Stalinesque here and there. But inside you get a much warmer feeling, and the facilities for students are impressive. The triple height, Star Commons area with three glass walls takes advantage of the Southern sunshine by making the inside seem like the outdoors. It was cheery even in late December. And the classrooms, moot court rooms and the library are impressive. So many resources are dedicated to international students, that the administration for LL.M. and international programs actually has its own separate area of the building.

As mentioned above, Duke has a particularly large and well known LL.M. program. As might be expected with such a large program, Duke is experienced at helping its foreign students. Duke's International House provides assistance in daily living for foreign students, as well as running events for spouses and families. Many incoming LL.M. students attend one of the foreign summer school study programs Duke Law School offers each year.

The regular study program begins mid-August with a full week orientation program mixing LL.M. students with first year J.D. students. During this orientation, students receive individual advising on what courses to take. L.L.M.s are also matched with students in Duke's joint J.D./L.L.M. program, who serve as mentors and offer advice about course selection. Each L.L.M. is assigned a faculty mentor, with whom they meet during Orientation to discuss their academic study plans.

As mentioned, Duke LL.M. students must take two obligatory courses: a "Distinctive Aspects of American Law" course and a special Legal Research and Writing course for LL.M.'s. In other courses, LL.M. and J.D. students are mixed, and a wide choice is available. Recommended courses at Duke include environmental law courses, intellectual property courses, corporate and financial law courses. Duke is particularly well known in these areas. Lawrence Baxter, a former Vice-President of Wachovia Bank, teaches a very popular course in Global Banking Law.

Duke also has a robust Center for International and Comparative Law, headed by Larry Helfer, a well known scholar in international law, who has been described as an amazing teacher in the areas of international human rights and intellectual property.

L.L.M. students at Duke can choose to concentrate their studies in any of these areas and in particular can earn a Certificate in Environmental Law, and beginning in 2013, a Certificate in Intellectual Property Law.

Duke law students can also take some courses in other schools of the university, such as the internationally popular Duke Fuqua School of Business.

Duke also has a popular "Wintersession," offering four days of intensive short courses in early January. Wintersession courses are taught by practicing lawyers and have a practical focus. Jenifer Maher explains "LL.M. students have enjoyed the courses and the interaction with the practitioners

teaching them very much, and can earn a credit toward graduation and the NY Bar requirements in that short week."

A drawback to Duke is the lack of on campus housing for graduate students. You must find a private apartment. Apartments are available close by for \$800 to \$1000 a month, and the LL.M. office, or the foreign student office of the university can help you find one. Jennifer Maher was happy to point out quite pleasant places where LL.M. students often rented apartments.

But living off campus brings up another difficulty: as beautiful and spread out as it might be, it's going to be very difficult to get around at Duke if you don't drive. Having a license, and planning for the expense of buying or leasing a car will make life at Duke a lot easier. To offset this difficulty, Duke has a smart-phone app for tracking campus and city buses, offers a free late-night van service to areas around the campus, and has a fleet of electric cars that LL.M. students can use for a small fee.

Duke's LL.M. is a very competitive program. They prefer good grades from a high ranked law school, plus about two or more years of experience in the LL.M. applicants they accept.

It also, unfortunately, isn't cheap. The cost of the program, including tuition and extra fees is almost \$55,000. Add to that an estimated budget for living expenses of about \$17-25,000. Meaning you will need about \$72-80,000 to take your LL.M. at Duke. There is a scholarship fund for international students, from which awards are made based on a combination of merit and need. Rarely, however, will the scholarship fund cover more than half of the tuition. Duke also participates in the Muskie and Fulbright fellowship award programs.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Before leaving the North Carolina, Triangle area, let's talk about University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill about 15 minutes from Duke by car. All the geographic benefits of Duke's location in a sophisticated high tech oriented city, also apply to Chapel Hill. Unfortunately I couldn't get a tour of the law building at Chapel Hill, arriving as I had so close to Christmas, but I did get a good feel for the area as we drove around campus looking at the buildings.

The campus here feels a bit suburban. Compared to Duke, buildings are fairly close



Duke Law School's Star Commons

Interview 101, from page 1.

hand firmly. No dead fish, and no bonecrusher. Wait until the interviewer invites you to sit down, then sit down comfortably, and do not slouch.

Have several copies of your resume ready, sitting on top of the pile of papers in your briefcase.

Here is the most important thing I would like you to remember: listen to the interviewer's questions, and answer the questions as they are asked. Do not go off on tangents, or tell amusing anecdotes, which will only distract the interviewer. Some interviewers make a point of trying to trip up applicants by asking loaded or trick questions. Let us hope this never happens to you, but if it does, the way to handle such a question is to ask, "If I understand your question correctly, you want to know about XYZ, am I correct?"

There are a number of questions that interviewers will ask as a matter of course. Be aware of these, and rehearse possible answers to these or similar questions with someone who is willing to spend a little time with you, and who will be willing to critique your answers. Please notice I said critique, not criticize. There are several possible right answers to any of the following questions, and at least as many if not more wrong answers that will leave a poor impression with the interviewer, and probably cause your name to be removed from the list of candidates.

Why are you applying to this particular business school?

Here you must show the interviewer that you have done your homework, and know a good deal about this school. The obvious answer is that this school has one of the highest rated MBA programs in the world or the country, and you have heard and read many excellent reviews. Be prepared to back up your statement with some figures or statistics from the material you have read. Mention some specific programs unique to the school and explain why they are extremely important to your particular area of interest. And add something having to do with the history or location of the school that you particularly like, whether it has to do with your studies or not. Mention the names of several members of the faculty whose articles or books you have read and

quoted in your previous studies, and how much their work is respected and admired.

Why are you better than other candidates?

This is really a trick question. Perhaps you are not better than other candidates, but your job at this moment is to sell the interviewer on the fact that you may be. So you must walk a thin line between sounding cocksure and sounding falsely humble. This is the time to restate some of your principal achievements in your business career, without going



The interviewers may ask you to work on a mock business school case.

into too much detail. This is also a good time to explain why your profile fits well with this school.

What do you expect from this program?

This is straightforward question; you expect to gain a great deal of knowledge from listening to the professors as well as from working with fellow students, and of course you are looking forward to receiving the all-important [name of school] diploma, which will give your career and important head start. This will give you an additional opportunity to show off your knowledge of the school.

What do you plan to do with your degree?

You know the answer to this question better than anyone else. The answer is essentially a restatement of the information that you have written on your application, but it must be believable. You will want to rehearse this answer, either with a tape recorder, or a live partner. There must be no hesitation or no stumbling in your answer, because any weakness here is likely to get you eliminated.

Where would you like to be in ten years?

This is another standard question about your career plans. Part of the preparation will be to prepare realistic five- and 10-year plans, and to be prepared to recite them and discuss them in depth. If you have a specific company in mind, you must know the structure and hierarchy of this company, so be prepared to name a spot were you intend to be in five years, and to explain how you're going to get there.

Tell me about an incident in your professional career in which you demonstrated extraordinary leadership or team play.

The answer to this question is also well worth rehearsing, because a specific incident in which you showed excellent perception and leadership will leave a definite impression with the interviewer. Should the incident have to do with dealing with a person who showed negativity, do not under any circumstances derogate the person behind his back, and of course never, but never, mention any names.

What do you feel is your greatest strength?

This is a standard question, and there are several possible answers. The stock answers will be: my knowledge of the subject, my ability to deal with many kinds of people, my ability to solve problems, many times by thinking outside the box. Answers to avoid are personal achievements that are not relevant to this conversation. You may well speak seven languages, play a mean game of bridge, and run a marathon every month, but that will have no bearing on whether you are accepted into this school's MBA program.

What do you feel is your biggest weakness?

This is probably the biggest trick question that interviewers ask. I feel that they are not necessarily looking for the content of your answer so much as looking for the style. Here's my suggestion: "the first time I was asked this question, I was somewhat taken aback because I had never thought about what my weaknesses might be. But that interview caused me to take stock, and to start listing my strengths as well as those things that I would want to improve. I took the list, and spoke to relatives and trusted friends, and asked their advice on how I should proceed. I processed that information, and embarked on a program of

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self-improvement, which I feel has been successful.” If the interviewer should press the question and ask, “Does this mean that you are perfect?” I would smile as though I understood this was really a joke, and answer something like, “I think no one is perfect, but I feel that I have overcome those things that were in the way of a successful career.” Of course, be prepared to provide, if asked, more specifics about what weaknesses you found in your self assessment and how you overcame them.

If I were to ask your colleagues or your professors to describe you, what would they say?

Be sure you have spoken with several former professors and a few classmates, ideally good friends, and tell them that you will be going for an interview, and ask their permission to give their names as references. Never give a person’s name as a reference without their permission. More than once, students have given my name as a reference without clearing it with me first. My curt answer is always the same: “This student was in my class in [semester, year], and received a final grade of X. Beyond that, I can say nothing.” The words that an interviewer will find impressive are bright,

hard-working, dedicated, gregarious, sociable. Now come up with a few of your own.

These days, interviewers have been known to throw out questions that sound as though they are off-the-wall. Here are a couple of examples: ‘Let’s suppose that you can take any means of transportation, and travel to any destination in the world, and stay for any length of time, how and where would you go, and how long would you stay, and what would you do there?’ Or, ‘you are going to throw a dinner party for 10 people from any time in history and from any country in the world. Whom would you invite, and what would you ask them?’ Recognize that there is no right or wrong answer to such questions. The interviewer is merely trying to get a sense of what kind of person you are and how you think, and also how well you handle such unexpected occurrences. So indeed, think about the question, take your time, and answer in a relaxed and confident manner.

And one final word of advice: Never, but never, make anything up. If the interviewer should check and find that you have exaggerated, fabricated or prevaricated, either during your interview or on your

resume, you are through for good, and that stigma is very likely to follow you throughout your career.

Even though Western culture abhors a lull in the conversation, it is not necessary to fill every second of the interview with some kind of verbal noise. It is perfectly permissible to say, “An extremely important question; allow me just a moment, if you will, to formulate the best answer.” Then looked up with a very sincere expression on your face, then back to the interviewer, and come up with a brilliant response. But do not exaggerate your answers, do not try to snow the interviewer, because this person has done hundreds if not thousands of interviews, and they have a very good sense of answers that are not sincere. Not lies, you understand, just not sincere.

Next time: all about nonstandard interviews. Some applicants are asked to participate in team events, or to work on a mock business school case.



Magnolia, continued from page 5.

together. They are mainly brick buildings ranging from classic to modern in style, fronted by lawns, and manicured flowerbeds, crisscrossed by paved roads. The campus here is also quite pretty, but, frankly, it’s hard to tell where the campus ends and the town of Chapel Hill begins.

There is graduate student housing available for both married and single students in furnished apartments offered through the university housing office. Also many students commute from other parts of the city, or live in several private apartment complexes near the campus. Chapel Hill’s director of International Programs, Bev Sizemore, says that students find apartments quite easily.

Chapel Hill law school is just a tiny bit bigger than Duke law school. About 250 students enroll each year in the J.D. program. It has less of a national reach though, as only about 30% of those are from outside the North Carolina area. It’s also less competitive for applications, with about 3000 students applying for the 250 seats, as opposed to Duke’s over 6000 J.D. applications.

As it’s a well regarded law school at a well regarded university, I was surprised to find that the LL.M. program is so very new and very small. As mentioned, the inaugural



The Law School Main Entrance- UNC Chapel Hill

class, last year, consisted of six students, most of whom were Asian, although one was from Armenia, and lived and practiced in Russia before coming to the U.S. This means, of course, that you can hardly expect to find the dedicated LL.M. employment office and formalized LL.M. preparatory programs that we mentioned when discussing Duke. The question of whether LL.M. students can attend clinical programs has probably not even arisen yet. The

program has plans to expand of course, but in a small startup program, if you want to be a big fish in a small pond, this is the place for you.

Much like Duke, the Chapel Hill considers its strengths to be corporate law, banking and finance law, environmental law, intellectual property law, and government law.

Continues . . .



*Statue of Jefferson in Front of
UVA's landmark Rotunda*

LL.M. candidates may also participate in programs offered by the many specialized "Centers" sponsored by the law school (for instance the Chapel Hill Center for Banking and Finance, a Center for Law, Environment, Adaptation and Resources, and the Center for Law and Government) or sponsored by other Chapel Hill departments (Center for Global Initiatives, Center for European Studies, etc.)

You don't need to write a thesis or even complete a substantial writing requirement to get your LL.M. at Chapel Hill, but you can if you want. Most students choose, instead, to take additional courses. Those who write a thesis may count it for six credits of course work, and thus enroll in one fewer course each semester.

The cost of Chapel Hill's LL.M. program is about \$41,000 in tuition. Expect another thousand dollars or two in fees and expenses. Living costs are estimated at around \$14,000, which seems a little low compared with the higher estimates at Duke in the same city. But I would estimate that you can expect to spend around \$55,000-65,000 for your LL.M. at Chapel Hill. There was no information available on scholarships for LL.M. students.

University of Virginia

In comparison to the forested atmosphere of Duke, and the suburban feel of Chapel Hill, the University of Virginia is an open area of pristine lawns, that reminds one a bit of a country plantation. Being one of the oldest Universities in the U.S., and the most northernmost in our article, Virginia is the only one of our Magnolia League members that also is considered a member of the Ivy League.

Charlottesville, the town in which the university is situated, is small. With a town population of under 50,000 people, and a university population of 15,000 students, the university is the major player in the area. Most people you meet are connected to the university, or to some business that in turn serves the university.

University of Virginia was founded in 1819 by Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States. Upon his retirement from the presidency, it became his dream to build a public university, unconnected with any religious institution, and teaching the most modern and practical subjects of the time.

For those of you who are not up to speed on your U.S. presidents, Thomas Jefferson was a great intellectual, considered one of the founding fathers of the United States. He was a major figure in the enlightenment,

this first public university in his new nation. Indeed, the architectural style is sometimes known as "Jeffersonian."

Students still live in Thomas Jefferson's dormitory rooms on the Virginia Lawn. It's not the most comfortable housing on campus, but living there is a status symbol because only the best students are invited to do so. Most students live in more modern dormitories and apartments off campus. LL.M. and MBA students often choose to live in a graduate-student-only apartment building, conveniently located across the street from the law school. If you choose private housing, you can expect to pay about \$500 a month for a shared apartment, and about \$1200 if you want a townhouse to yourself.

You won't need a car at Virginia. Although it can be easier to explore if you



The Jeffersonian & red brick architecture of University of Virginia

a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a drafter of the Constitution, a prominent statesman, philosopher, writer and architect.

To this last quality of Jefferson, his interest in architecture, Virginia owes its famous "Quad" or "the Lawn." The Lawn is large rectangle of terraced lawns, bordered by red brick pavilions that house all manner of educational faculties, administration buildings and even dormitories. The pavilions are connected by covered brick walkways, and the whole Lawn is capped by the architecturally lauded Rotunda, the famous symbol of the university, which houses a library. The area is replete with archways, wide columns, white plaster trimming and grey slate roofs, in a neo-classical Greek and Roman style that Jefferson felt best reflected the dedication to democracy that he hoped would bloom in

have one of course, parking is difficult in the vicinity of the campus, and the public transportation system is very good, so many students live without one. There is a free shuttle bus to downtown Charlottesville, and also around the campus. There is also a smartphone app to tell you when the next bus is coming to your location.

Also lots of activities center around law school life to keep you from being bored if you can't drive around and explore on your own. Student organizations arrange day trips for the LL.M. students to places like Washington D.C. or to go wine tasting.

The Virginia law school building is nothing special from the outside, done in kind of a modern version of the Jeffersonian architecture that adorns the campus. Inside the building though, it's very comfortable.

You won't find the imposing modern glass walled commons that they have at Duke, but you get a more classical feel, and perhaps a bit lighter, more relaxed feeling. As the school has grown, two buildings have been joined here to create enough space, so it's a bit of a maze. You find wide hallways lined with nice looking polished wooden lockers. There is the comfortable looking Scott Commons area done in light wood with dark blue armchairs and a glass ceiling, and there are several other areas for students to sit and chat or relax, including an interior courtyard with weathered grey chairs and tables. The library is made to look classical in style, with white walls and lots of cherry wood trim, high back burgundy leather chairs, and paintings of the founding fathers on the walls. My favorite painting was a rather whimsical portrait of Thomas Jefferson sitting on a bench of the law school, reading a modern Constitutional Law textbook, with a takeout cup from a local coffee shop.

When asked what sets Virginia apart, Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, Polly Lawson, who showed me around the school, mentioned "high quality faculty and student contact." "Professors make an effort to get to know their students both inside and outside the classroom" she said. It's not unusual for professors to invite groups of students to lunch or dinner at a professor's home, or for professors to go to student organization events, such as football "tailgater" parties.

The LL.M. program is flexible, allowing students to take first year J.D. classes, as well as electives, as they prefer. One requirement is the graduate research and writing course—which is taught as a graded, one credit course during the first semester. You will also need to complete a thesis of 25 pages or more. You can do this as an independent research project under the supervision of a professor, or as a seminar.

You are not required to specialize at Virginia, but you can do if you want to. You can also take courses at other schools within the University, such as at Virginia's well known Darden School of Business. The Chair of Graduate Studies, Professor Paul Stephan, meets with students individually to discuss proposed courses.

A very popular Virginia program is the Law and Business specialization, where students who take an introductory course in accounting and corporate finance can then take advantage of certain courses that cross over between the business and the law school, such as corporate finance, strategy, and introduction to capital markets. It's designed for students who don't have a



Emory Law School Building

prior business background but want to have a competitive advantage in practicing business law.

As mentioned above, some LL.M. students participate in an International Human Rights Clinic. There is also an opportunity to spend a week in Paris taking special courses in January. Students planning to take the New York bar, however, should note that no LL.M. courses taken outside the U.S. can count towards your bar credits.

Virginia expects outstanding academic performance from its applicants. They also prefer at least two years of work experience, but say that, realistically, since the financial crisis, fewer of their applicants have this experience. Instead, if applicants have substantive experience interning in legal organizations it may suffice.

Tuition and fees at Virginia are \$51,400, plus about 21,000 in living expenses, so expect to spend around \$72,000 or more for your LL.M. here. There is a small financial aid budget for LL.M. students, with grants generally from \$5-15,000, depending on merit and financial need. I was told that students should not expect to get 50% or more scholarships, and that the more realistic students were in their requests, the more likely financial aid would be granted. Financial aid decisions are made in mid-February, so those who want financial aid should apply to the LL.M. program early. Only students who ask for financial aid in their application will be considered for the aid.

Emory University

Moving southward, about a day's drive from Virginia or North Carolina, we get to Atlanta, Georgia, and find Emory University. Emory has the distinct advantage of enrolling LL.M. students to start either in

August or in January, so procrastinators can be happy.

Emory is also the only Magnolia League University to truly be located in a major urban area. Atlanta, Georgia, home to the busiest airport in the world, is also the 9th largest city in the US, a population of over 5 million people. Economically, Atlanta is home to Delta Airlines, Coca Cola, Home Depot, and CNN, as well as hosting regional offices of thousands of other national and international corporations. Potential international employers are in abundance.

Founded in the mid-1800s, as a private, Methodist affiliated university, Emory has plenty of large trees and large classical buildings, interspersed with many more modern ones, build in the campus "quad" style like Virginia. This time, however, we find white brick, marble and stucco instead of Virginia's red brick and white columns. It's located in a suburban neighborhood, but not far from downtown Atlanta, and is somewhat outgrowing its campus. You get more of a modern Mediterranean impression here, with tall buildings, overhanging roofs, and high narrow archways. It's very beautiful, and in a very different way than either Duke or Virginia.

Emory University is small, as universities go, with about 7000 students. The law school has a bit over 700 J.D. students (taking in around 250 a year) and the LL.M. enrollment averages around 40 students.

Emory has one of the most complex LL.M. programs of any of the Magnolia League LL.M.'s I examined. It has three distinct "tracks." Track 1 is a general LL.M., in which students can choose any courses they want. Track 2 is a specialized LL.M. in which students may choose from six different concentrations: Transactional Law, Public

Law and Regulation, Child Law & Policy, Vulnerability and the Human Condition, Human Rights Law, and Law & Religion. In the specialized tracks, students must choose somewhere between 9 and 14 credits from among specified courses in their specialization, and the rest of the 24 credits they need can be chosen from other courses offered in the law school. The number and variety of courses you can choose from in your specialty area vary widely depending on which concentration you choose. Also, depending on your concentration, you may, or may not, need to complete a thesis.

Track 3 at Emory is one that might be of particular interest to Russian students, as it is a joint program with Central European University in Budapest. Students spend the fall semester in residence in Budapest, living in the CEU dormitories and studying courses designed to introduce them to Anglo-American Law, European Law and to whatever specialties are offered there that interest them. Then they spend the spring semester in Atlanta finishing off the remaining half of their degree. Students are warned, though, that completing this program will not make them eligible to take the New York bar, as New York will not recognize courses taken outside the United States.

The LL.M. program will cost you approximately \$46,400, with living expenses setting you back another \$24-25,000 (higher than Duke and Virginia because of the bigger city of course) for a total cost of about \$71,000. Limited scholarships are available. There is no separate scholarship application, students are automatically considered for whatever scholarships for which they might be eligible.

Vanderbilt University

Moving Westward from North Carolina, and North West from Atlanta, we find Vanderbilt, in Nashville, Tennessee. Vanderbilt is a compact campus, surrounded by a decidedly urban area. It's another tree shaded quad with peaceful, brown and beige stone buildings, and more modern buildings like the law and business schools, situated down a path slightly off the main quad area.

A year ago in the Graduate Advisor, I reported on Vanderbilt's Owen School of Business' MBA program, so you might want to check there for more details on the campus. For here, suffice to say it's a small green oasis in the middle of Nashville, America's country music and southern rock capital.

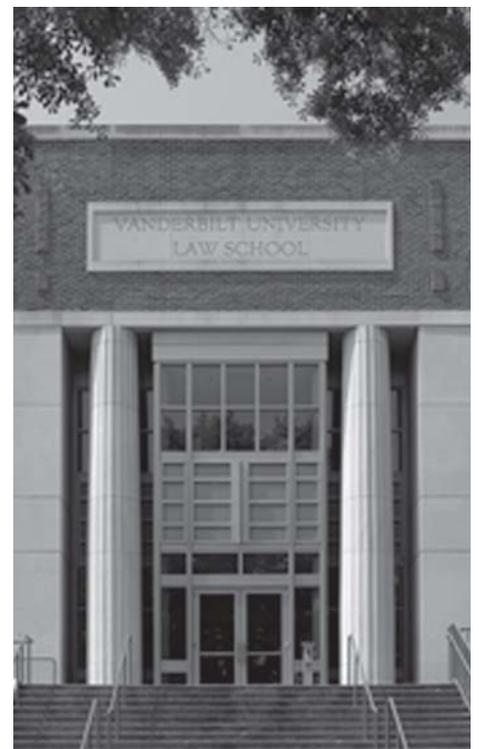
Although Nashville isn't as large as Atlanta, there is plenty of nightlife here, with a bar and nightclub strip famous for live music and regular street concerts featuring famous rock bands. When I visited last year, I had dinner at the famous Crazy Horse Saloon, and then I wound up in the middle of a street festival with the famous Southern rock band, Lynyrd Skynyrd, entertaining the crowd for free.

Vanderbilt has three tracks available to LL.M. students. You can take a thesis track program, where you are scheduling your classes and writing a major research paper under the auspices of a professor/advisor. The thesis track serves as a general LL.M., allowing you to take any courses reasonably connected to your chosen thesis. Or you can take a Course Track, also choosing more or less whatever courses you want.

Finally, Vanderbilt has the Law and Business Track, which obviously limits students to business related courses. This specialization allows students to cross over courses with professors from Vanderbilt Owen Business School, located right next door to the law school. Students in this specialty, as mentioned, take at least 27 credits, including courses in accounting, corporate finance, and tax.

LL.M. Students at Vanderbilt tend to live in private apartments. There are apartments run by the University, but I was told that the cost is higher and the space smaller that one can get finding one's own apartment privately. Rent tends to run around \$800-1000 a month.

An advantage to Vanderbilt is the



Entrance at Vanderbilt Law School

extremely low cost of living in Tennessee. The corridor of Western Kentucky, Tennessee and Northern Alabama is considered the cheapest place to live in the entire United States. Tuition at Vanderbilt is not that cheap though. The LL.M. will cost you \$46,400, with cost of living estimated at an additional approximately \$23,000, meaning that the LL.M. is budgeted at about \$69,000. Frankly though, looking at Vanderbilt's budget figures, they seem to be more generous than other schools. You probably can get by with a couple thousand dollars less.

For some reason, although they pointed out that their LL.M. class represents 15 countries this year, there seem to be a very large number of Chinese and Japanese students attracted to Vanderbilt's LL.M. program, which, theoretically, should make a Russian student's application stand out.

Tulane University

Finally on our tour, to reach Tulane University, in New Orleans, you drive a day southward from Vanderbilt.

New Orleans is a famous city. It's famous for its Bourbon Street nightlife and strip clubs, for its jazz, blues and unique zydeco music, for its spicy Cajun seafood, for its French and Spanish influenced architecture, for its French Quarter, its Mardi Gras, and its general joie de vive.

Let's face it, I'm a little biased toward New Orleans. I grew up there, and I love the town.



A reading area at Vanderbilt Law School



The entrance to Tulane University.

Unfortunately, more recently New Orleans has also been infamous, as a victim of hurricane Katrina, which not only wiped out all the more modern areas of the city, but also brought to the surface some ugly racial tensions that had theretofore been only shallowly suppressed. Then the BP oil spill created more catastrophic damage to the fishing, shipping and tourist industries. The New Orleans economy has been suffering more than most, and you will still see parts of the city that are badly in need of repair and a little scary.

Tulane, though, is located in a part of the city called Uptown—an upscale neighborhood of large antebellum homes, gardens and magnolia trees, which fortunately escaped most of Katrina’s damage. It’s urban, and the campus is accordingly compact, but graceful, with sweeping trees, French and Spanish influenced architecture and white stone buildings predominating the main quad. There are actually two universities here, Tulane and Loyola, which stand one right beside the other. Mutual cooperation lets students use many of the facilities of either campus. Numerous restaurants and shops surround the campus, plus it is about four miles away from the famous French Quarter, where night life abounds.

Tulane offers university owned apartments for graduate students called the Papillon Apartments. Many LL.M. students choose these. They are off campus, but are on the same street, easily accessible by trolley bus or a free university shuttle. The cost starts at about \$900 a month for a “one bedroom” (i.e., 2 rooms) and goes up to over \$1700 for 4 rooms. Other students choose to find private housing, which can be a bit cheaper, and is usually obtainable within walking or biking distance from campus. There is a trolley bus system that goes from right in front of the campus to the main areas of downtown, so you won’t need a car.

Tulane’s LL.M. program is unique among the Magnolia League schools because of its specialties. Located in Louisiana, the only state in the United States that functions as a civil law, rather than a common law, jurisdiction, Tulane professors are experts

in International and Comparative Law, and this is one of the LL.M. specialties available. One of New Orleans’ economic strengths is as a major southern port city. Thus, Tulane offers a specialty in Admiralty Law. For sadly obvious reasons, Tulane offers an LL.M. specialty in Energy and Environmental Law. Students can also take an LL.M. in general American Business Law, or create their own concentrations, under the guidance of the administration, of course.

Tulane is one of the more economical choices for your LL.M. Tuition is a bit over \$46,000 a year, with living expenses realistically estimated at around \$21,000. Scholarships and tuition waivers are awarded on a merit basis in amounts between \$5000 and \$20,000.



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“Observations” Continued from page 16

(Observations on a Michigan Ross MBA, by a Russian alumnus who wishes to remain nameless)

semesters. Pre-MBA English classes could help you to prepare for the MBA activities.

3. Group Work.

Many bright students from the former Soviet Union are not very happy with their team experience. Group work in business schools is quite an artificial process. In a real work environment one usually has a more structured situation with formal roles, assigned authority to take final decisions and clear goals. At a business school usually almost everybody in the group is trying to maximize his contribution to the final paper and show his leadership. The different background of the students complicates the issue. I struggled to explain some obvious ideas to American students without previous business backgrounds but strong leadership ambitions. Quite often team members are trying to maximize their work load. Your part of the work could be easily “stolen” if you are not fast enough to deliver it. Universal advice for the group work is 1) be punctual 2) keep your promises 3) be proactive but not pushy, and 4) look for “compromises” to please your teammates even when those compromises don’t make much sense for you. My group work experience demonstrated to me a fact that we were told during one of the classes: the most rare leadership role is a moderator. It’s not your ideas that are really valuable, but an ability to listen to others and facilitate the discussion.

4. “A Lot of Reading” Myth and Overall Complexity of the Courses.

Technically there is a lot of reading. However, only part of this reading is really necessary to prepare for a class. If you have prior business experience or a related degree you might grasp the main idea of the case from its first and last pages. More challenging are classes with rich American context. For example, in the marketing class

students and professor often started spontaneous discussion of American brands I hadn’t heard about, or they referred to some cultural issues I was not aware of. Pets, sports and TV play really important roles in the lives of Americans. The state of the art English language of native speaking professors in “soft skills courses” (leadership, management and organizations, etc.) also added some complexity to the classroom experience.

5. Technology.

Education is just one more industry in the US. The courses are conducted in the most efficient and cost-effective way. Professors at Ross are usually well-prepared and equipped with all possible modern technologies. Sometimes they don’t know much outside the course they teach, but



Front entrance of Ross at night.

they are trained to conduct it in the way to make you remember the most important ideas on the subject.

Observations on the social life at Ross School of Business

The crucial thing to take most from the MBA program is to find a proper balance between studying, job search and social life. In Russian language there is no such word as “socializing,” and “social life” usually has a negative connotation. For many American students, social life is the most important part of the school experience. This is one the ways students build an effective network, which Ross is so proud of. Social life has professional and entertaining sides. “Professional” social life usually happens at clubs and conferences. At first, it is difficult to understand why students are volunteering for conferences, or are so interested to take positions in clubs, taking

on significant responsibilities without any direct benefits. All these things could pay off in a distant future, but also could be helpful in job search. It’s hard to compete for posts in the clubs with Americans, but in each club there is usually at least one special position for international students. Since students clubs are non-existent in Russia, it makes sense to research about them beforehand.

Ann Arbor is a big university city. Life in the city is organized around the university. There is a lovely downtown where one can find almost everything you have in a big city. Football and parties are overly significant components of the student life at Ross. Every Thursday there is a party, and every second Saturday there is a football game. Ann Arbor has the largest football stadium in the world. Up to 120 thousands people gather there for important games. Everything starts several hours before the game with beer drinking and funny activities. The ability to hold conversations about football is important to find common ground with alumni during the job search. Some international students become great fans of the Michigan team and are really good in discussing football issues.

The second most important sport in Michigan is hockey. Overall, Michigan University has a lot of sport facilities available to the students. Besides regular parties, there are several important events during the year dedicated each to a particular topic (Brazilian Carnival, Ross Follies, etc.) Plus, Ann Arbor has probably more music halls than Moscow, with world class musicians such as Gergiev and Matsuev performing there. Concerts of major pop stars take place in Detroit.

Another part of social life are students trips. The first one, called M-Trek, happens before the first year starts. M-Trek is organized by the second year students. It is a good way to travel and to get acquainted with some of your classmates as well as second year students. At the second year of study there will be an opportunity to organize such a trek yourself. Besides that, there is a ski weekend in February, and there are numerous self-organized trips during the spring break and summer.

Americans use social networks such as Facebook much more intensively than Russians do. When most Russians have 30-100 friends on a social network, many of my American classmates have more than 1000 contacts on Facebook. FB is the medium of communication. Different events and parties are organized through FB, so it is important to be there.

Observations on the job search process

I knew that the job search starts the very same time the school starts. What I didn't know was that it was crucial to start the job search before that. You can win some time if you contact recruiters before your classmates. Ideally you should know what you want and can target particular companies and offices. You have an advantage if you get in touch with a recruiting team before the company's presentation. After the presentation on campus many of your classmates are trying to reach Ross alumni at the company, so the chance of a response is lower. Since there could be hundreds of people at the presentation, it's difficult to differentiate yourself. Preliminary contact helps to solve this problem.

Though school offers a lot of training and advice, you should be in control of your job search. The school won't find you a job, you should do it yourself. The recruiting process consists of two phases. The first part is on-campus recruiting when companies come to the school and conduct interviews. Most major consultancies, investment banks and companies do on-campus recruiting at Ross. However, on-campus recruiting is very competitive. Many students don't get internships or jobs during the on-campus recruiting. They need to continue with an off-campus search. Though off-campus search is mainly for second-tier, mid-sized companies and start-ups, there are also some leading companies which don't recruit on-campus, but hire students from Ross every year. The most difficult part of the off-campus search is a self-initiated internship when students are trying to use the Ross alumni network to land an internship.

In Ross school, an additional opportunity to find an internship is MAP. MAP is a consulting project performed by students

for a sponsoring company. As a result of MAP, many students are invited to continue working for the company.

Be prepared to travel for job interviews, conferences and company presentations. Professional clubs organize special events with employers in New York, Chicago and

York offices of the leading consultancies are pretty rare. Then, many companies may prefer Brazilian, Japanese and Chinese students over other international students. Furthermore, there are not so many Russian Ross alumni working in America. All these factors make the job search in America for Russian students especially complicated.

However, most of international students concentrated on the American market did find internships, though it demanded extra effort. Another viable strategy could be to look for an internship with an international company in Russia and then leverage that experience during the full-time job search in America.

The share of career switchers without previous business experience is pretty high at Ross. Even if you want to switch your career to a new path, you

need to leverage your previous experience. For example, healthcare consultancies welcome former doctors while high-tech companies prefer people with an engineering background.



Hall Area at Ross

San Francisco. Students from Ross are welcomed by companies' offices in Detroit, Cleveland and Minneapolis. Chicago, New York and San Francisco are more competitive but still many Rossers end up working there.

Currently many positions in American companies are not available for international students. Even if a company officially hires international students, it may prefer Americans. Cases when international students get offers from Chicago and New





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“My Ross Experience” Continued from page 16

(by Dmitry Polukhin, Second-year MBA, University of Michigan Ross School of Business)

collaborative and friendly. The focus is on the cooperation, not on the individual achievements. Group work accounts for about a half of all studies, no matter what areas they are, e.g. finance, strategy or marketing.

Classmates help each other with interview preparation. Since my career focus was in consulting, I am particularly familiar with activities related to internship and job hunt in this area. For example second-year MBAs do cases and mock fit interviews with first-years. There is a student club, The Ross Mentorship Club, where one second-year is paired with one first-year, and acts as a mentor about any possible questions and advise necessary. Many clubs have their mentorship programs in order to help students interested in specific functions or industries to connect with second-years who did the same a year ago, and these can be a valuable source of information.

But Ross culture is not only about classes or career. Ann Arbor is one of the major sites for American football many Ross students go various “tailgating” places to

close to the stadium to talk to each other and just have fun.

Studies

The academic approach in the school is a good mix of lectures, case discussions, group projects and individual assignments. The school is well known for its balanced approach teaching methods and curriculum. During the first 3 quarters (Fall A and B and Winter A), students take about 8-10 core courses including strategy, finance, accounting, marketing and management. Starting from Fall B they can add electives to their class schedule. This is a time where everyone can choose an area for specialization, or just build a well rounded set of classes from various departments.

Classes are usually scheduled from Monday to Thursday and can be of different workloads, ranging from 1.5 to 3.0 credit hours. The school is very well known for its strategy professors (Aneel Karnani and Gautam Ahuja), finance professors (Gautam Kaul and David Brophy), marketing (John Branch), and management (Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks).

One of the school’s signature classes is MAP (Multidisciplinary Action Project), which is a student-team (usually up to 6 members), half semester, consulting project. Student teams are assigned to different projects of their choice, sponsored by

companies, ranging from top banks and manufacturing leaders to startups and non-profit organizations, located domestically and internationally.

Second-year MBAs bid for electives they want to attend. It works in the following way: every student is assigned 1000 points and they can place bids for courses of interest. Highest bids up to a number of seats in the class win and those students get the places.

Career

Searching for an internship and later for a full-time position is an exciting adventure with a lot of work and great feeling of Ross has very strong positions almost in every function, industry and geographic location of companies. Particularly it is well known for its strategy and consulting, marketing, general management, sustainability and entrepreneurship focuses. The school enjoys having a great number of employers who come on campus. In fact it hosts visits of about the same number of companies as the other top 5 competitor schools.

Usually, the career activities of every company starts with a corporate presentation. Then companies usually conduct office hours, coffee chats and resume reviews with students interested in those companies. This is a great opportunity to show your interest to the company and have a comprehensive

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discussion about an employer's details, talk about the experiences of the company's representative, and demonstrate what you can bring to the table as a prospective intern.

Clubs also conduct their own activities related to recruiting. There are quite a few trips organized to meet companies from various regions (West Coast Forum, Chicago Forum, Texas Forum) or specific functions (Wall Street Forum, Marketing Forum, Health Care Forum). Besides that, the Finance Club, Consulting Club, General Management Club and others host conferences usually attended and sponsored by numerous companies, who consider these events as additional recruiting opportunities.

In terms of an employment profile, the largest share of the Ross student body finds an internship and job in consulting, general management, marketing or finance. Among industries, the most popular are consulting and hi-tech. It should be noted, that for international students the task may be more difficult as not every company is willing to sponsor work authorization. Of course, this is true for any US school.

Social activities

The school and the city have a lot to offer. Extracurricular activities start with clubs and associations. Some clubs are professional

and their members mostly consider them as a valuable source and forum to learn more about their future career functions or industries. They also seek the club's support in getting ready for the job search and interview process.

Other clubs are socially oriented. There are the Wine Club, The Scotch Club and The Poker Club. These clubs regularly host events in Ann Arbor and Detroit. One of the most memorable events of the first year for me was a flapper party with all students dressed like in 1930's.

The entire class of MBAs of every year is divided into 6 sections. These sections form unity as they do most of the core courses together. Even later in the program, after all students mix with other section's students when taking elective courses, each section continues to hold events and communicate closely.

Life in Ann Arbor

University of Michigan is one of the largest and most highly-ranked US universities, with a student body of about 44 000 students.

The business school is located on the central campus close to downtown Ann Arbor. Numerous restaurants, bars and clubs are located within 15-20 minutes walk.

There are a lot of housing options. Students may want to choose live in the downtown, close to school and the busy life of the city and the university. Alternatively students who like a quiet life, especially those with families, may want to choose more remote apartment complexes located a little further away.

The price of housing and living is not very cheap since this is a university city; however it depends on the budget and a life-style you want to live. Having a car is not a necessary thing, as the transportation system is very good and consists of combined university and city buses. Besides, there is an opportunity to use zip-cars on an occasional basis.

Overall, my experience at Ross has been one of my most significant and exciting experiences so far.

With this welcoming and diverse environment, I learned how not to get surprised or confused when needing to deal with ambiguity. All the main MBA elements, such as career search, academics, social life, and of course an internship, as it was for most of my classmates and me, make a life-lasting impression and change life for the better.



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Letters From the Underground (with apologies to Dostoyevsky): Two Students' Impressions About University of Michigan's Ross School of Business.

Letters from the Underground is a regular column in which Pericles asks its former GMAT and TOEFL preparation students to comment on their experiences in Western business and law schools.

Observations on a Michigan Ross MBA

by a Russian alumnus who wishes to remain nameless

I was pretty satisfied by my Russian university degree. Studying at Ross is completely different experience.

Observations on the Study Process

1. Students' Motivation.

Most students in the MBA program are motivated to study and are surprisingly serious about what they learn. You need to be prepared for each and every class, beginning with the first one. Finals contribute no more than 40% of the grade, so it is really important to work during the semester.

2. Class Participation.

Most classes are pretty big (80 students) but still students are expected to participate in the discussion. Final grades and, even more importantly, your recognition among students, depends on the level of your participation in the class. The class often looks like a TV talk-show with the professor manipulating the audience. A productive discussion in such a big and diverse audience is rarely possible, but still you need to play the game. This is usually a challenge for international students. One of my really bright classmates from Africa complained that he was able to say something at the class only once in 2

See "Observations" page 12 . . .



University of Michigan, Ross School of Business

My Ross Experience

by Dmitry Polukhin, Second-year MBA, The Ross School of Business

Choosing between several schools I applied and got admitted to, I ended up going to the Ross School of Business. Here I would like to share my experience, and some views on MBA studies in general and at Ross in particular. My notes are not by any means an exhaustive description of all aspects of the school. They will give some highlights that I believe are the most interesting part of my journey so far.

The school is located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which is a state in the Midwestern part of the US. Being a part of the University of Michigan, the Ross School is consistently ranked among the top 10-15 business schools in the US and among the top 3 in the Midwest, along with Chicago Booth and Kellogg.

Several buildings serve school needs. The newest one, the Ross Building, opened its doors in the beginning of 2009 and hosts full-time and part-time MBA classes. The building is a perfect example of a sustainable architecture rated by eco-agencies. It is built with eco-friendly materials (no marble, for example) and has rooftop plants. Other buildings are used for administrative purposes, executive MBA classes and residences. The Kresge Library has its own four-story building.

Here I would like to cover some aspects of Ross that together represent the most important and exciting MBA-life experiences.

Culture

The school's student body stands out among peer schools as being very

See "My Ross Experience",
page 14 . . .



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