2023 Employment Spotlight: MBA grads leverage skills to pivot into new careers

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For Freeman School MBAs, 2023 was another strong year for employment outcomes. Just under 93% of the Freeman School's full-time MBA class of 2023 had job offers within three months of graduation, an 8% increase over last year at that time.

“I think that number reflects both the quality of this year’s graduates and the continuing strong market for MBA hiring,” says Carla Coury, executive director of the Freeman School's Career Management Center. “Despite rising interest rates and other economic challenges, employers are continuing to seek out top MBA talent and our graduates are continuing to get great offers.”

Of the grads who received job offers, more than half took jobs in industries different from the ones they worked in prior to starting the MBA program. Below are profiles of four grads who leveraged their Freeman MBA experience to pivot industries and start new careers.

Ashley Gulick (MBA ’23) spent seven years working as a first-grade teacher at an elementary school in New Orleans East after graduating from college. She loved her work, but it was an incredibly demanding job at a high-needs school. When the pandemic hit, she knew she was ready for a change.

Ashley Gulick

“I didn’t want to get just any random job,” Gulick says. “I knew I wanted to do something in the world of business using my skills I developed as a teacher.”

Her parents and brother had attended Tulane University, so she followed in their footsteps to pursue an MBA at the Freeman School.

It was a summer internship at Infosys, a multinational technology company, that helped determine her current career trajectory. At first the size of the company was intimidating, she says, but as an intern she got to work closely with a team.

“There were people who took me under their wing, and I got to know my team very well,” she says. “I thought this would be such a good opportunity for me.”

In July she joined Infosys full time as a business development executive. In that role, she works with partner companies to foster business development.

“I am very much a freshman and still learning, but I am enjoying it so far,” she says.

Yang Liu

Yang Liu (MBA ’23) is another MBA graduate who used the skills she gained at the Freeman School to pivot to a new career.

After 17 years in the oil and gas industry, Liu was looking for a break to pursue further education and reflect on her career. After graduating from Tianjin Foreign Studies University in 2004, Liu worked for PetroChina and, later, for ExxonMobil in Dubai and Iraq.

“I was working all of the time and didn’t get time to get a break,” Liu says. “For me, the MBA was a chance to take some time.”

She was interested in pursuing her MBA in the United States and felt that Louisiana, with its ties to the oil and gas industry, would be a good fit. She chose the Freeman School with the hope of continuing to work in the industry but with a new focus on sustainable energy. But as she started looking for work in her final semester, she saw opportunities in a new industry.

“I learned that the healthcare industry is much more developed in New Orleans,” she says.

Liu took a class on healthcare policy her final semester and started working part time at LCMC Health, the non-profit healthcare network that operates nine hospitals across the New Orleans area. She took a month to travel home to China after graduation and in June started working full time as a senior reimbursement analyst at LCMC.

After four months on the job, Liu is still familiarizing herself with the policies and terminology of health care.

“I was familiar with oil and gas,” she says. “This is like learning a different language.”

For now, she is happy to call New Orleans home and happy to be working in a new and thriving industry.

Jack Wimberly

Jack Wimberly (MBA ’23) returned to New Orleans after working in financial services in Dallas. He wanted to follow in his parents’ footsteps and pursue graduate level studies to further his career.

“I always knew that this was a good way to pivot your career and identify better skillsets,” he says. “It was either going to be, stay at this job and grow in it gradually or go get an MBA and learn the technical skillsets and managerial styles.”

Right out of college, Wimberly was hired by Wunderlich Securities to help people with their personal financial planning and wealth management. Eventually, he moved to Stonegate Capital Partners, working in investor relations and institutional sales.

The work and clientele were different, and he enjoyed it, “but it was the commitment to the desk, so to speak,” he says. “I had to be at the office a lot to do the job, and I didn’t feel like I had a lot of growth opportunities. I wanted to get more

of a dynamic background.”

Pursuing his MBA at the Freeman School was an opportunity to return home and recalibrate what he wanted out of his career.

Wimberly credits the Freeman School with putting Bernhard Energy on his radar. The company works with large entities such as hospital systems and higher education institutions to help them implement energy-efficient improvements to their utility infrastructures. Wimberly joined the company in June as a financial analyst on the development team.

“It feels good to be back in New Orleans,” he says. “It’s on the opposite side of the spectrum compared to Dallas. It’s slower paced, but there are great opportunities.”

Marie Gares

After a life of living and working between New York City and Europe, **Marie Gares (MBA ’23)** has found a new home in New Orleans with her husband. She studied international law as an undergraduate at the Sorbonne in Paris, but she knew she wanted to explore something different. Interested in the fashion industry, she started working for Gucci in sales. She moved up to work in operations and logistics, managing different projects at Bergdorf Goodman, and later returned to Gucci as an operations coordinator.

“I did a lot of back and forth between Paris and New York, but I reached a cap where I was in the fashion industry and wanted to work on finance skills,” she says.

The pandemic provided a lot of time to consider her next steps, and she decided that she wanted to pursue an MBA. Her godmother attended Tulane School of Medicine, and Gares was intrigued by the curriculum at the Freeman School. The 2021 cohort was small, but she says it was a great way to get to know everyone.

At Freeman, she started doing consulting for one of her former clients who owns a luxury goods resale company called TBC Consignment. The company was growing into a mid-size company, and Gares was able to apply much of what she was learning in the classroom to her consulting, helping the firm with data analytics and strategy.

Gares now works full-time for TBC Consignment as CFO, helping the company manage finances and overseeing its corporate structure.

“What I liked about this opportunity is that it was something that was started from the ground up by CEO Chrissy Sayare,” she says. “TBC is an innovative business model started by an entrepreneurial and dynamic CEO from whom I have a lot to learn. I love being at a company that is growing fast and at a high level where I can make an impact and directly contribute to advancing our goals.”

-- *Maria Clark*