

## Ask Us Anything: MBA Student Q&A

Three UNC Kenan-Flagler MBA students took questions from potential MBA candidates. Here are some of their answers.

### What is the very first step I should take in considering UNC for an MBA?

- **BRETT: Visit the school and meet with the administration and staff.** Have deep conversations about making a career switch and leaving work, giving up the salary, and moving to a different state or country. There can be a lot of fear involved with that. So just talking to the staff at UNC really calmed my nerves and allowed me to feel like I would be taken care of and wouldn't just be a number here.

**Class sizes really matters as well.** There are 275 people in the first-year class and I've met just about everybody and know them on a personal basis. The UNC Kenan-Flagler community helps me to feel comfortable as I'm going through my coursework and looking for a job. It just really is a place I can call home.

- **CAITLIN: Another important thing to consider is [skills-based learning](#).** I really wanted a school where I could take what I was learning in the classroom and then apply it in an actionable way. Last year I had the opportunity to be a nonprofit board fellow working with the United Way, and I took what I learned in the classroom and applied it directly to that organization, which was really important to me.
- **RAVI: I think community is big.** I visited six or seven schools and took a lot of time and invested a lot of energy and effort to find out where I fit the best. UNC Kenan-Flagler is where I felt in my heart just very correct. I can say that with the 280-student class size, it's a very tight-knit community. Everybody knows everybody and you have this good quality of network, instead of being in a class where you don't know a lot of your classmates. That definitely makes a big difference.

### What extracurricular activities are you involved in, and what impact have you made through them?

- **CAITLIN: I'm on the executive board of [Carolina Women in Business](#) (CWIB)** and I'm responsible for our external outreach, which means I work with prospective students and alums.

**I'm also on the executive board of our [Consulting Club](#).** I'm responsible for learning and development, so I helped design the curriculum to prepare the first-year class to interview.

**And I'm our school's ambassador to the [Forte Foundation](#).** I've really been able to help shape how the women's community has formed at UNC. And it has really made me even more invested in the school than I think I was as a first-year, which has been great.

- RAVI: **In my second year I was elected the [MBA Student Association \(MBASA\) President](#), and through that I got to work with all of the clubs and communities in the school, the dean's office and the MBA program office to make sure that we keep improving ourselves. And the clubs and the MBASA have helped prepare my classmates for job interviews, to get the jobs and to be successful at those internships.**
- BRETT: **I am an [MBA Ambassador](#), and have been talking to a lot of prospective students and answering their questions.**

**I am also an executive liaison for the [Alliance of Minority Business Students](#) (AMBS) where I've helped expand the impact and reach of the minority students in business and in our business school.**

**And I'll be a project lead for our [STAR program](#).** STAR (Student Teams Achieving Results) is like a mini consulting firm. We work with companies in the area and globally to solve a business problem they are having. Teams are made up of groups of four to seven MBA and undergraduate students with a faculty advisor.

Visit our website for more information on [MBA Student Life](#).

## **Do classes consist of people of all different job and career backgrounds?**

- CAITLIN: **Yes, and I think a great example is the [study team](#).** When you come to school, you're assigned a study team with a goal to maximize diversity. On my team we had someone with a background in federal consulting, someone who owns his own textile company, someone who used to work for the federal Treasury Department and flew all around the world investigating crime, an international student, and someone with a background at Target Corporate.
- RAVI: And there are military veterans, a professional opera singer, a professional magician and professional poker players.
- BRETT: I think the essence of the question is "Are we only looking for business backgrounds?" And that's the furthest thing from the truth. UNC Kenan-Flagler does a great job of recruiting a lot of different people from a lot of different backgrounds, so you get a better sense of the business world at a more holistic level.

## **Can we discuss some international opportunities at UNC Kenan-Flagler?**

- CAITLIN: **As a first-year I participated in [Doing Business In \(DBI\)](#) where I spent a week of my spring break traveling to Copenhagen with students from Duke and George Washington University and the focus was sustainability. We visited four different companies, met with their VPs of Sustainability, and learned on the ground what they do day-to-day and what issues they're facing in the industry.**

**There are also [Global Immersion Electives](#) (GIEs) that are more classroom-based and you actually travel with faculty and staff from UNC for a longer duration. This spring I will be**

studying abroad in Bangkok, Thailand for about five weeks with about 18 of my classmates from UNC. We will also travel around Laos and Cambodia on an organized trek.

- RAVI: **And there are [Global Business Projects \(GBPs\)](#)** where you are working for a company outside of the United States, but you don't necessarily need to travel there to still have a global experience.

**And about 90 students will be traveling on [exchanges](#)** next March to a variety of countries. There are about 70 partner schools where you can do an exchange.

Visit our website for more information on [Global Programs](#).

### Can we discuss some faculty and staff support and interaction?

- BRETT: **There's a lot of support from the [Career Management Center \(CMC\)](#)**. Through the Consortium, I was able to talk to Google and secure two final interviews. A staff member cleared her calendar on the two days before my interview to spend four or five hours each day to help me go over interview techniques and different questions that might be thrown my way. I was able to do well on the interview and some of the interviewers commented on what a good job I did in the interview.

**And I was able to reach out to four or five professors in preparation for a [case competition](#)**, some of whom I hadn't even had a class with yet. Since we hadn't covered some topics in the case, they cleared their calendars and taught my team and me some really important skills to use in the competition. The faculty and staff are amazing. They really do care about the students here.

- RAVI: **I love the professors here.** They have an open door policy and are very, very friendly. And they go out of the way to make sure you learn the curriculum and that you are helped throughout your internship.

### Discuss the recruiting timeline and the Career Management Center relationship.

- CAITLIN: **The recruiting timeline starts really early.** Companies are here at the end of August presenting to the class what opportunities they have and who they're recruiting for. Resume drops are around October or November, and then you'll find out about your interviews in the November-December timeframe. You'll be interviewing anywhere from early January to end of February, then getting your internship offers and making your decision anywhere in that winter/spring semester.

As for the CMC relationship you're assigned to a director based on your career concentration. And there are second-year student volunteers who have been selected specifically to mentor small groups. That's the more formal structure.

**Then there are the [career clubs](#)** with their own programming around education and career tracks and interview prep.

- RAVI: I agree that clubs are one of the big factors here that help people get the right jobs and help them be successful at what they do.
- BRETT: **One of our first projects with the CMC is making sure your resume is up-to-date**, and your elevator pitch is in a good position. The focus is making sure you are really prepared for both your interviews and follow-up interviews, and making sure you're in a position to get an internship in a career that you want.

## What are the resources at UNC for startups and entrepreneurship?

- CAITLIN: **I'm going to take a class this spring called [Business Plan Analysis](#)**. The students become business centers and present their business plans to the class. You then decide would you invest. If so, why, and if not, what are your hesitations. Finally, a VP in the industry comes in and tells you what they actually did decide. It enables you to conduct analysis and then actually see how the professionals did it and practice in real-time.

**Outside of the classroom, we have a program called [Launching the Venture](#)**. People who either want to launch a business or have a business they want to accelerate work with faculty and staff both here and in the community to get it off the ground over the course a semester.

- **We also host a large [Venture Capital Investment Competition](#)** and we want to do well so we have a lot of support internally for the team and the students that are involved in the venture capital entrepreneurship track.
- **Ravi: We have a program called [The Adam's Apprenticeship](#)**. If you take the entrepreneurship route you will be interning with a startup that typically pays less, and a part of The Adam's Apprenticeship pays for your costs over that summer.

**And the [Entrepreneurship and Venture Capital Club](#)** also chooses a few people every year and supports their internship in its entirety so that they can go and work with startups and still make some money while they intern.

**And the entrepreneurial hub [1789 Venture Lab](#)** is near campus. It is a full office with all of the amenities and a boardroom for your startup. Many startups have started in there and stayed until they could afford an office space.

## How is the employability of international students considering the visa laws?

- RAVI: I will definitely say that it is harder for an international student to get job opportunities in the US, no matter what school you go to. Companies make decisions about international hiring and then they go to their recruiter schools and the schools will follow the decisions. That's why across schools it is the same. So you have to bear in mind when you're thinking about coming and studying in the US that there will be a few difficulties when it comes to getting a job, but many people have done it and being in a top school you'll be in good shape to do it.

For further questions on this, you should contact international students who you feel comfortable reaching out to. There are a lot listed on the UNC Kenan-Flagler [MBA Ambassadors](#) web page. And ask all the questions you have, because they are important.

### Discuss the highlights of your classroom experience. What has surprised you about the academics at UNC?

- CAITLIN: **The level of energy and engagement the professors bring to every single class has blown me away.** They go out of their way not only to work with you but also to work with other faculty and make sure the curriculum is really innovative across the core courses. You might talk about that same case in strategy and accounting or finance or econ. The professors are meeting on a weekly basis to make sure that what you're learning in their classroom is really applicable to what you're going to learn in your subsequent classes.

#### **And the faculty reach out to their professional networks and bring them into the classroom.**

My favorite part of strategy class was after we spent a lot of time talking about Coca-Cola, what our strategy would be and what we would recommend to Coca-Cola, our professor called some students to the front of the room and opened a webcam and there were Coke executive son the other line. No warning whatsoever, but he trusted us to do well and to have taken it seriously enough to perform in front of the executives.

### Talk about contacting current students and alumni. Are they welcoming?

- BRETT: **That was one of things at UNC Kenan-Flagler I was really surprised by, that when I did reach out to students they emailed me right back.** I also went to the MBA Ambassador website and saw a guy who went to Ohio State. I reached to him and said "Hey, fellow Buckeye, can you tell me about your school?" The interactions from the perspective of current students are great and a lot of students love talking about the Carolinas, talking about their decision to come to UNC and are really willing and able to reach out.

At the other end of the process is reaching out to alumni for help with the recruiting process. The amount of interaction the alumni have had with current students is amazing. They'll set up phone calls or interviews. And I think this has something to do with our tight-knit community and class sizes, but it is also that people here are willing to give back and really make sure the students at the school are successful.

Visit the [MBA Ambassadors](#) web page to contact current UNC Kenan-Flagler students.

### I would like to hear if you have some tips or advice on choosing the right MBA program.

- CAITLIN: For me, two things were of utmost importance. The first was why are you coming to business school? What is it about yourself that you're hoping to grow or improve? I was really focused on skills, hard skills, and so I wanted a program where I could not only learn in the

classroom but also repeatedly practice it outside, so when I graduated in two years I'd really feel like I had a good grasp on business acumen. So think about what it is about yourself that you're hoping to enhance and then look at a school that's going to cater to that.

The second is, and I don't think I can emphasize enough, how important culture is. I didn't necessarily know this coming into it. I think finding a school where you fit and you're comfortable and where you really can grow from the student body and the community is possibly more important now than it was in undergrad. As much as you can, visit schools in person. Actually talk to the students, talk to the faculty, talk to the staff and figure out where you're most comfortable.

- RAVI: I was also going to say the culture, too, because I think that's the most important thing to find out. Reach out to current students in a way that you can gain the most understanding of how things really are at the school.

At any top business school, you are going to get a great academic experience. You do not have to worry about that. What you have to worry about is will you end up in a culture where you can thrive? You can be a great candidate, but in a culture where you don't fit, you cannot thrive in it.

- BRETT: I would also ask, will I get an internship? Are there steps in place for you to get the internship? Does the school have an active career management center and active alumni?

And one last thing I'd suggest, and I didn't know how important this was until I came to school, is how well does the school take feedback from its students? Are they're very receptive of feedback? Our school has made changes to make sure they bring in the best students and that the students, while they're there, have the best experience.