

November 5, 2008 UNC's Kenan-Flagler Business School Minority Experience Chat

Anne_KFBS2010: Good afternoon everyone. My name is Anne Stoehr and I am a first year MBA student and member of the Admissions Advisory Board at the Kenan-Flagler Business School. Joining me today for the Minority Experience Chat are three first years: Dawn Norvell and Katrina McGhee. Also, we have Megan Godley who is a second year and chair of the Inside Kenan-Flagler event coming up November 13th-15th. Peggy Tate one of the MBA Admissions Assistant Directors and Amrinder Nandha from the Admissions Advisory Board are here as well. First, I will have each student introduce themselves and then questions can begin (please wait until they finish to ask questions).

Dawn_KFBS: Hello Everyone, I a member of the class of 2010. Previously, I worked in non profit management and I'm switching to a career in Brand Management.

Katrina_KFBS2010: Hi, Everybody. I'm a first year student at KFBS. I have a background in actuarial science within the healthcare industry but am switching to a career in marketing.

Megan_KFBS2009: Welcome Everyone. As Anne stated, I am a 2nd Year student concentrating in Marketing and Sustainable Enterprise. I worked in Financial Services for 4 years before coming back to Business School. Look forward to chatting with you all...

Anne_KFBS2010: Questions can begin now.

Meleata: Question for anyone: What most attracted you to KFBS?

Katrina_KFBS2010: There were several things, one of the biggest factors was the depth and variety of KFBS' international opportunities.

Megan_KFBS2009: The Kenan-Flagler culture and community was definitely a key aspect that attracted me to the program. The school also has a strong focus on Sustainable Enterprise - an area of interest. The accessibility of the professors is also great.

Jackie C: Thanks for hosting this chat. Generally speaking, how many African Americans are in any given incoming class?

Peggy T: For this year, we had 6% African American students.

Jackie C: Thanks! Is this a typical amount... are things trending up or down?

Peggy T: Jackie C, our % of minority students, including African American has been relatively consistent. However, increasing our minority representation is an important objective for us each year.

MichelleF: Hello, Dawn, I am currently in non profit management, and I love it, but what made you change your mind to brand management? What about KFBS was attractive to you in terms of brand management?

Dawn_KFBS: I switched because I wanted more general management experience and tools. Brand management provides me with this opportunity as well as allow me to be creative.

Meleata: Katrina - I see that you are a first year - what has been the most difficult adjustment thus far?

Katrina_KFBS2010: Good question. Actually I'd have to say Mod II... the first Mod was very quantitative and matched my background. This current Mod is very different than what I'm used to and it's been a challenge finding time to get everything done.

David: What is the military population at KFBS?

Anne_KFBS2010: David- write to mba_info@unc.edu to obtain the exact number. There is a veterans club at KFBS that works to connect military people. In the first year class I would say there are about 10 people with prior military experience.

Jackie C: What type of support systems exist for minority students?

Megan_KFBS2009: Hi Jackie - there are a number of support systems. The most significant is the Alliance of Minority Business Students (AMBS) organization which is a student run club. I am actually the Vice President this year and we have a number of events throughout the year that support the academic and career objectives of all minority MBA students, while promoting diversity in the broader community.

Brian: Question for anyone: How would you describe the Kenan-Flagler community and culture?

Dawn_KFBS: Brian- the culture at KFBS is open and friendly. Our professors are world class and very willing to help.

Katrina_KFBS2010: In my opinion I find the community at Kenan-Flagler to be very supportive and collaborative. Our class size is big enough to keep things interesting but small enough that I know most of my classmates.

Brian: Sounds great, thanks. Did each of you go through The Consortium?

Megan_KFBS2009: Hi Brian. Yes - Dawn, Katrina and I are all members of the Consortium.

Jonathan S: Question for all is there a Hispanic specific club on campus (e.g. Hispanic Association)? Thank you

Dawn_KFBS: The Alliance of Minority Business Students (AMBS) serves the Hispanic, African American and Native American population.

Candi R: I'm curious as to how the university will encourage greater diversity. Please list a few specifics that are not listed on the website. Thanks in advance.

Dawn_KFBS: Candi, Great Question...KFBS encourages greater diversity through its strong alliances with Consortium for Graduate Study in Management and Management Leadership for Tomorrow(MLT). In fact, this summer KFBS hosted MLT's summer session.

Meleata: Please describe a typical day in the life of a KFBS student.

Anne_KFBS2010: Hi Meleata. It depends on your class times, but for me I am in class from 8-12:20 and then have lunch/club meetings/job search prep until around 1:30. My study group meets for about an hour each day. I normally head home around 4. In the evenings my time is spent studying, preparing cases, and playing intramural sports (or something to get my mind off of school work).

MichelleF: Do you feel that applying to KFBS through the consortium was an advantage?

Katrina_KFBS2010: Yes, I feel that it was a huge advantage for me.

Megan_KFBS2009: Michelle - Yes, I would say it is an advantage regarding the additional network you develop through the Consortium. I do want to clarify that all applicants must submit a separate Kenan-Flagler admissions application/interview even when applying through the Consortium, which is evaluated like that of any other candidate.

Jonathan S: I encourage all to apply through The Consortium. It gives you more opportunities to express yourself and tell your story.

Candi R: Does KFBS have any formal mentoring programs for minority students to promote greater success in the program? (Dawn, thanks for addressing my other question) If so, what is the application process like?

Dawn_KFBS: Candi, you're welcome. Though no formal mentorship program exists the informal network is strong.

Josh B: Hi, first of all, I'd like to say I'm looking forward to a great IKF weekend. I'm wondering if AMBS has any activities/interaction with local corporations and their minority programs.

Megan_KFBS2009 Hi Josh - I'm so glad you will be joining us for IKF! You can find the agenda for the weekend on the Admissions website. You will have an opportunity to interact with several large global corporations that are sponsoring IKF this year (Johnson & Johnson, Deloitte Consulting) in addition to a local company (PlyGem). They will all speak to their diversity initiatives at some point during the weekend.

Meleata: Katrina & Anne: If you had to apply to business school again, what words of advice would you offer about the admissions process, things to consider when narrowing your school choices, etc?

Katrina_KFBS2010: One thing I did that was very helpful was visit all of the schools I was seriously considering. It was a great chance to get a true feel for the campus, students and culture. As for something I would change, I would have applied Round 1 just to finalize the transition to a new location sooner.

Anne_KFBS2010: Meleata the biggest factor for me was to visit the schools I applied to. When I came to KFBS I just knew this was the best fit. The students here are incredibly welcoming, the program is extremely collaborative, and a broad range of resources. It truly distinguished itself from other programs.

Dawn_KFBS: Meleata, I echo Katrina's sentiment... "fit" is very important!

Jackie C: Study time is different for everyone, but can any of you share the length of time you typically devote to studying/projects, etc each day.

Katrina_KFBS2010: It varies depending on the day. On an average day I'd guess about 2-4 hours but sometimes that can sharply increase. I was recently in a case competition and that was also a significant time commitment.

Meleata: Megan, what do you feel is the most important thing you have learned in your business school experience?

Megan_KFBS2009: Meleata - great question. There are so many things I've learned during my time here but, I'll highlight those that stand out the most. First is definitely leadership development - how to really motivate and lead a team/group of people to effectively achieve your goals. Second is how to build an effective network. Third is probably the ability to strategically solve business problems, especially in situations where you have limited data/information. I view business on a much more macro level.

Jonathan S: How much importance does Kenan-Flagler place on career development and placement?

Katrina_KFBS2010: When you first arrive at Kenan-Flagler you'll be given several career assessments to make sure you have a clearer idea of what it is that you're pursuing and how you're going to achieve your goals. Once school starts the CMC offers mock interviews, resume reviews and many company presentations. If you need help in your career search, someone at the CMC will be more than willing to help.

Jackie C: Any insight into how much time is typically devoted each day to studying/class work/projects since KFBS is know for its robust and rigorous program.

Dawn_KFBS: Jackie C. to reiterate Katrina's earlier comment...on average 2-4 hours a day but can change depending on when projects/exams are due. It really depends on your level of understanding of the course material. It sometimes can exceed 4 hours. You will also spend time with your study groups, attending club meetings, etc.

Jackie C: Thanks because in my head I was thinking it would be like law school 6-8 a day.

Meleata: How many of you attended ASW?

Anne_KFBS2010: About 80% of our class (2010) attended ASW. It allows you to get in the school mode again, become settled into life in Chapel Hill, and helps you start to form friendships with your classmates. Also, it made the first module of classes a bit easier. I would highly recommend ASW!

Josh B: Regarding ASW, is there a significant difference between the first and second sessions?

Megan_KFBS2009: Hi Josh – this past summer we offered Analytical tools and Financial Accounting in ASW I and Accounting, Microeconomics, Finance and Analytical Tools in ASW II. Attending one or both sessions really depends on how many courses you would like to take. You can only register for 2 classes each session.

Jackie C: Do the ASW courses go in-depth or merely scratch the surface of key topics?

Anne_KFBS2010: Jackie- the ASW courses bring you up to speed on the basics in the particular subjects offered. If in undergrad you only took one course in economics, then I would take the microeconomics ASW course. I took Analytical Tools, Microeconomics, and Finance. I was an Accounting undergrad and found all 3 courses beneficial.

MichelleF: For anyone, is adjusting to Chapel Hill difficult? How would you say the adjustment was, not just to KFBS, but to the City you study in?

Katrina_KFBS2010: I moved to Chapel Hill from Atlanta and was concerned I would feel a little claustrophobic in Chapel Hill. But I have been pleasantly surprised and my adjustment has been effortless. There are a lot of fun events to keep you busy as well as homework, so as of Mod II I haven't spent much time exploring the town. But I hope to do more next Mod.

Meleata: Megan - I see that you are doing a marketing concentration and that is something that I am interested in as well. What made you decide to do the concentration versus doing the general management?

Megan_KFBS2009: Meleata - I decided to concentrate in Marketing because I really wanted to round out my Finance background. While I am concentrating in Marketing, my focus is still to leave school with a general management skill set. I continue to take other courses. This Mod I, I actually only have 1 Marketing course - in addition to Negotiations, Private Equity and Real Estate. I'm trying to learn in little bit of everything :).

Meleata: As a follow up to above question, Megan - can you also explain how much flexibility there is within the overall program? I've looked at some of the electives that are available and am excited, yet overwhelmed, by all of the choices.

Megan_KFBS2009: Meleata - you're right, there are a lot of choices. That said the program is very flexible. You can really tailor your classes, and the program, to fit what you need and are looking to get out of the program. In fact, it is strongly encouraged that if you choose to concentrate (you don't have to), you continue to take courses outside your area. As fas as choosing which courses to take, I relied on the 2nd year students for guidance, who were extremely helpful. Now I've been returning the favour to 1st years.

Joe: Where is everybody from?

Katrina_KFBS2010: Hi Joe, I'm originally from West Virginia but went to school in Massachusetts and DC and then moved to Atlanta where I was living for the past 7 years until moving to Chapel Hill.

Dawn_KFBS: I am originally from Dayton, OH but I recently moved from St. Louis, MO to Chapel Hill.

Megan_KFBS2009: Hi Joe - I'm from Ohio!

Anne_KFBS2010: I grew up in San Antonio, TX and lived in DC and Nairobi, Kenya before moving to Chapel Hill.

Joe: I'm from California.

Jackie C: The school states that it has strong alumni relations how has this been evidenced during your time at KFBS?

Joe: Yes, I had questions about alumni networks as well.

Dawn_KFBS: Jackie C. So far, the alumni I've encountered have been very supportive. They actively recruit KFBS students for the company's they represent. They also have helped with preparing for interviews.

Jonathan S: If you had the opportunity to study abroad, can you share with me your experience? Is it worth the cost?

Katrina_KFBS2010: Jonathan, are you referencing a Mod or Semester exchange program or a GIE (Global Immersion Elective) program?

Jonathan S: A Semester exchange program

Katrina_KFBS2010: My understanding of the exchange programs is that most don't cost anything extra as far as tuition. You still pay the same tuition to UNC while you're abroad. The only significant difference in cost would be your living expenses.

David: Can anyone elaborate on the Supply Chain Management concentration?

Amrinder_KFBS2009: David: I'm taking the Global Supply Chain Management (GSCM) concentration and we have a chance to take the courses right from the core (required for all students regardless concentration) to the electives such as Supply Chain, Services Operations, Project Management, Management & Operations Modeling classes and some others. Most students at KFBS take GSCM concentration together with another concentration.

David: Great thanks. Would it be feasible to add the MHA as a dual?

Anne_KFBS2010: David. Yes, it is. In our class I am not aware of anyone doing the MHA dual degree, but we do have students doing the dual degree with the Law school, MPH, urban planning, and environmental program at Duke. I believe there are a few in the class of 2009 who are doing the MHA dual degree.

Meleata: Peggy - How are older applicants viewed within the KFBS program? Do they have trouble gaining admissions or getting adjusted once they arrive?

Peggy T: Meleata, we consider all applicants based on their academic background, work accomplishments, leadership experience, and career aspirations. We have students with a range of ages; our average each year is usually 28-30. The adjustment to KF is usually quite a smooth one for all our students.

Brian: Megan, can you talk about your experience in Sustainable Enterprise? Which courses have you taken and how does the program fit with your career goals? I'm also interested in SE. Thanks

Megan_KFBS2009: Hi Brian. There is a Sustainable Enterprise chat on November 19th so I encourage you to join that as well. As for my experience, I've taken a general Sustainable Enterprise course (required for all who plan to concentrate in SE), a Social Entrepreneurship class and a Corporate Social Responsibility course thus far. They have all been great. Eventually, I plan to work for the CSR arm of an organization and also have some entrepreneurial aspirations/plans in community development - focusing on education and mentorship.

Brian: Thanks Megan! I'll make sure to attend the chat on the 19th

Josh B: I'm scheduled to interview at UNC as my Consortium interview. Is there any advice you have about the Consortium interview?

Dawn_KFBS: Josh B. As always be professional and articulate but most importantly be yourself! Also be clear about why you want your MBA.

Meleata: Peggy - Could you also speak about what makes an applicant's essays stand out?

Peggy T: Meleata, the essays that stand out really tell a story--not just what you've done, but a bit more on why and what you have learned. Then you can relate these to why an MBA makes sense and where you want to take your career.

Joe: What are the joys and struggles of the minority experience at UNC?

Jackie C: I too am interested in the response.

Katrina_KFBS2010: Joys - bonding with fellow classmates during the Consortium's OP event and finding a supportive and friendly environment at KFBS from our admissions director, Sherry Wallace, to our fellow classmates.

Dawn_KFBS: Joe, in my opinion the struggles are no different from that of majority students i.e. time management

Jackie C: Megan, have you taken courses by the highly respected Prof. Johnson? If so, what was your class experience like.

Megan_KFBS2009: Jackie - yes, Dr. Jim Johnson is a phenomenal professor (and person in general). I took his Social Entrepreneurship class in Mod 4 this pass spring. The class focused on writing a business plan for various social ventures students were interested in - fascinating. He has a wealth of knowledge and passion in his field. The minority students also had brunch at his home last year and he gave us invaluable words of wisdom. We are planning a similar session this year.

Jackie C: Thanks Megan, I guess the "good" rumours are true! Can you please recommend two books that are essential for social entrepreneurs or those interested in the topic of sustainability?

Megan_KFBS2009: Jackie - The first I would recommend is "Just Good Business" (by Kellie McElhaney). The author is a visiting Professor here from Berkley and I took her class last Mod. If you're interested in Corporate Social Responsibility - good read. Another great book is Cradle to Cradle (by William McDonough & Michael Braungart) which focuses on Environmental and Social Responsibility.

David: Peggy - I'm 20 years in the military, need to strengthen my quantitative, and have done my interview, what else could I do to beef up my application?

Peggy T: David, in addition to strengthening your quantitative skills, be sure your essays reflect your experiences in the military, particularly where you have had a chance to show your leadership or team skills. Of course, strong recommendations that support your qualifications and accomplishments with specifics are a strong addition.

Candi R: Duke is clearly a major competitor and collaborator school. Are there any opportunities to take a few courses there and still receive credit for them at UNC? I read on their site they can do this.

Anne_KFBS2010: Candi. We like to think of them as our friendly competitor. In your second year there are options to take classes at Duke. I think the main issue is coordinating your time and schedule.

Anne_KFBS2010: There are 10 minutes remaining for this chat, so please ask your final questions now.

Joe: What brought you to UNC? What do you wish you had known before coming?

Katrina_KFBS2010: Hi Joe, I was initially interested in UNC because it was a solid program in the Southeast. I looked at several other schools but when I considered my top priorities for business, I came to the conclusion that UNC was the best fit for me. I can't really think of anything I wish I had known before coming. Sorry!

Dawn_KFBS: What brought me to UNC are the collaborative culture and its reputation for graduating strong business leaders with strong communication skills. Honestly, I cannot think of anything that I wanted to know before coming to business school. The one thing I wish I would have done is saved more.

Meleata: Can anyone speak about the partner's program or club - I believe it's called the Kenan Connection? How often are partners/spouses included in group activities?

Anne_KFBS2010: While I am not in this club there is a chat on Jan. 8th to learn more about Kenan Connection. I know they have book clubs, dinners, and other social gatherings. About 30% of my classmates are married and most of their partners are active in the club. Partners are invited to any Kenan-Flagler event and most do attend!

Meleata: Great, thanks! I will be sure to attend the chat.

Jackie C: Are professors at UNC available or must you hunt them down? Some places feature classes largely taught by TAs and students having to "find" their professors.

Dawn_KFBS: Jackie C. Not only are they world class they are approachable. Most of them run class review sessions once a week. In fact, both our Marketing and Accounting professors have held social events at their homes. Also TA's don't teach class but they're available for tutoring.

Jackie C: Here is a tough question and perhaps my final question. If each of you could improve/change the school in one way, what would you do? (i.e. make classes smaller, add certain electives, etc). Thanks Megan for that rec.

Megan_KFBS2009: Jackie - I think the support for those who have off-campus career search can be strengthened. There is an advisory board of students focusing on improving this this year.

Anne_KFBS2010: Thank you all for participating in this chat! You all had great questions. Good luck during the admissions process. If you have any further general questions you can email mba_info@unc.edu. Also, the transcript for this chat will be available next week.