

“Musings of a Wannabe Modern Day Nomad”

By: Joyce Hopkins

February 5, 2017

My path to and through the MA in Educational Technology program at Michigan State has been an unusual and exciting one. In 2012, I was settled in my role in the finance organization at Intel Corporation for 5 years and had started thinking about my life legacy. Never too early for that as tomorrow is never guaranteed! For the prior decade, I had chosen to front load my earning capacity so that I could have more flexibility to pursue my passions for travel, social entrepreneurship, and education later in life. At that point, my projections supported me taking off on a round the world trip followed by a stint in the Peace Corps or MBAs without Borders within a few years' time. Still, I was uneasy about leaving a rock solid job and coworkers I had grown to love. So, when I learned about Intel's Tuition for Teaching program, an amazing benefit that offers tuition reimbursement for employees, retirees, and career switchers pursuing studies in education, I jumped on it.

My original goal in pursuing an education program was to have a more secure bridge connecting my work in corporate America and the uncertain, yet wildly exciting life that I planned would await me traveling overseas. I had a strong feeling that I would somehow find a way to support small business owners throughout my travels as a modern day nomad. I came across the MAET program only after discovering that several teacher certified programs were not what I wanted. I didn't want to be tied to a particular state or school district. I wanted to simply learn how to teach people things I'm passionate about like finance and technology to improve their livelihoods, and I wanted to be able to do that anywhere in the world. I landed on the MAET program only after resorting to googling key terms like “education technology people and passion” to see what else besides teacher certification programs was out there. When I landed on the MAET home page, I thought, “I can't believe something like this exists. This is it!”

As I'm finishing up my final semester in the MAET program nearly 5 year later, I am happy to report that I was right. This program has been a good fit for me and my interests and I'm about to achieve my initial goal of creating that bridge between my work in corporate America and the wildly uncertain and adventurous life I'm pursuing as a social entrepreneur largely thanks to the support of my former employer, Intel. I've learned a lot more theory than expected and have been privy to more struggles of teachers in the public and private school system than I ever imagined. Yet overall, the program has delivered what I was expecting it to, giving me the confidence to attempt to help improve learning outcomes for those in underserved communities around the world, be it first generation college students learning financial literacy or small business owners learning to utilize technology to improve their business outcomes.

Much has changed in my life plans since I embarked on this journey and it has taken longer that I had expected at the outset. I ended up having a baby just a little more than a year into my MAET studies, moved across the country, left Intel, and founded a startup. The Peace Corps and MBA without Borders simply were no longer options given the little one's debut. Becoming a mother has changed me in so many wonderful and unexpected ways, and since then my one goal has simply been to finish what I began back in 2012. So many of my life circumstances have changed, but my desire to be able to teach others to more efficiently manage their finances and businesses has remained a constant until today. Now, on the brink of receiving my MA in educational technology, I feel more equipped to face the challenges ahead having conducted in-depth research and analysis on topics that mean a great deal to me. In each and every class I've taken in this program, I have been able to tailor my projects to fit my unique interests in finance and business. The support I have received as a nontraditional “teacher” has been extraordinary and I could not be more grateful for the experience.

Thank you to the entire MAET community for making this such a rewarding experience!