

Andrew Colannino

Mr. Limbu, WRA 130

March 21, 2014

Choosing Finance as a Major and Career

Introduction

Choosing a major in college is one of the most important things a person does in their career and life. Having to make this choice as a teenager still in high school is a daunting task, which can seem overwhelming. I, as well as many other seniors in high school, had to make this decision last year. I was not exactly sure what I wanted to major in at college but business seemed to share my interest the most. It's a very broad field where people can figure out what subcategories of business they like throughout college and even throughout their career. Some people find what they like in a semester but it takes some other people years. Luckily, I found finance, which attracted me because it involves a good amount of math along with a social business atmosphere, which I enjoy.

Background

Not everyone is cut out for studying business, specifically finance. However, there are certain people that are right for finance and will have a successful career in this field. These people should have the attributes of a leader, along with solid math skills, and be able to act outstandingly in a social environment. These qualities are prerequisites to studying finance. I believe I am suitable for this major because I was the captain of my lacrosse team and enjoyed every second of it, so I have leadership experience. I have great math skills and I am currently in

calculus. I love meeting new people and completely agree with the popular business degree slogan “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” This quote emphasizes the importance and need for the ability to expand your social network and connections in and outside the work field.

What is Finance (Major)?

Getting a finance degree means many things. First, it means you will be studying mathematics, statistical analysis, technology, and ethics. Also, it means you will be using this new knowledge to obtain the use of critical thinking and problem solving skills. Finance degrees have shown to be extremely useful. This is because finance is the backbone of any business. People who study finance will find opportunities in every industry (“Business Majors”). Finance also breaks down into specific studies and careers, such as corporate finance. Specializing in corporate finance is basically managing and trying to improve the way a corporation organizes and spends its money, just at a much larger scale. Corporate finance also means you could be a chief manager of finance for a large industry (CFO), as a “big picture” worker that tries to organize and plan future financial investments for the company. However, you could also be on the low end as a “small picture” worker, doing the taxes and handling multiple spreadsheets of less importance. This all depends on experience and how well educated you are.

Major Specifically at MSU

When narrowing down my options for college, I knew I was going to study something in the business field. Michigan State University stood out for their exceptional business programs. The Eli Broad College of Business is consistently ranked in the top fifty business schools in the country and is only getting better every year. This past year it was even ranked twenty-two by Forbes magazine, one of the most prestigious business magazines in the world (“The Best

Business Schools”). Michigan State has a seemingly endless amount of classes that relate to finance, and companies know that the students from Michigan State will be immediately ready for the work force. Also, as mentioned before, the quote, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know” can really be exploited at Michigan State. What better way to expand your connections and your social network than to live in a community of fifty thousand people that come from all around the world. I have personally heard many stories, usually along the lines of meeting someone here and they can potentially help you land a job in the future. Endless possibilities are present when you know so many people just through the fact that you went to the same university. There are also many business fairs that focus specifically on finance, where hundreds of companies come to look for future interns and employees. There are many classes you have to take during your study at Michigan State to earn your bachelors degree in finance. First, just to get into the business college students must complete multiple prerequisite classes. This includes introductions into accounting, computer science, finance, economics, and a few more. Students must also do fairly well in these classes because the business college only accepts around one thousand applicants per semester. Once students have been accepted into the business school, they can then start taking more focused classes such as Finance 801 where students study investment decisions by firms, value creation, risk and return, pricing models, and financial markets (“Finance Courses”). This writing class, WRA 130, helps advance my studies in finance in many ways. This is because you can have all the facts and spreadsheets you want, but if you cannot express your calculations and findings of a company’s finances in words, then you will never become successful in finance or even business. This class has and continues to help me express my opinions in a clear and decisive way so the reader can properly understand what I am trying to say.

Careers and Goals

Finance is currently ranked the seventh best degree to get to have a lucrative career and that is worth the investment of college. It prepares graduates to compete in a highly competitive, yet financially rewarding employment sector. Average salaries for financial professions are about thirteen percent higher than the national average. The average starting salary for people with a bachelors degree in finance is \$47,500 and the average mid-career pay is \$91,500 (Rapacon). With my degree I plan to get a steady, most likely lower paying job at a company so I can start off my career. With this job I can then get my masters degree in business for free because most companies pay for their employees to go to graduate school (Schoonmaker). Once I get my masters degree I can then really try to work my way up the business ladder and ideally land a position that has me managing other people, maybe even a CFO. This is what I want to happen, but obviously there will be many obstacles and different scenarios that can happen over the course of my career.

How My Major Impacts Society

Obviously, finance is a key role in society. The entire world runs on money, and studying finance can give you an advantage on how to manage and invest that money. Every business, whether it's a family owned pizza shop, Apple, or the United States Government needs people who major in finance to organize, save, and invest their money or else their business will end up in ruins. People who have a finance degree can also help predict the future of a company or government based on their current financial situation and other similar factors, which is very valuable. As well as when crisis in the economy happen, financial professionals are responsible for cleaning the mess up. For example, they can help stimulate the economy and create new jobs by being a major part in writing new measures for government spending, such as the stimulus packages

Americans have seen throughout the recent years.

Finance in the Family

I interviewed my Uncle because he majored in finance and still works in that field today. He attended the University of Texas and graduated in 1988. He went into finance for all the same reasons I did. When he graduated college he said that the market at that time was not very high for finance professions. He admitted that he should have gone to graduate school to get his masters degree. However, he did end up landing a job fairly soon after graduating. He then climbed the ladder in this business and is doing well. My Uncle said that majoring in finance helps you get a job, obviously, but it also helps with everyday life. For example, balancing your bank accounts, 401k, stock investments, mutual funds, etc. is all very difficult to do but studying finance throughout college will give you the tools and knowledge to do this, and a clear advantage over people who do not study finance. He also said that the job market is booming for finance majors but advises me to go to graduate school first because that will more than likely pay off in the long run. (Schoonmaker)

Conclusion

Even though there are many great things about being a finance major, there are some disadvantages. The banking and economic crisis of 2008 obviously hurt everyone, but the financial sector was really struggling after this. With the banks being bailed out they still do not have much money to hire people with financial degrees, which is where a big part of finance majors find jobs. Also, this job field takes a great time commitment. It may not take as many years of schooling as a doctor or lawyer, but for a person with a finance degree to make a salary that a doctor or lawyer would make requires many years of experience as a lower paid

employee. The only part of this degree that I would realistically change is that more companies could hire more unpaid interns, just so these people would then have some experience under their belt and the companies do not have to expand their budget.

Finance is clearly a great degree to pursue if you are looking to make a decent salary but also have the opportunity to have an extremely wealthy living. It may not be the most exciting career to go into but it will more than likely make sure the bills get paid.

Work Cited

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