The Home Stretch

by Jeanine Thompson

Ok all you weary scholars, are you ready to see the end of this semester yet?? At this point, I think that most of us would settle for saying goodbye to this long, dark, cold winter. After surviving record breaking snow falls, stressful world events, ice storms and power outages – what could be left? Oh yeah, finals. At least this semester we have places to study in the Pittsburgh building.

So how do you assess how much work you truly have versus how much work you think you have? Hmm, tricky. It’s easy to underestimate your workload or believe that someone else in your group has picked up the slack on your final projects. In order to assess the damage before you cause yourself problems review the month ahead and list out everything that needs to get done, and then don’t panic. Not only do you want to list out your remaining workload, but carve out some free time for yourself. There are a lot of students finishing up their studies this year, make an effort to find out what they will be doing when they leave. Remember to back up your computer and your data so you don’t lose everything the night before you have to hand in that fateful final project. The great thing about school is that you actually have the feeling of accomplishment when the semester ends, unlike the real world when you may be on a project for a few years.

Good luck with your finals and stay healthy. I wish you the best in finishing the semester.

Reflections on my First Year at the Lally School

by Leonardo Ulloa

I have noticed that the Lally school is fairly receptive when a student gives input with regards to the MBA experience. I have decided to give it some thought and share with everyone what I liked and didn’t like about my experiences as a first-year MBA.

I know there are a lot of mixed feelings about the cohort. Some think that students should have been given the option of choosing their own courses from day 1. Others say that the entire class has been stereotyped a certain way. I don’t know about the rest of you, but I personally was not sure what concentration to take. Hav-
SPOTLIGHT: Jabbar Fagan

This month we’re going to catch up with Jabbar Fagan, a part-time MBA student who started last fall in the Lally School. Jabbar is a database administrator at First Albany Corporation, and he manages to squeeze in two classes per semester toward completing his degree by 2007.

JF: Sustainable Living support group meetings inspired me to pursue course work at Lally. A group of us would come together to discuss approaches to social, ecologic, and economic activities with an eye towards Voluntary Simplicity. Often we would look at traditional business activities and intuitively sense a “disconnect” between executive management teams and the environment or its community. I always left the meetings with a feeling that corporate organizations can contribute significantly to the causes if it expanded its worldview to achieve balance.

I knew “shareholder wealth” provided measurement tools to ensure that organizations perform well from an economic and accounting perspective. So I asked, “Why not expand the definition to help the organization align with sustainable ideals?” Eventually, these ideals may become generally accepted principles and/or law. Perhaps, value can be assigned to these ideals and be accounted for on financial statements. I came to Lally to do this research, fire up my imagination, and those of others.

TT: What has been your favorite course so far?

JF: Managerial and Financial accounting was inspiring because I learned not to forgo common sense for the numeric details. Statistics for Operations Management was perfect, because I am Database Administrator and have an affinity for data. Management Information System is crystallizing concepts of how my life as an Information Technologist is relevant. I am learning a lot of theory in Financial Management and Valuation of Firms, but what I have learned the most is how easy it is to make Professor Randy Norsworthy laugh. Tell him a corny joke or two and forget about it!

TT: Thus far, what has been your greatest challenge in life?

JF: Identifying and embracing my life purpose has not been easy. I avoid it by overindulging in work. I am starting to learn how to meet it head on.

TT: What can the Lally School do differently that you think would improve the Part-time experience?

JF: 1. RPI as a collective whole could re-recognize the importance of part-time students and market a strong vision around this student body. It is an essential responsibility to the community. Due to the premium tuition rates, part-time students should expect scholarly attention.

2. I came to Lally because of its diverse course offerings. The school should continue to build on the diversity, and offer courses that stretch the imagination. For example, I am thinking of taking Chinese 1, 2, and 3 because I think opportunities to do business in China will continue to grow. Any course that teaches us how to systematically change our belief system to get us out of the “rut” is important. To paraphrase Einstein: “Knowledge is limited. Imagination is not”.

3. I would love to know if a program allowing management students to reach out to other schools within/out of RPI exists. I always wondered if there was a way to collaborate with our engineers/scientists and serve as a management resource. This would be a wonderful venture for all and can even be accomplished via a platform similar to the Severino Center.

TT: What is your Can-Not-Do-Without piece of technology?

JF: Ironically, I have never owned a personal computer. I think the soul is the best technology ever. I remember talking to Professor Burke about bringing the idea of inner technology into a management setting. Learning skills of self-nurturing and how to set good limits can help a manager balance the drive to excess. Since I am still trying to understand how, I opted to focus on something less esoteric. I have a feeling the idea will comeback like a boomerang until I find a way to incorporate it.

TT: What do you like most about Lally?

JF: I like Lally’s emphasis on teamwork and cooperation. It is the key to any success I have ever known.
We H@ve Liftoff!

That’s right fellow graduate students! In case you haven’t checked it out (http://www.rpi.edu/dept/mgmt/gmsa/), the new GMSA web site was launched right after spring break. Http://www.rpi.edu/dept/mgmt/gmsa/ We have totally reworked the design of the site and have added areas for expansion for the future. We hope that sometime in the near future the GMSA website will become a central resource to both aid with your class work and leverage the resources of the RPI campus.

Here’s just a brief overview of what we are offering and some ideas about what we might offer in the future:

★ Now we offer basic information about the GMSA including our mission statement, contact information, and upcoming events.
★ The most recent and archived issues of our newsletter starting with the January 2003 issue are available in full color!
★ In the future we will also have a list of important Capital District events such as business plan competitions and job fairs; please e-mail about any events that you know about that should be on this list.

Some other features that are also in the works: mailing list management system — set up mailing lists and file sharing for your groups in each class; a calendar system that not only lists when your classes are scheduled but also shows due dates for assignments in each class; and links to on-campus, Capital Region, and on-line resources that are invaluable to both your coursework and personal life.

Can you think of any more cool features that we should offer? Do you have any comments, ideas, and/or suggestions about the website? E-mail me at dunier@rpi.edu. I look forward to hearing from you and good luck with the remainder of the semester!

An Interview with Professor Jeff Durgee

MBA first year students are taking some time this month to figure out a “plan of study” for our second year. To help with this decision, this month we are profiling Professor Jeff Durgee, whose marketing courses have been highly recommended by both faculty and second year students. Professor Durgee teaches Marketing, Marketing Research and New Product Development and does research on qualitative methods for identifying needs for new products and new brand positioning. His research has been published in the Journal of Advertising Research, Psychology and Marketing, Advances in Consumer Research, the Journal of Product Innovation Management, the Design Management Journal, the Journal of Consumer Marketing and the MSI Working Paper Series. He has consulted on new product development and brand imagery products for Procter & Gamble, Kodak, Coleman Camping Products, O M Scott, Enterprise Rental Cars, the F&M Schaefer Brewing Company, Stolichnaya Vodka, and Hannaford Brothers. He worked in the Creative Research Department at Young and Rubicum in New York and in Marketing Research at RJR Tobacco. Professor Durgee was kind enough to answer a few of my questions about his work:

ED: I know you are researching creativity. Can you give me some details about the research you are doing?
JD: I am a qualitative research methodologist for consumer package goods and services. My research

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What? When? Where?

THIRD GMSA CHILLOUT

Need a break from the end of the semester? Come and enjoy an evening filled with relaxation and free food. Join us at the RPI Student Pub on Thursday, April 24 from 4:30 to 6:30 PM.

This month in April...

☆ **April 4 — April 11: GM Week.** A week filled with lots of activities on campus and lots of free food! For more details go to http://www.union.rpi.edu/gmweek/GMweek.pdf
☆ **April 9: 10:15-11:30am, Paul Sa Lounge, 4th Floor Pitts—Tom Lefevere ‘71, former VP and GM of Intuit, successful entrepreneur, angel investor and venture capitalist is here to give you advice and on your business ideas!!!! Make the effort to meet our Alumni!!**
☆ **April 9: H&SS open forum on the war on Iraq, Sage 3303, 7 — 9 PM**
☆ **April 15: DON'T FORGET TO DO YOUR TAXES!!!**
  ☆ **April 16: Speaker in DMM, DCC 324, Stu Benton, Venture Capitalist**
  ☆ **April 22: American Red Cross Blood Drive, Darrin Great Hall, 11:15 AM — 5:15 PM**
☆ **April 23: Lally School Open House.** Give potential future Lally School students some words of advice. If you are interested in helping, please contact Darcy Kullmann at kullmd@rpi.edu.

Alumni Event Planning

We are currently brainstorming ideas for an alumni event for next year, and we are looking for your input. We would like to plan an event or two depending on resources, schedules and level of interest. Here are the ideas we have:

☆ A golf outing followed by a dinner
☆ A soccer game followed by lunch or dinner
☆ An alumni speaker panel
☆ A wine tasting event
☆ A social, similar to the wine tasting event from last semester but less formal
☆ A reunion where alumni would offer us career advice and information
☆ A "road trip" to NYC or Boston to visit alumni at their places of employment

Some combination of these activities

Please let us know if you have any other ideas by emailing them to armsgd3@rpi.edu by Friday, April 18. We will take all of the ideas and send out a survey before the end of the semester to see which events students are most interested in attending.

Distinguish Yourself In a Tough Market

Are your Interviewing skills as sharp as they need to be in this highly competitive market? Practice makes perfect, please take advantage of the opportunity to polish your story and handle your least favorite questions. Sign Up for a One hours video-taped mock interview and private coaching session with a former human resources manager with GE.
Hello, and welcome back to ‘Faces of Lally Diversity’, the column that seeks to bring us closer to the foundation of our uniqueness. Before we delve into this month’s profile, I would like us to rewind a little and catch up with someone that we missed in last month’s profile. Please meet Rifat Gorener! He is one of our PhD Students currently in the process of wrapping up his Doctorate in Management degree. He hails from Sivas, about 400 miles East of Ankara – Turkey.

Before coming to RPI, Rifat had a BS in accounting and also an MBA. His areas of expertise are Inflation accounting, Finance and international trade. Besides working on fulfilling his degree requirements, Rifat is a successful entrepreneur and cofounder of TurkTel, an IT consulting firm offering Telecom Equipment and Services to medium to large firms in Turkey. TurkTel was founded in 1996 and today has 30 employees most of whom are engineers. You can visit TurkTel at http://www.turktel.net.

In the last issue I promised that we were going to be discovering Croatia represented by Ana Corsic who unfortunately is away at this time. However, after this long winter I thought it might be worth taking a trip to some place where snow is a ‘strange word’ and temperatures hovering around 70 degrees are taken for granted. Where else could I be referring to other than somewhere in the largest of the six continents – Africa.

Our trip will take us across the Sahara to the most populous nation in Africa – Nigeria. This West African country, called home by more than 120 million inhabitants is represented here at RPI by many including Ayo Olayinka, an MS in management student here at the Lally School.

Ayo hails from Ibadan in southern Nigeria where he grew up with three sisters and two brothers. He came to RPI after completing a BA in communication Arts and an MS in Industrial Labor Relations both at the University of Ibadan – Nigeria. The University of Ibadan was founded in 1948, as an external College of the University of London. It was the first university established in Nigeria and remains one of its premier institutions of higher learning. Ayo moved to the US some seven years ago and attended Regis University in Denver, Colorado where he obtained a Master of Business Administration degree in 1999. After a few stops in the corporate arena, he decided to leverage his entrepreneurial spirit and business know-how to create his own Investment and Financial Services Firm called Decencia Associates, Inc. The need to be tech Savvy is the main driver behind his return to school and he says he chose RPI because of its reputation for being a leader in blending technology and business knowledge.

After being exposed to a multitude of cultures in Africa, Europe and the Americas, Ayo appreciates the freedom the US accords people but wishes that moral values played a bigger role in the American society. He also notes that, it’s a shame that Americans don’t travel as much as other nationals because exposure gained through international travel could be a great boost to modern diversity.

Now let’s turn our attention to the land that Ayo and more than a 100 millions others call home. The story of Nigeria is a selfless history of leadership in many areas. Nigeria's citizens are, not surprisingly, serving as the epitome of this leadership globally in the sciences, arts, humanities, sports, diplomacy etc. Nigeria is a massive country of about 120 million people comprising 250 ethnic groups speaking 4000 dialects besides English which is the official language. The most influential of these Ethnic groups are: Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5%. In size, Nigeria is more than two and half times the size of California. The diversity of Nigeria is reflected in its rainbow of creeds and complexions, views and counterviews, stretching from the fringes of the desert in the North to the Atlantic waters in the South. Nigeria is located in Western Africa, bordering the Gulf of Guinea, between Benin and Cameroon and to the north by the Niger and Chad. The country is divided into 36 states plus the Abuja Federal Capital territory and is 50 percent Muslim, 40% Christian and 10% indigenous believers.

With one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, Nigerians are their own harshest critics, loudly establishing organs to make sure they are heard. The country has the largest and most vocal press in Africa, publishing views and opinions freely expressed. However, while debates are impassioned and views varied, Nigerians largely remain united in a single, unsnwering thread: ONE NIGERIA. It is this oneness that has been the guiding posts of Nigeria since independence even as it embarked upon state creation exercises in a bid to perfect its federal structure. Like the United State, Nigeria has a federal system of government. The country gained independence from its British colonial masters on October 1st 1960 and has gone through many phases of defining and redefining itself. The country’s legal system is based on English common law, Islamic Shariah law (only in some northern states), and traditional law. Niera has seen its share of political instability and military rule but has since the late 90s returned to democratic rule. The current president is Olusegun OBASANJO.
Faces of Lally Diversity

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who is both the chief of state and head of government.

As part of the United Nations the country is always very committed to peace keeping activities in Africa and around the world. Today, Nigeria leads the world in international peacekeeping. Of the 80 countries contributing troops to over 20 global operations, Nigeria has more than 6,500 men keeping the peace outside its borders in places such as Bosnia, Herzogovenia, Iraq, Kuwait, Western Sahara, Liberia, Angola, Rwanda.

Nigerian troops have also served in Somalia, Mozambique and Cambodia, The Congo, Chad, Lebanon, India, Pakistan (Kashmir). The key aspect in global peacekeeping is the men and women risking their lives in the interest of peace. Nigeria has more of those people than any other country in the world.

There are more than 18 million students in Nigerian schools at all levels. That is more than the total human population of South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Egypt, Morocco, Tanzania and the school population of France, Britain and Spain. The country adopted a 6-3-3-4 educational policy in 1982. The policy requires six years primary education, a two-tier (3-year junior, 3-year senior) secondary education and four years of University education. There are 31 universities in Nigeria today. Apart from fully funding primary education all around the country, the government also runs secondary schools, and funds technical colleges, polytechnics and universities in all 36 states of Nigeria. In addition, there are hundreds of privately-owned schools duly approved by government for the benefit of those who prefer to send their children to private schools. While literacy rate stands at about 58 per cent, one of the highest in Africa, the goal of Nigeria is to eradicate illiteracy in the shortest time possible.

Nigeria has made its mark in global sports competition too. Its national soccer team, the Super Eagles, is adjudged one of the best in Africa and one of the top twenty in the world. The super Eagles won the soccer gold medal at the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996. Nigeria won the first World Cup in the under-16 category in China in 1985 and came second in the same category two years later in Canada. Its Under-20 soccer team won the bronze medal in the Junior World Cup competition in the Soviet Union in 1985 and the silver medal in Saudi Arabia in 1989. In the 1994 World Cup competition, Nigeria led its group to qualify for the second round. Nigeria's athletes have also won Olympic medals in long jump, 400 x 4 relay and several other track and field events. Dozens of Nigerians are today professional athletes in Europe and America. A perfect example is the former NBA Great Hakeem Olajuwon. He hails from Nigeria and at the top of his game he was arguably one of the top basketball players in the world.

Oil is today the bedrock of Nigeria's economic development, accounting for more than 80 per cent of its foreign exchange earnings. Nigeria's oil reserves are the ninth largest in the world. In 1997 estimates placed Nigeria's crude oil reserves at about 20 billion barrels. Nigeria is a member of OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), with one of their citizens serving a record sixth term as Secretary General of OPEC. Nigeria also has vast largely unexplored natural gas reserves, the world's fifth largest. However, the country sensing the dangers of over-depending on the oil sector has resorted to promoting agriculture and encouraging manufacturing. Various schemes have been established to assist farmers at every level, resulting in impressive cutbacks in Nigeria's food import bills while changes in Nigeria's industrial policy are encouraging foreign participation in manufacturing.

In Nigeria, the rich African culture is manifested in art, dance, language, folklore, music, governance, and even the environment. In their books, world renowned writers such as Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka also tell marvelous tales about Nigerian culture. Nigerians take pride in what they wear. Their flamboyant traditional outfits made out of mostly hand woven fabric come in countless styles and shapes. Attend a Nigerian wedding and you would catch yourself stamping to the beat of the 'high-life' music. Ayo recommends a visit to Nigeria when you feel the need for adventure and also want to experience the untouched ‘face’ of nature. He says Nigerians by nature always have an ‘open door’ and be prepared to eat a heavy meal because culturally, sharing is heavenly.

Case Competition

If you are interested in refining your skills in case study contact Jeanine thompsj@rpi.edu
Reflections on my First Year at the Lally School

(Continued from page 1)

ing classes in Finance, Economics, Product Development, Strategy, Information Systems, Operations, and Human Resources as requirements has allowed me to consider concentrations that did not cross my mind before coming here. And face it, isn’t it nice to be able to talk about net present value of growth opportunities even if you have no interest in investment banking whatsoever?

No one can argue how easy it has been to form study groups for assignments, exams, or take-home finals or how simple it has been to ask your next-door neighbor for class notes whenever you miss class. The cohort has allowed us to reach a point where we know who takes the better notes, who copies everything that is said, or who copies the same lecture slides onto PowerPoint in class. I know, for instance, that if I mention who likes to play devil’s advocate or who has a tough time getting to the main point in class, most of us first-years will know who I am referring to. This may be a little scary. But think about how much we have learned from one another and how grateful we have been to gain perspectives of different regions of the world through simple conversations.

On the negative side of things, I feel that certain students who come with a Masters in Economics, for example, should not be required to take basic Microeconomics. Instead, they should become TA’s or lead optional discussion sessions so students can gain a different viewpoint other than the one given by the instructor. I am sure the master students would find leading study sessions much more rewarding than having to study the same concepts all over again.

I also believe that there should be an optional course in the spring semester. Some of us, for instance, would have liked to take a course in our first year that could have further exposed us to radical innovation, like Commercializing Advanced Technologies. I know of some students who may be getting internship opportunities and would have found this class helpful. Furthermore, radical innovation is a big buzzword at the Lally School, but I guarantee that over half of the first-years do not even know what it means.

As far as classes are concerned, I think the first year should be the perfect opportunity for professors to sell their class so that other students end up pursuing the concentration those classes are under. I have had great professors and insightful courses this year. Some professors, however, are not trying hard enough. For instance, I have heard some students who were RPI undergrads say they are taking the same course all over again as MBA’s. Maybe these professors should analyze whether something needs to be done to the course so that these students find motivation to go to class. Still other professors may have heard in the past their course has not fulfilled expectations for the majority of students, yet they fail to meet those needs and modify their syllabus.

GMSA has discussed the idea of allowing students to see how courses have been rated by students. This is how it was in my undergraduate school, and I don’t see a problem with that. I think this will make professors more receptive as to how their classes are being viewed and whether a different approach should be taken. Some professors may think this will create a more competitive environment. I personally feel it is a perfect opportunity for them to learn from one another. Our GPA’s are made public in resume books, and that has not made the best students more competitive, has it?

Despite my recommendations, I have truly enjoyed my experience at Lally. I remember talking to a Lally MBA before coming here. He said the experience would depend on what you make out of it. I hope for your sake you have made the most out of it. Two years go by more quickly than you think. If not, ask the second-years.
The Graduate Management Student Association, also known as GMSA, is run by students who were elected by their peers to serve the graduate business school community at the Lally School of Management and Technology. We are continuously looking to improve and meet the high expectations of our classmates as well as the faculty and staff of the school. Through this newsletter we hope to inform and prepare our classmates with information to help equip their educational experience. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Lally business school or the Institute. We thank you for your interest and hope that you find our newsletter worthy of your time.

If you should have any questions or concerns please contact Tauseef Ansari, the Communications Chair.

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contains ways of identifying latent needs for new products and services and creatively turning those needs into new products and services. I am currently working on a book about ways to research consumers to find these types of needs. Right now, I am asking creative in different fields - product development, advertising, motion pictures - basically how they come up with content. For example, we had a young ad creative in the branding class last night and he said, "I first look at the item to be advertised - then I move my mind as far away from it as possible, and start thinking of words and images I might connect back to the item". The class exercise was how to advertise a new product - an office waste basket which is also a shredder - and he said his mind traveled to many different areas: e.g., what if the papers weren't shredded? What about the other people in the user's life? What about movies? The result was a clever "James Bond" type of ad.

**ED: What are some of the details of the work you do outside of teaching?**

**JD:** Companies occasionally ask me to do qualitative research to identify the rational and emotional underpinnings for their products. These are used to develop new product designs and new ads or retail designs. Oddly, companies often introduce something which is a huge hit and they don't know what they did right! So I will interview consumers to find out. Hannaford, for example, recently designed a new layout for their produce section they call the "Festival Concept." It has a nice country market feeling with a lot of space, random walkways, trees, the whole bit. I wanted to know how women would feel moving through the space so we did interviews of a troupe of modern dancers. They first danced in the space, then I interviewed them later for their impressions. They had great insights about the mood and layout which Hannaford will use in designing future supermarkets.

Interested in finding out more about Professor Durgee's research? He will be working on research here over the summer and is teaching Marketing Research in the fall.