

Darla Moore School of Business
University of South Carolina

Full-Time **MBA Programs**

International MBA • Accelerated MBA



Project Profile:
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IMBA Class of 2011

Company: Medical Accounting Systems Software, Inc

Location: Manati, Puerto Rico



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Journal Entry #1

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Fast! The first word that comes to mind as I think about my first year in the IMBA program. I can't believe it's been almost a year since I started this journey back in South Carolina. The fast paced six months in the core, the process of moving abroad and learning another language, searching for internships in this economy, and of course, the realization that I would be moving every four to six months for the next year and half. I didn't realize how exhausting and exhilarating it would be, but in the past year I have lived in South Carolina, Spain and now Puerto Rico.



My time in Spain was, to say the least, incredible. The opportunity to spend four months immersing yourself in another country as a student and not just a tourist is incredible. During my time in Spain I was fortunate enough to be able to ski in the Pyrenees, watch a running of the bulls in Ciudad Rodrigo, and spend two and a half weeks traveling to Dublin, Paris, Heidelberg, Berlin, Prague and Rome. A truly unforgettable experience and a perfect way to end my European adventure before heading back across the pond to start the next phase of the IMBA program.



Before my next entries, I would like to tell you a little bit about myself, and how I landed an amazing internship opportunity in Puerto Rico. I graduated from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 2006 with a degree in Aviation Business Administration, and a concentration in Airline Management. After graduation, I worked as a Senior Financial Analyst for a Phoenix-based airline, as well as a Senior Analyst for an Aviation Consulting firm in Washington D.C. After the downturn in the economy I, like many other friends, decided it was a

great time to start my long desired goal of obtaining an MBA. USC met my criteria for its

International reputation and the ability to study abroad in Europe. I then began a two-year journey, which has given me many new and exciting experiences.

From the first day of the core, the office of Career Services advocated for us to start looking for our internship. Networking was the key word, and for me I couldn't agree more. Originally I thought I wanted to stay in the Aviation Industry for my internship as that is where my future goals, expertise and contacts are, but then I realized this is a rare opportunity to expand my knowledge and explore the option of working in another industry after graduation. So I used my network and contacted a friend from undergrad who works for a software company in Puerto Rico and started talking about internship opportunities. Before I knew it I accepted an offer and am now interning in marketing and operations for Puerto Rico based Medical Accounting Systems Software (MASS), a software company that specializes in healthcare information systems.

Everything fit perfectly. I could work in a new industry, continue learning Spanish, and spend the summer on a Caribbean Island. If you have ever visited Puerto Rico then you know why in Spanish it is referred to as *La Isla del Encanto*, the Island of Enchantment. One of my favorite parts of being here is the people, referred to as *Boricuas*. They have such an affinity for enjoying life and with a culture that centers on the influence of music, they truly know how to enjoy all that comes to them and relax! A trait I hope to learn while I'm down here!

Puerto Rico is located in the North Caribbean Sea and is a territory of the United States, which basically means it belongs to the USA but is not part of the USA. This also means that US Federal Laws apply to Puerto Rico, but they do not have voting representation in Congress. More on how this affects operations in our industry later. *Hasta la próxima!*

Journal Entry #2

Already four weeks in and I am finally starting to feel more comfortable working in Spanish. When I was studying in Spain, I knew there would be many differences from the 'most pure' Spanish (as the Salmantinos refer to it), to the Spanish here in Puerto Rico, but it's been a much harder transition than I thought. Some days I feel like I'm learning Spanish all over again! Lucky for me, there are a few people in the office who speak fluent English, so I'm not completely stuck, and I think I'm catching about 50% of the meeting, which feels great!



As with any new job, the first few weeks are, in general, fast paced with learning about the new company, and slow in terms of actually being put in charge of a project. The great part about a small company is that doesn't apply. When I first sat down with my managers, I was told that they would like help with two projects, the first being an expansion plan into the States and the second would be to help with marketing here in Puerto Rico. With that, I then received a day of orientation, in which I learned all about Electronic Health Record's, the newest government healthcare regulations specifically for software development companies, and the current and future goals of my company, Medical Accounting Systems Software. Of course I thought this was very exciting until I remembered I have no experience in the Health Care Industry, and my marketing classes aren't exactly what I count on to boost my GPA. Thankfully, I have a wonderful sister who works in the marketing department for a healthcare manufacturer, and she has helped me out tremendously.

Within the first two weeks, I helped the company get ready for and attended a Health Information Exchange Summit in San Juan. The summit had many high level government officials presenting from both here in Puerto Rico and the United States explaining the new direction of healthcare and the regulations regarding the HITECH Act (part of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act signed by President Obama in 2009). This summit gave me some great insight into understanding the role our company plays on a large scale in the healthcare industry, and how we can make a niche in this fast paced, high growth industry for the future. I'm now neck deep in research for my expansion plan and working on redesigning the company website, which so far, are both very exciting projects. I'll update you about how these both go in my next post.

As expected living and working on a Caribbean Island has been an absolute blast. The social adjustment is fairly easy since many of my friends from undergrad are Puerto

Rican, and a majority of them are now working here on the Island. In fact one of my friends got married last week and I got to attend my first wedding in Spanish, which I found is a perfect way to experience another culture. So most of my first few weeks were spent getting back in touch with old friends and visiting what I call 'my second family' down here. Oh, and I finally got to experience my first earthquake, which I thankfully slept through!

The rest of the summer is looking very exciting as I have some friends visiting in the beginning of July, and towards the middle of July Puerto Rico is hosting the Central American and Caribbean Games. The games are similar to the Olympics but only include countries in Central America, Caribbean, Mexico, Bermuda, and a few South American countries. *¡Viva Puerto Rico!*

Journal Entry #3

So I must say, I love being here in Puerto Rico, but as I watched Spain dominate the World Cup, I can't help but wish I was back there celebrating Spain's first world title with all the locals. What an event that must have been. Maybe we can get that feeling in four years in the US! I know, hopeful! For now, I get to enjoy the Juegos centroamericanos y del Caribe (Central American and Caribbean Games), being hosted here in Puerto Rico! Although I haven't had a chance to attend one of the events yet, I have been able to cheer on Puerto Rico with my close friends. In fact, one of my friends ran with the torch through his home town of Pastillas, very similar to running with the torch for the Olympics. The games run until the end of July so hopefully I get a chance to attend one of the events.



Earlier this month, my boyfriend came to visit and I got the chance to show him a part of Puerto Rico that most visitors never get a chance to experience, it also gave us a great chance to do more touristy stuff that I don't typically do in Puerto Rico anymore. One of the highlights to his trip down here was kayaking to a bioluminescent bay in Fajardo on the east coast of the Island. The bay is filled with

these micro-organisms that glow in the water when disturbed, so every move we made with the kayak, our hands, and even our paddles made the water glow! Fajardo is about 45 minutes west of San Juan and is also very close to El Yunque Rainforest which has amazing waterfalls and some of the best views of the east side of the island. The hiking here is amazing. The rest of the long weekend was spent being locals with my good friends and sharing the best parts about living on an Island. This included visiting one of my favorite towns on the west coast called Boquerón. This town has a great night life and is the best place to find fresh oysters on the Island. We then went a little farther

north towards Rincon to have Piratas, an delicious rum drink mixed with fresh coconut juice, and watched a beautiful sunset. Food and drink, mixed with relaxing on the beach with good friends, just another weekend in Puerto Rico!

In between all the fun and living the Island life, I fit in work. So far things are going very smoothly and in about two weeks I will be presenting my business plan for expansion to the head honchos of MASS. I'm pretty excited to report the results of my research to expand the company and look forward to their opinions of my analysis. As I stated before this is a small company, so this analysis has giving me the freedom to take control and complete as I felt necessary. So while I'm very excited, I'm a little nervous to see if they agree with the direction I see this company heading in the future. I'll let you know the outcome in my final blog.

I also mentioned in my last blog that I was to help with marketing in Puerto Rico. So far, with extensive help of our graphic designer, I have redesigned many of the pamphlets that are given to prospective and current customers. I also implemented a quarterly newsletter that updates current clients on industry and company news, helping them with the rapidly changing healthcare industry. My final feat this summer was the successful re-design of our Web site in both Spanish and English. Our old Web site was created in the 90s and never updated, which means that our best marketing tool and salesman was outdated by 20 years! So after about a month and a half of hard work we have the skeleton of the new site. The next step is to update all the information, which if you ever built a Web site, takes a long time. I hope to be able to launch the new Web site before the end of my internship and show you all what I've been working on. Thanks for reading and I look forward to sharing the final days of my internship with in my last post.

Journal Entry #4

Well it's been one amazing summer in the Caribbean. Although the last two weeks were a bit hectic with finishing up projects and loose ends at work, I made sure to take time to enjoy my favorite qualities of living within a Spanish culture, relaxing and enjoying life with new and old friends. Of course all good things must come to an end so it's off to Colorado for some down time with my family, and then back to Columbia to start the fall semester. Which means I get to see all my friends, start classes, and of course... football games!

First, I would like to say that I am so thankful to everyone at MASS for the patience, the mentoring and the overall great time I had working for this company. This internship has been a great learning experience, both professionally and personally, and I have had an absolutely amazing summer. I presented my final project, the expansion plan, on my last day of work and I have to admit I was more than relieved to have completed such a large project in such a short period of time and excited knowing how much I had learned over the summer. It's still fairly early for them to make a final decision on what state they will expand to, but I'm confident that my suggestions will help develop the future of their company.

As part of the expansion plan and the marketing role I played for the summer, I worked on ways to increase the visibility of MASS. Conveniently, the U.S. government has granted money for Regional extension Centers (RECs) all over the U.S., Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, that will educate healthcare professionals on the newest healthcare laws. These RECs pick a few Electronic Health Record (EHR) Companies that exhibit the best technology for the future in healthcare, and recommend the companies to professionals to adopt in their practices. On my last day of work I found out that the Request for Information that I worked on for the Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands REC, placed 1st out of 237 vendors! This opportunity will catapult MASS as a leader in EHRs in the Caribbean. We couldn't have asked for better advertising. So, with the great news on placing first and the good reception from my final project, with a sigh of relief I can say it has been a very successful summer!

From everything I have learned this summer, one of the most valuable experiences I will take with me is that my heart and mind are dedicated to the aviation industry. So, while I have thoroughly enjoyed learning about healthcare from a technological standpoint and working in such an advanced industry, my admiration for aviation drives me back to the troubled airline industry. I will now enter my last year of the IMBA program with high hopes that the aviation industry will have a good year, and start hiring again right around graduation time!

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