

ALOHA SPIRIT IS GOOD BUSINESS

If you're ever looking for Ashley Williams, you can probably find her in a local coffee shop making new friends.

"I love this—sitting down and talking to people," the MBA candidate proclaimed. "In my free time, you'll honestly find me in coffee shops, talking to people. I have a genuine love for people. It's just that aloha spirit. It's very cliché, but it's so true."

Williams credits her love of people and interest in business to her Hawaiian upbringing. Growing up, her mom was a "power businesswoman," and she aspired to be just like her mom.

"I had always wanted to be a businesswoman growing up, but I don't think I understood what that meant," she said. "When I was a child, my mom would take me and my sister to her office, and we would just play office."

Williams got a better idea of what it meant as an undergraduate student at Syracuse University, where she played volleyball on scholarship and majored in Supply Chain Management.

"My brain is naturally looking for efficiencies and looking at the big picture," she said. "Thanks to a passionate teacher... and my competitive nature, I fell in love with supply chain."

She secured an internship with Pratt & Whitney, an airplane manufacturer based in Connecticut. The internship turned into a job, and she lived in Connecticut for three years before deciding to reevaluate her career path and move to Texas.



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Williams followed in her little sister's footsteps and went to a discipleship school focused on starting churches. After completing the program, she opted for graduate school.

"For me, I had to realize that you can radically love Jesus and be a businessperson," Williams said. "I didn't think you could do both. I want to bring the best skillset to ministry or nonprofit—whatever I go into later. Right now, that means learning everything I can in the season that I'm in."

She applied and got accepted to the Baylor full-time MBA Program. Unfortunately, deciding to pursue an MBA wasn't the only life-changing event in the summer of 2016. She lost her mom to pancreatic cancer a few weeks after she was supposed to start classes.

"I spent the summer at home with my dad just sorting things out and figuring out how to grieve," Williams said. "I actually contemplated not coming to Baylor, but one of my mentors really challenged me. He said, 'Are you going to give up what the Lord has called you to do based on what your circumstances are right now?' I said, 'No, sir.'"

With the support of those around her, Williams arrived at Baylor in the fall and excelled. She did well in classes, competed in the Business Ethics Forum MBA Case Competition, and secured an internship at the John Deere headquarters in Illinois.

"[John Deere has] a great culture," she said. "It's a great company. Anywhere you go it's about the people you meet... and I was like, 'These are my people!'"

The people in Moline, Illinois agreed. She will resume her supply chain management career at John Deere after she graduates in May.

"[Eventually,] I want to be a chief operating officer somewhere," Williams admitted. "It took me a while to actually say it out loud. It's a terrifying feeling because what if I don't make it? Then, I tell myself, 'Ashley, it doesn't matter. Just go for it.'"

That's just what she's doing. Ashley Williams is going for it.

bbr.baylor.edu/ashley-williams

ASHLEY WILLIAMS
MBA CANDIDATE '18

WACO, TEXAS