

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

Speaker 1:

Saint Leo 360, a 360 degree overview of the Saint Leo University community.

Greg Lindberg:

Welcome to another episode of the Saint Leo 360 podcast, this is your host, Greg Lindberg. And on this particular episode, we are talking about the Doctor of Business Administration here at Saint Leo University, also known as the DBA. And so I have a few students who have been nice enough to join me here on the podcast. And so first off, I'd like to introduce Jordan Hutchison. Jordan, welcome to the podcast.

Jordan Hutchison:

Glad to be here.

Greg Lindberg:

Sure, thanks so much for joining us. So I just have a few questions here about how you came to Saint Leo, your experience in our DBA program, what you're currently doing careerwise and maybe potential goals in the future.

Jordan Hutchison:

For sure.

Greg Lindberg:

So first off, if you could just still introduce yourself as far as your background, where you're from family, whatnot.

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah, so I'm originally from Alabama but currently live in Atlanta. And so yeah, I found out about the DBA program from a good friend of mine actually, was a former business partner with the former president here, Dr. Lennox. And so when I was looking all over at different programs, he told me, he's like, hey, you should take a look at this school, spoken very highly about it and so I came down here and went on a visit and everything was great ever since then, it kind of really narrowed down my decision-making.

Greg Lindberg:

Wow, interesting. It is a small world out there, it's funny how those connections come full circle.

Jordan Hutchison:

Very small.

Greg Lindberg:

And talk to me about your previous education, where did you go before Saint Leo?

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah, so I actually played against Saint Leo in my undergrad. I played basketball at The University of Montevallo, which is in, a division two school in Birmingham, Alabama. And then after there, I went to The University of Alabama, which most people know for the great football team, and so I taught personal finance there while I did my graduate work and actually tutored the football team.

Greg Lindberg:

Wow, interesting.

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah, many good stories from those days.

Greg Lindberg:

Oh, I'm sure. Yeah, yeah, very cool. And then, so you said you did actually visit the campus here at Saint Leo before actually enrolling then?

Jordan Hutchison:

I did, and so it was actually like perfect weather. The time I came down and it was, I think it was actually like freezing in Atlanta at that time and so having just the beautiful weather in it warmer, it was like, this would be a great place to visit every so often for class, I can't complain.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, yeah. And let's see here then, what did you actually major in for your undergrad?

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah, so my undergrad was Psychology and then my master's at Alabama was Financial Planning.

Greg Lindberg:

I see, and have you always had a business interest so to speak, would you say?

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah, so just from what I currently work in, the business side of things and especially the business management piece of it, management was always an interest of mine, just how that works with people and then even more narrow if you look at the organizational behavior side.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, I see. And then when did you actually enroll with us here in the DBA program?

Jordan Hutchison:

So I am coming to the end of my second year. So it will be almost two years ago, is when I started. And it was exciting time for sure, the way to start the year off.

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

Greg Lindberg:

Definitely, yeah, and in general terms, can you talk about your experience in the program and how it's been for you?

Jordan Hutchison:

So the program has actually been great. I always tell people that I've learned so much because we do so much on the statistical side that, just working in finance, having that just refreshment and also even more in depth on the data analysis and statistics, that's the way so many things in the industry are going towards, that it's just great to have that ability but all my professors have been so helpful, being able to reach out. Even though it's online, they've been so interactive and of course working with my cohort, I've created a pretty tight bond with a few of us, we've teamed up and we know where each other live and what part of the city. And actually one of them lives in Atlanta with me and not too far away, he lives in Marietta, and so we've kind of have the traditional side where we'll go over, do our homework together, different things like that, just to keep us focused because it's not an easy process but we both enjoy it.

Greg Lindberg:

Interesting, yeah, so even though this is primarily an online program with occasional colloquiums and whatnot for students, it is interesting that you have someone face-to-face you can really work with and support each other.

Jordan Hutchison:

I always recommend that piece to people whenever they're starting, like currently we're in the colloquium right now and some of the newer cohorts are coming through and I tell them, I said, network, meet some people that you get along with well that will hold you accountable but also push you because sometimes life happens and it gets hard because it's definitely a tough program but I mean, it's a doctoral program, what do you expect? And so that's, you wouldn't feel like you earned it if it was something that everybody could get and it was so easy. So definitely make those relationships, it makes it even more beneficial.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, right. Let's talk about specific classes and faculty members within the DBA program. What has stood out to you in this program in terms of those two areas?

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah, so going in, I always had the interest on the organizational behavior side and actually Dr. Mac, she has been a great professor for me, just, she was actually my hardest one. She was actually the one that gave me the lowest grade in the program so far.

Greg Lindberg:

Right.

Jordan Hutchison:

... But she's probably been my favorite professor so far because of the few classes I've had with her. She's been so helpful just with spending time. I mean, I remember vaguely that most people would say

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

like, professors aren't going to spend that much time with you. Well, it's not the same here whereas she spent a whole day, Saturday. I think I probably talked to her two hours on a Saturday just about statistical research trying to get mine narrowed down. I mean, I couldn't ask for a better professor to student relationship because that, most people don't want to spend their Saturday sitting, talking about statistical research of course.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, right, interesting. And any specific classes, projects, collaborations with other students stood out to you?

Jordan Hutchison:

I'll say in the most recent one, we were in a Strategic Decision-making and Strategic Planning class and the professor let us pick any company we wanted. And so of course, the guy that I was paired up with, he actually used to be the tennis coach at Florida State many years ago before going into the business world and so of course he's a big sports fan. And so we were looking at the different, companies couldn't make a decision on something we enjoyed but we actually ended up choosing the NFL and so that was, with just all the different things going on in the sports world, they have the collective bargaining agreement. It was just fun to actually do a strategic plan for the NFL, considering we look at it and watch the sport all the time but it was different to look at it from a business side. So that, I thought that was pretty fun-

Greg Lindberg:

Very cool-

Jordan Hutchison:

... Project, yeah.

Greg Lindberg:

Yeah. And to just have that flexibility of choosing any company, that's pretty neat.

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah.

Greg Lindberg:

As far as the online format, I know there are obviously some challenges to an online program versus being in a classroom where you have that instructor that you can really look at and make eye contact with, just go up and talk to, talk to me about your strategies as far as how you approach an online program and how you've been successful in it.

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah, even though I'm probably would fall into, as one of the younger ones in the program, I prefer the traditional, at least I thought I did, just because I liked that human interaction but the online really has been a good experience and something that, what I was speaking to earlier is just developing those relationships with your classmates has been huge because now we can text and call and you can do a Google Hangout however you want to talk, to see each other to hash out an idea or to work together.

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

Those have all been so helpful to the whole online class format. And so many of the professors are, I mean, you have the full professors in there speaking today, talking about here's my cell phone number, text me whenever you have a question. And just having that access has made the online experience so much better than what you would assume that you're watching a video and then you're stuck there reading a book or watching a video, which would sound miserable but you actually have a good bit of interaction with them.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, I see. So you say you would feel, you'd say you felt very connected to your professors and classmates?

Jordan Hutchison:

For sure.

Greg Lindberg:

Nice, yeah. What kind of advice would you give to someone considering a doctoral program, maybe specifically a DBA program like this one?

Jordan Hutchison:

I'll tell you the joke I always make people when they ask me, because I work in finance and they're like, Jordan when in the world do you have time to do this because it seems very time consuming? And it is but I always tell people don't do it for the vanity of it. Yeah, it's going to be amazing whenever I can say, hey, I have doctor in front of my name, but I always recommend that if you're passionate about it, find a professor or a program that has that department or professor that's researched that and has that amount of interest in it. Definitely getting to meet some of those professors and what their interests were on that visit really made me feel comfortable that what I was wanting to do and wanting to go on that journey really connected with them.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, I see, and then can you speak to, how would you say this program has benefited your career and specifically the work that you do now and perhaps even in the future?

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah, so I work in an interesting area. I work in behavioral finance and behavioral economics, which is, it's just now become an actual thing. It's more or less, you're looking at the financial world and investing from a psychology lens. So it's blending those two things together and it's a lot of it, was just heavy research based and so now it's becoming more of applied. And so with the program, it's really taught me a lot of how can I look at what the academics are researching and what people are truly getting into the weeds are from an academic level and how do I actually apply that into a real business setting? And so it's been extremely impactful. And of course, like the statistical side, I said, that's the way the industry with data analytics is going and no matter what role you play in what company, it's going to become more and more important. So having those 12 plus hours of statistical research is just very impactful for my job.

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

Greg Lindberg:

Right, and as far as career goals, are there certain goals once you complete the DBA? Maybe have a little more time to work on some other things or whatnot. What kind of goals do you have?

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah, when I have a little bit more time... I do have a 11-month-old right now running around the house.

Greg Lindberg:

[crosstalk 00:11:53].

Jordan Hutchison:

So if it wasn't for my wife, definitely being very supportive with all this, I couldn't do it. I'll always say that she'll probably earn three fourths of this doctorate because she allows me the time to work on it but definitely one of the goals is I do want to teach at some capacity, probably be an adjunct professor maybe or definitely take that later in the career to be a full-time professor or instructor but my next step would be really to just understand that research side that I've learned and how to apply it working in the behavioral finance world.

Greg Lindberg:

I see, very nice. And I'm curious, did you always envision yourself getting a doctoral degree thinking back or how has that played out?

Jordan Hutchison:

So that was an idea that, one of my dreams that I always wanted just because I've found out that I had a passion for the learning and teaching and motivating people. And so it wasn't a young idea that I had, it was definitely something that I toyed with for many years working in the financial world and talked to a couple of friends that had PhDs that were working in their industry or what and finding the DBA program was actually just a great thing because I didn't have to leave my job. I loved what I was doing in finance but didn't want to have to quit everything and go get a PhD and spend five years doing research and working at a university and just have to give up a career that I've been working at for 10 plus years. And so it hadn't been an idea until I found the DBA structure. So I've been very lucky and blessed to find it.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, and I'm also curious how meaningful do you think it will be once you do collect that diploma, complete the DBA program, to be able to have DBA after your name and have that on your resume?

Jordan Hutchison:

I think it'll be definitely impactful. That was what one of the professors was talking about today, that the percentage of people that have doctorate degrees, it's extremely, extremely small. I think she was saying something like 1% of people actually complete a doctoral program. And so I think it would be very impactful for my career and it, just as a personal achievement, I think it's going to be huge. I've already talked to people, my cohort and my wife about we're going to take a nice long trip after this but definitely I think it will be a great, just to have that on your resume is impressive that you went through

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

that journey and that you've been given skills on just a research and how to apply academic research. I think that that could be impactful in so many industries.

Greg Lindberg:

Very nice, yeah, very well said. All right. So again, we've been speaking with Jordan Hutchison, who is a student in our DBA program. And Jordan, I'd like to thank you for joining us here on the Saint Leo 360 podcast.

Jordan Hutchison:

Yeah, thanks for having me.

Greg Lindberg:

All righty. All right, so next up here on the Saint Leo 360 podcast and continuing with our DBA students, we now have Maryland Ponder. Marylyn, welcome to the podcast.

Marilyn Ponder:

Hi, thank you so much for having me.

Greg Lindberg:

Absolutely, we really appreciate you taking the time to do this.

Marilyn Ponder:

No worries.

Greg Lindberg:

So first off, Marylyn, can you just talk about your background and then kind of where you came from?

Marilyn Ponder:

Sure, so currently I work as an ophthalmic practice administrator and that is probably just a long fancy term for an administrator who just manages all facets of the business of a medical practice, specifically ophthalmology and optometry. I have a Master's in Management and I got that from Shorter University from Rome but I attended a satellite campus in Atlanta. And then I ended up here at Saint Leo because my best friend is also an alumni of Saint Leo. And looking into DBA programs originally, I was living in Texas and I thought I wanted to choose a program that was religious based, as we spoke before, that was kind of important to me, which is why I chose Shorter University and Saint Leo just aligned with that, not because I'm Catholic, but I just prefer schools who have religious bases because then we can talk about religion in the coursework and no one feels uncomfortable. And so it just seemed to be a perfect fit for me at the time. Then I ended up moving to Atlanta and of course we have an Atlanta Campus there and so it just all worked out.

Greg Lindberg:

Wow, very interesting. And so when did you actually first enroll in the program?

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

Marilyn Ponder:

So I started the DBA program, wow, when is this? 2019, so 2017.

Greg Lindberg:

I see.

Marilyn Ponder:

Yeah, so it was, I guess, Spring 2017.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, and did you consider other programs? I mean, was Saint Leo pretty much the one that you wanted to settle on?

Marilyn Ponder:

Yeah, it was pretty much, I mean, I guess initially I thought about applying at other places, but honestly Saint Leo was it for me again, because I know some Saint Leo alumni but because of the faith-based and because it's military friendly and I'm prior military and my friend who graduated from Saint Leo is also, I'm going to say prior military, because I just flew in from D.C. where he retired on yesterday and we did his retirement ceremony out in Washington.

Greg Lindberg:

Oh, wow, very nice. And so let's talk about the program and your experience.

Marilyn Ponder:

Sure, sure.

Greg Lindberg:

Talk to me about, any specific professors or classes or projects that you've done that have really stood out to you?

Marilyn Ponder:

I would say the program, it's built to get you to the dissertation processes, like building blocks and so particular professors, Dr. Gold, I mean, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention him, he's kind of the anchor it seems of everything because he's a wonderful resource. I've met many professors, Dr. Wiseman because he explains SPSS and statistics in a way that no one else has ever been able to explain and I can actually understand it and feel competent that I can do it when he's not in the room. And then recently when I did my teaching practicum, I was a teaching assistant in an HR class at the Atlanta Campus and it turns out that's how I ended up meeting my chair, Dr. Hawkins.

Greg Lindberg:

Interesting, I see. And let's talk about the online format of a program. I know sometimes an online program can be challenging, especially to someone who has never done online coursework before.

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

Marilyn Ponder:

Yeah.

Greg Lindberg:

Talk to me about how you approached the online program and maybe if you have tips and tricks for those out there listening, who might be considering an online but just have a little hesitation there.

Marilyn Ponder:

Yeah, so I think you summarized that awesomely, like it can be a little intimidating at first. I had never participated in an online program because undergrad and grad school for my master's were all on ground. So I went to class every night and so this was a little bit different. And then I would say the key to being successful is you have to just have some self-discipline and good time management skills because you can probably have the tendency to put things off because you're not actually in a classroom but the coursework is a bit heavy and so doing so is not conducive to being successful, I would say. But the online experience has been great. I mean, initially, you have your board discussions and you can chat with your cohort members via the board discussion and you can have really lovely discussions there as if you were face-to-face. Initially doing all those board discussions every week, that's kind of what gets you comfortable with working in the online arena. And then, like I said, I did a teaching practicum and they actually teach us to teach in the online arena.

Marilyn Ponder:

So then I got to see the other side of it from the professor's perspective and I just have a newfound respect for that because you have to use different skills to engage students in an online arena and not just take it for granted that they are following along and so you have to be able to engage them when they're not physically in front of you but it can be very rewarding and you can get through it but you definitely have to have some good time management skills.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, and very well said. I know some students talk about the connections to other students, to fellow students within the program. Talk to me about maybe any friendships, relationships, any connections that you've made with your fellow classmates in this program.

Marilyn Ponder:

I liken it to having a battle buddy, like when I was going through basic training, you're kind of in the trenches with your cohort members and you go through just the ebbs and flows of the different course works and courses that may have been not as challenging for you, may have really challenged your cohort member and then you can give them support and then the next class they're able to give you support because maybe they're stronger in that particular area. And so you learn to reach out to them and ask for guidance and help and encouragement. And sometimes it's not even the coursework, you just need to pat each other on the back and say, we're going to get through this, we're going to get through this. Specifically for me, my cohort, we started a text messaging group and we kept in touch, especially around time for comprehensive exams.

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

Marilyn Ponder:

We were just a big cheerleading squad for each other at that point and just when you're trying to put together a topic and initially it's a little overwhelming but again, just having those cohort members that you can email or text or call even. And the group... The DBA program did a good job in having us often do group projects, which does team building and then you learn the strengths of your coworker, I mean, of your cohort members and then you know who to reach out to for certain things and after a while, it just becomes second nature, like reaching out to your professor. And so I can honestly say, especially through the comprehensive exams, had it not been for my cohort members, mentally, it would probably have been too much but we just provide a good emotional support for each other and so it's a very good format that they have, especially with the online arena to be able to have those cohort members to kind of help you along the way.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, and very well said. And that support, I'm sure it's so helpful in such a rigorous curriculum.

Marilyn Ponder:

It is, it definitely.

Greg Lindberg:

And then as far as the faculty, the professors go, talk to me about how available they are to the students, how connected you feel to them.

Marilyn Ponder:

Yeah, so, I mean, I know they're not our cohort members but there is not a professor past or present that you can't reach out to. And so, especially when you're in their class, they're always available. There are no office hours per se. There are people just like we are and they've been through it and they typically understand. And so all of the professors have been great and that has helped tremendously with feeling confident that you can get through the program. It's because you have their support and even still, if you have a professor that you connect to later on in the program, you can always go back to that professor, shoot them an email and they always respond. Like that's the greatest thing.

Marilyn Ponder:

I would reach out to Dr. Wiseman, and I plan to do so when I get to chapter four of my dissertation, but he's available and always willing to help. And all of the professors have been great that way. And you can't say that about everyone but all of the professors have been very just grounded in an understanding that we are people just trying to get through this educational process. And it seems that they really love what they do. And so they don't mind sharing and so their availability and willingness to help has definitely made this process a lot easier.

Marilyn Ponder:

Dr. Gold is like a cheerleader for us. Every time we come to these events, we had our residencies, he's always there giving very simplistic advice, don't overthink it, you know this topic better than anyone, you're here to teach us about this topic and listen to your chair, just very basic things. And so just reminding us that, don't overthink the process, you can get this done. And so it's great to hear that from

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

him and I just met Dr. Mancini but he was literally just in my last workshop there giving the same advice. And so it's just really great to have that from them.

Greg Lindberg:

Right, very nice. And let's talk about advice, what kind of advice would you give to a prospective student considering a doctoral program, specifically like a DBA program here?

Marilyn Ponder:

Wow, I would say it's a commitment. You can't go into it thinking that you can kind of skate your way through the coursework and just get to the dissertation, it is definitely a commitment. So you have to make sure that you really want to do it and know why you want to do it because there are going to be some times that you're going to look at yourself and say, do I really want this? And so for me, I did a pros and cons list before I got started and then I just kept that on my whiteboard and whenever there were challenges along the way, I would look up at my whiteboard to remember what drove me to have the desire to want to attain this degree. The second thing would be, is once you've made the decision to commit to the program is that, time management. I cannot stress that enough because it's an online environment.

Marilyn Ponder:

Most of us are working professionals, so we have jobs, full-time jobs and so you have to balance that and you still have to give your coursework the time and attention that it deserves and you have to be able to balance it because playing catch-up with this course load, not going to happen. And so I would say make sure, just a commitment to the program and good time management skills. And then the last piece would be work-life balance, basically understanding that you have to be able to tune in and tune out and not take yourself too seriously, right? So it just really helps to stay grounded so that you can relax, if you need to curl up in a corner and read a book, sometimes that's not academic, then you need to be able to do that and not feel pressure, whatever it is that you do that helps you relax you need to remember to do that so that you don't get so wound up but it's a great journey.

Marilyn Ponder:

I wouldn't change it for anything and hopefully next year, sometime I'll be graduating. And so I definitely wouldn't trade it, it's definitely challenged me in areas that I didn't realize that, you kind of look at your strengths and your weaknesses and you quickly learn to realize, I won't necessarily say weaknesses, opportunities to improve is what I would call them, and you quickly figure out what those things are and you start to build those muscles to make those things, your strengths as well. This program has been great at helping me with that.

Greg Lindberg:

Yeah, that's very well said. And I know obviously a student that enrolls in a degree program, the ultimate result of that is to have the skills, the knowledge to be able to better themselves, to advance, to apply what they learn in that program into a professional career.

Marilyn Ponder:

Absolutely, yeah.

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

Greg Lindberg:

Can you speak to specifically how this DBA program, how you've been able to apply anything specifically to what you currently do?

Marilyn Ponder:

Absolutely, and I think because of... This particular discipline aligns so well to what I do in my professional life, that literally I could take the concepts that we discussed in class, and then I could take them to work and put them to use. And so when you're trying to understand the theories that you have to understand to write papers or build your dissertation, it helps if you can go to work and put those theories into practice.

Marilyn Ponder:

For me specifically, I focus on leadership and management, specifically for my dissertation, emotional intelligence and leadership style. And so what that allows me to do is gather all of this knowledge about those things that means so much to me. And then when I go back to work, I can impart that on my management team because my goal every day when I walk in that door is to give them the tools they need to be successful and make them better managers because if they're better managers, their subordinates perform better and it just produces a more positive work environment. And so I always strive to just impart knowledge into my managers because now I understand the theory behind why I want them to be better managers and how they can improve their leadership styles and deal with their subordinates better. It just ties in to everything that I learned through this DBA program. And so ultimately my goal is to, because I love ophthalmology, is what I've done for 25 plus years, I want to do some consulting in the field of ophthalmology and just teaching other practices how to better develop their managers.

Marilyn Ponder:

I'm hoping that out of my dissertation, I can gather enough information to help them understand the investment in... Investing more in their leadership teams in terms of better developing, developing their leadership styles in terms of emotional intelligence. And then at some point maybe teaching a little bit but ultimately for me, I just want to pour into other people. So getting this degree, although it will be a great success for me, honestly, I did it because I want to help make other people better.

Greg Lindberg:

That's a very, very honest answer.

Marilyn Ponder:

Yeah.

Greg Lindberg:

Sounds like it's so meaningful to you.

Marilyn Ponder:

Yeah, definitely.

Episode 12: Conversation with Two Doctor of Business Administration Students

Greg Lindberg:

And kind of on that note, I'm curious, when you do collect your diploma and graduate from Saint Leo University, having DBA, those initials after your name, how meaningful do you think, is that going to be to you?

Marilyn Ponder:

I mean, definitely very, very meaningful. Just all the hard work that goes into it and probably less than, I would be in what Dr. Hawkins calls the 1%, oftentimes when we think of the 1% we think of finances but in her definition, there's 1% of the population who've actually went after and actually completed a doctoral degree. And so at that point, I'll consider myself in the 1%. Does it make me a different person? No. But it says to everyone else that I am dedicated to what I do and I take it seriously. And because of that, maybe they'll take me seriously. And so that I can do what I love, which is working with managers and leaders to be better so that they can produce healthier, happier, more productive work environments. And that is ultimately the goal for me.

Greg Lindberg:

Nice, those are definitely wise words and then very well said. All right, well, I definitely appreciate your time, Marylyn-

Marilyn Ponder:

Thank you, I appreciate [crosstalk 00:33:11].

Greg Lindberg:

... [crosstalk 00:33:11] for joining me here on the podcast and then taking some time out from your colloquium.

Marilyn Ponder:

Thank you so much for having me, it's my pleasure.

Greg Lindberg:

Sure, you're very welcome.

Speaker 1:

To hear more episodes of the Saint Leo 360 podcast, visit saintleo.edu/podcast. To learn more about Saint Leo's programs and services, call (877) 622-2009 or visit saintleo.edu.