Postgrad life

Professor Marianna Fotaki on business, ethics and refugees

Plus: startup incubators, renewable energy and student life after Brexit

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any students see postgraduate courses as a chance to study abroad but, with Brexit looming, how long will this continue? In this special supplement we focus on the Brexit effect and hear from the vice-chancellor of De Montfort University, who warns: “It is no secret these are difficult times for British universities hoping to recruit postgraduate students from abroad.”

Dutch student Sjojke van Oostenhout, who is studying for an MSc in European politics at London School of Economics, is sick of hearing about Brexit: “My life is dominated by Brexit. I hear the word more than my own name.” However she recommends that British students consider postgraduate courses in Europe: “It’s the same as any international experience – you increase employment opportunities and can learn a new language.”

Prof Marianna Fotaki, daughter of Greek refugees from the second world war, is researching humanitarian responses to refugees in Greece: “I want to understand, theorise and make an impact. I’ve been looking at how communities cope and what motivates people who have nothing to help others.”

We also peer into the world of neuroimaging, timber up for some sport-related postgraduate degree, and tap into how startups and clean energy technologies are still putting down roots in the UK.

Sarah Jewell

Post-Brexit postgrads

What happens next?

The impact may have turned traditional publishing on its head, but print is still very alive. The University of Derby’s MA in publishing covers digital skills, critical thinking, legal and business knowledge and “the ultimate transferable skill: high-level English”, says programme leader Alistair Hodge. “We also run modules on entrepreneurship, leadership and management, so our graduates are not only prepared for their first career step, but progress quickly into senior positions.”

“Books and magazines cover every subject imaginable, from academic journals to the latest Brian Cox autobiography title, so we have students publishers and some will join one of the many new niche book and magazine publishers. Others are likely to find roles as a librarian, or in bookselling, PR, communications or illustration and web design.

Enterprise

More people are starting their own business than ever before: 2015 saw 380,000 business births, up 32,000 on the previous year. Some enterprise master’s focus on specific areas, such as the University of Cambridge’s MPhil in bioscience enterprise. Others are aimed at students seeking a broad range of skills, such as the master of enterprise, business and entrepreneurship (MGen) run by Manchester Enterprise Centre, University of Manchester.

“Students develop competencies in opportunity recognition, ideas generation, creativity, sense-making and strategic and divergent thinking – all vital when creating tangible, robust business proposals,” says Dr Martin Henery, enterprise academic lecturer at the Centre. “They’ll also gain an essential knowledge and awareness in areas such as finance, risk management and market research.”

Many alumni have gone on to start their own businesses, including Paul Delamere, founder of the ShinDigger Brewing Company.

Student formntina Taylor, who runs the Aim Sky High Company, a performing arts organisation: “The MGen gave me the knowledge I needed to tackle the problems I would inevitably face. It gives you a level of quality research and teaching in marine environmental policy and coastal engineering.

“The unifying aspect is that all of them have a component related to the needs of this part of young, but rapidly growing industry, the work of which is so important to the future health and security of our planet.”

Sarah Jewell

The average number of new companies born every hour in the first half of 2016

80

The Guardian | Saturday 18 March 2017

The number of new jobs that will be in place in marine renewable energy over the next decade

70k

Source: Renewable UK

80

PAGE TURNING

What do to with a postgraduate degree in...?

A sports postgrad degree can open up a whole new field of dreams.

Have boots, will travel

Ever wondered about when cricket wasn’t cricket? An MA in the elementary science, an MA in publishing or a PhD in astronomy title, so we have students in information systems management.

Source: StartUp Britain

The first master’s cohort will graduate in November 2017: some are publishing, others are pursuing a career in publishing.

The majority of accommodation is within 10 minutes from the students’ union, where there’s a lot of private, purpose-built student halls. It’s an affordable city with a surplus of good housing for students.

The Motorpoint Arena hosts families names, a huge amount to do in Cardiff.

Cardiff

Theatre regularly showcasing exciting new writing. If shipping’s your bag, the city centre has every chain store imaginable, from clothes to curry. For a huge amount to do in Cardiff.

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Theatre regularly showcasing exciting new writing. If shipping’s your bag, the city centre has every chain store imaginable, from clothes to curry.
It’s not easy to quell students’ fears

Dominic Shellard

It’s no secret that there are difficult times for British universities hoping to recruit postgraduate students from abroad. Brexit, combined with immigration rules that appear hostile in other parts of the world, means that universities must pull out all the stops to continue to attract as many international postgraduates as before.

As soon as the result of last year’s EU referendum was announced, we made it our mission at De Montfort University (DMU) to show Europe and the rest of the world that, far from erecting barriers to other nationalities, Leicester welcomes them with open arms. It helps that Leicester is a multicultural city, where a majority of residents – not just students – would feel comfortable in other parts of the world.

So far, there’s no sign at DMU of a fall in the number of postgraduates from outside the UK, this year numbers actually increased by nearly 30%. However, the UK government has only guaranteed EU students existing levels of loans and grants for 2017/18. At that, who knows? At DMU we are reviewing our bursary and scholarship schemes for postgraduate students from overseas.

We need greater clarity surrounding not just funding, but the message and focus on nurturing talent. We want to Brexit-proof our students. That’s why we are communicating that at DMU a successful postgraduate programme means that universities can build stronger relationships with higher education institutions outside the UK, but we still need greater clarity from government.

DMU remains passionate about attracting people from all over the world. But we recognise that in today’s global market, there’s no guarantee that postgraduates will automatically come through our doors.

Dominic Shellard, vice-chancellor, DMU, was talking to Neil Merrick

In the wake of Brexit, what does the future hold for studying abroad?

Neil Merrick reports

Any students see postgraduate courses as an opportunity to travel and spend time in another country. Last year, 37% of postgraduates studying at UK universities came from abroad. At the same time, hundreds of British people studied for postgraduate qualifications outside the UK. But with Brexit the UK government clamping down on visas for students outside the EU, how much longer will this continue?

The message from UK universities to potential students from abroad is that it’s business as usual. As Gareth Howells, head of MiBAs at London Business School, says there is no sign of applications falling: “They are the Lehman generation. They are used to challenges in the global market,” he says. “We want to go beyond the political message and focus on nurturing talent. We want to Brexit-proof our students.”

Of the 512,275 postgraduates studying at UK universities in 2015/16, 45,340 were from other EU countries (8.7%), while 154,390 were from countries outside the EU (29%).

The government has confirmed that EU students coming to the UK will be eligible for existing loans and other financial support for courses starting in 2017/18.

So far, there’s no sign at DMU of a fall in the number of postgraduates from overseas. But Nick Hillman, director of Hepi, says that students will depend on the level of financial support for courses starting in 2017/18. The same applies to UK students going to other parts of the EU. But it is the years following Brexit that concern many, coupled with the inclusion of international students in UK immigration targets.

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Think it. Be it.

Sjoukje van Oosterhout

There is a European identity that makes it easier to adjust

Sjoukje van Oosterhout is sick of hearing about Brexit. “My life is dominated by it. I hear the word even more than my own name,” says the Dutch student, who is studying for an MSc in European politics at the London School of Economics (LSE).

By the time Oosterhout moved to London last October, the EU referendum was done and dusted and Brexit negotiations about to begin. But she was already familiar with the topic. After completing her undergraduate degree in international relations in the Netherlands, she became a Dutch youth representative to the EU for two years, looking, among other things, at the effect of Brexit on her country’s youth.

Determined to study as a postgraduate in a different country, Oosterhout chose the LSE because of its reputation. “I preferred to stay in the EU because of the quality of its education and culture,” she says. “There is a European identity that makes it easier to adjust within the EU.”

Whether students from the rest of the EU continue to choose British universities will depend on the level of tuition fees as much as ease of travel, says Oosterhout, who paid £20,000 for her MSc course.

“My life is dominated by Brexit. I hear the word even more than my own name”

But she hopes UK universities retain strong links with those in the rest of Europe and recommends that British students consider postgraduate courses in universities in Europe.

“It’s the same as any international experience,” she says. “You increase your employment opportunities, and it can be extremely helpful to learn an additional language.”

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Help in a time of crisis

What are universities doing to mitigate the refugee situation, asks Helena Pozniak

When a group of students arrives in northern France to spend time with refugees, they are careful to listen and learn. “We don’t say we’re parachuting in to carry out fantastic social work and then just bugger off again,” says Prof Michael Lavallette, who’s overseen three of these trips, as part of Liverpool Hope University’s master’s in social work.

Students first took bedding, clothes, food and more to the Calais refugee camp in late 2015. They made two more trips after it was closed down to help in a time of crisis. They study issues around forced migration, and how refugees are covered in the media. “That’s what appealed to me,” says Sophie Pritchard, a student who works at Cafod, and has just been to her first lecture on the root causes of migration. “I want a better understanding of human rights and the legal framework around working with refugees.”

Students on London South Bank University’s master’s in refugee studies may already have worked in the field – either within government or NGOs – although some have no relevant background, says Gaim Kibreab, professor at the school of law and social science. Since the 2015 refugee crisis, demand for the course has increased, he says. Students take on work placements at charities, voluntary organisations and the UNHCR, both overseas and locally.

While the current refugee crisis has sharpened public focus, there is nothing new about people being forced from their homes – for political, environmental or economic reasons. Students on the University of Oxford’s master’s in refugee and forced migration studies examine the causes and consequences of this – as well as legal issues. “My time in Oxford was a door opener,” says Erik Abdin, now director of partnerships and policy at the Norwegian Refugee Council.

...
You need to understand how these tools work and how to understand the data.

Megan Kelleher plans to continue in academia after her master’s
**MA research: it’s a question of sport**

Fancy studying sporting culture, with some expert help? Try one of the new MAs, writes Lucy Hodges

You can’t fully understand sport without appreciating its history. That is the thinking behind an MA in sports history and culture at De Montfort University (DMU) in Leicester, which is offered by distance learning so that busy people can fit it around other commitments.

Taught by expert staff in the university’s international centre for sports history and culture, the only centre of its kind in the world, the MA is aimed at people who want to grasp the origins of modern sport and understand why sport has become so culturally and commercially important.

“The course was established because there was a gap in the market,” says the centre’s director, Prof Martin Polley. “It recognises that sport has a history that is worth studying academically.”

**England cricket and commentator Ed Smith, who is writing a history of sport in the 19th and 20th centuries for Penguin.**

**Future prospects**

**I would like to think I can use the master’s when I quit the game**

Graham Kitchener, 27, who plays Premiership rugby for Leicester Tigers and made the England squad for the 2015 RBS Six Nations, has just graduated from a master’s degree in sports history and culture at De Montfort University.

I completed my first degree in sociology at the University of Birmingham in 2011 while playing for Leicester Tigers. After a couple of years I fancied getting back into education again and keeping my brain active, so I opted for the distance learning MA. I chose the course because DMU has a great reputation in distance learning MA. I chose the course with my rugby. Because DMU has a great reputation in distance learning MA. I chose the course from a master’s degree in sports history and culture, the only centre of its kind in the world, the MA is aimed at people who want to grasp the origins of modern sport and understand why sport has become so culturally and commercially important.

**For my 15,000-word dissertation I talked to a lot of people at Leicester Tigers and at my old club Worcester Warriors. I found out that over time the money that was made available to the game enabled them to employ specialist medical coaches as well as coaches for strength and conditioning guidance. The result is that rugby union is being played at a much higher level than before – and the players are now a lot bigger and fitter.**

I would like to think that I can use the course when I quit the game. I hope I have a few more years of playing rugby. But eventually I would hope to do something connected to my sport. Even if I don’t, the MA is a good basis for employment in any field. I’d love to do something connected to my sport. Even if I don’t, the MA is a good basis for employment in any field. I’d love to do something connected to my sport. Even if I don’t, the MA is a good basis for employment in any field.

**The course recognises that sport has a history that is worth studying academically**


“What has been really interesting in the quality of the conversation at the evening events,” says Smith. “I have learnt a huge amount from all the discussions. And I have loved working on the students with their dissertations.”

On the course are 11 students, one of whom is an “associate”, who is attending the seminars but not doing the dissertation. The topics being researched by the 10 students include how cricket was transformed from a disreputable sport to my sport. I eventually would hope to do something connected to my sport. Eventually I would hope to do something connected to my sport. Eventually I would hope to do something connected to my sport. Eventually I would hope to do something connected to my sport. Eventually I would hope to do something connected to my sport.

**Online study enabled Graham Kitchener to continue playing rugby**

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**Science returns are a sweet**

A sports science MA can be good for your career and travel options, not to mention the health of the nation, writes Alison Dickinson

The wide-ranging world of sports provides degrees offers opportunities not just in the UK, but globally – and every one’s winner.

Richard Sackey-Audo, 23, from Croydon, landed his dream job working for the International Tennis Federation (ITF) in Valencia, Spain in September 2015 - two months before he graduated from his master’s degree in sports science at the University of Bedfordshire.

He puts the appointment down to the networking opportunities offered to him during his studies.

“My lecturers were instrumental in accommodating us with valuable industry contacts, as many of us attained internships or work experience at various professional sports clubs and academies,” he says. “I had to finish my dissertation for the first three or four weeks I was there though, which was an interesting experience!”

During his time working for the ITF, he has created content on the ITF website, tennisicoach.com, planned and attended conferences around the world, and evoked with some of the top names in tennis, including Andy Murray and Rafael Nadal coach Francis Roig. “There are so many different aspects of the game that I’ve been involved with, so whether it’s tennis development, developing partnerships, education or even high-performance coaching, there really is a lot open to me,” he says.

“I’ve played tennis my whole life, so for me there’s nothing greater than helping to grow a sport that I love, and being able to help this game by 1850.”

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Richard Sackey-Audo uses a weighted wooden racket in a coaching presentation Ray Giubilo ITF
Clean energy

Changing the elements

The renewable energy market is looking extremely buoyant. Helena Pozniak looks at the courses that can plug you in.

British sea power: Plymouth students at the university’s marine station -- Lloyd Russell

One of the more specialised programmes on offer is Plymouth University’s master’s in marine renewable energy – a course that links up with Cornwall’s £2.4bn wave hub project – the world’s largest wave energy test site. Postgraduates focus on emerging technologies and work with marine researchers.

If the proposed tidal lagoon power plant in Swansea Bay goes ahead – and proves to be a success – there could be a surge in demand for similar projects around the UK. This would mean an increase in jobs for specialist engineers, project managers and developers.

Tidal energy is included in many generic courses, such as the University of Warwick’s master’s in sustainable energy technologies, which also looks at wind, solar, biomass and fuel cells. Kingston University London’s renewable energy engineering master’s has a business slant and includes modules in software modelling.

The University of Manchester’s MSc in renewable energy and clean technology has the issue of carbon emissions at its core. The university has strong links with leading industry providers such as Shell, National Grid and EDF Energy.

Students on the master’s in sustainable energy futures at Imperial College London, notably at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, but also at Manchester, East Anglia, Exeter and Imperial College London.

Some of the smartest new science is connected with energy storage, and the UK is positioning itself at the forefront of this developing technology. It also wants to make itself a hub for smart technologies – not just smart meters, but also the internet of things and smart grids.

Clean energy provides a great business opportunity for the UK and is a key element of its bid to cut greenhouse gas emissions. It’s one of the fastest-growing industries and there’s much to do in upgrading energy infrastructure to meet demand. Innovation is occurring beyond the electricity sector as well, as new technologies are developed, tested and deployed to decarbonise heat and transport. Taking a postgraduate route shows your commitment to the renewable cause. And why not? It’s such an exciting field.

Technologies in the sector are moving fast and a specialist year allows you to have a broader understanding of what’s out there. But there’s nothing wrong with learning on the job either. Any university programme worth its salt will give you experience of solving real-life issues and innovative practice.

Many businesses in the renewable sector are small, entrepreneurial and specialist. They don’t have the capacity to run graduate training programmes in the same way as the big engineering firms such as Atkins. But they do want people with the right sets of skills who know the market. It’s important to have a grasp of finance, building and communicating a business case, and project management - and postgraduate courses can teach you these skills.

When someone comes in with a master’s or a doctorate, companies know they can fill specialist roles.

More women are working in renewables than any other energy sector: we make up 51%, compared with 8% in nuclear and 7% in oil and gas. But the numbers are still low, and although there are opportunities, women are more likely to be working as environmental consultants or auditors than in building and design.

There should be more women engineers developing smart systems.

Get smart and get involved


We have extraordinary hubs of innovation on renewable energy and climate change in the UK, notably at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, but also at Manchester, East Anglia, Exeter and Imperial College London.

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Enterprise hubs
Helena Pozniak

Postgraduate startups are becoming more commonplace, says Helena Pozniak.

Dr Lauren Fletcher was looking for business students with the right background to help with his aim to combat heavy deforestation. “I was absolutely fascinated by Brazil’s forests.”

Below: the Wink Hall handles from a University incubator

Postgraduate startups are becoming more widespread, thanks to university incubators, says Helena Pozniak.

From little acorns ...

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Baramel UK author of the study Gilberto Fernandes gave incredible support. “It was a great boost to our morale. We were fortunate to have visibility and credibility.”

Although university isn’t a prerequisite for entrepreneurs, it can be tough. But don’t suffer alone. Help is at hand, says Helena Pozniak.

To join online study groups to share information on deadlines, exam dates and notes and socialise.

To look for cross-discipline study seminars to get an insight into what further research involves.

To attend practical workshops to develop your ability to apply theory to practice.

To talk to careers services to identify the sectors you want to target. Jump at the chance to attend any relevant careers events.

To analyse your strengths and weaknesses. What do you like to do and what are you good at?

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Ritchie graduated in 2014 and has worked with the award-winning new business BioCarbon Engineering ever since. For a year and a half he was based in the university’s entrepreneurship centre. “These spaces do supercharge your ability to build a team and business,” he says. “As a place to network they’re really very important.”

In 2015 the team raised enough investment to push ahead with trials.

As a business, BioCarbon plans to seed up to ten trees a year without touching the ground. Drones scope the land and then fire out pre-germinated seed pods into the soil – it’s a far cheaper, faster way of reaching remote terrain. After successful dummy pods in 2015, this year will see the first paid trial in Australia in April. Beyond this, the team hopes to target Brazil, the world’s largest exporter of hardwood, in North America.

When the team first floated the idea, it seemed “insane” to many, says Ritchie. “Drones are more commonplace now. We were fortunate to win an university award, which really helped.” At times, Ritchie has felt it an uphill struggle: “But we worked hard to build our network and the whole infrastructure of the enterprise hub gave incredible support.”

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To attend practical workshops to develop your ability to apply theory to practice.

To talk to careers services to identify the sectors you want to target. Jump at the chance to attend any relevant careers events.

To analyse your strengths and weaknesses. What do you like to do and what are you good at?

To identify the sectors you want to target.

To make a list of your best skills and how you can apply them.

If you’re aiming to be part of the subject field rather than being open to graduates, “says Ritchie. Within the university’s enterprise hub, a team came together.

Ritchie graduated in 2014 and has worked with the award-winning new business BioCarbon Engineering ever since. For a year and a half he was based in the university’s entrepreneurship centre. “These spaces do supercharge your ability to build a team and business,” he says. “As a place to network they’re really very important.”

In 2015 the team raised enough investment to push ahead with trials.

As a business, BioCarbon plans to seed up to ten trees a year without touching the ground. Drones scope the land and then fire out pre-germinated seed pods into the soil – it’s a far cheaper, faster way of reaching remote terrain. After successful dummy pods in 2015, this year will see the first paid trial in Australia in April. Beyond this, the team hopes to target Brazil, the world’s largest exporter of hardwood, in North America.

When the team first floated the idea, it seemed “insane” to many, says Ritchie. “Drones are more commonplace now. We were fortunate to win an university award, which really helped.” At times, Ritchie has felt it an uphill struggle: “But we worked hard to build our network and the whole infrastructure of the enterprise hub gave incredible support.”

Although university isn’t a prerequisite for entrepreneurs, it can be tough. But don’t suffer alone. Help is at hand, says Helena Pozniak.

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Degree apprenticeships

All systems go with level 7

As postgraduate degree apprenticeships gain in popularity, an option for leaders is next in the pipeline, writes Lucy Join

You could be forgiven for not having heard of postgraduate degree apprenticeships, also known as level 7 apprenticeships, which were launched in March 2015 with just 30 learners. But these master’s-level programmes have big potential. The Department for Education says it expects uptake to increase when the apprenticeship levy comes into force in May. And while only a few apprenticeships are available, such as in systems engineering or digital technology solutions, there are plenty more in the works, including teaching.

With level 7 apprenticeships, students will have an undergraduate degree or equivalent, and be expected to be working for their sponsor company. Those who have been promoted into senior management roles or who have been influential in senior leadership development, which can have a powerful trickle-down effect throughout an organisation.

‘This apprenticeship provides a route to support senior leadership development, which can have a powerful trickle-down effect throughout an organisation.’

Prof Lynette Ryals, pro-vice-chancellor, education, at Cranfield University – which delivers the academic component of Semap - says interest in level 7 is increasing. “Once employees become aware that they can get a master’s through this route, “ she says: “we will see a major shift in the way companies and employees think and be expected to be working for their sponsor company.

The level 7 systems engineering master’s apprenticeship programme (Semap) was sponsored by the Defence Growth Partnership. Students work towards a diploma at master’s level. Several major employers now have staff on the scheme, including QinetiQ and BAE Systems.

There are 18 Semap students at BAE - all of whom are employed there but those numbers will grow, says Richard Taylor, who heads up BAE’s early careers programme. “We knew we had a skills shortage around systems engineering and needed to build on the competence of the people we had,” he says. “It benefits the individual, the organisation and the sector.”

‘The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) is part of a group, including employers Serco and Bartlett, that’s developing a master’s degree apprenticeship for leaders. Petra Wilton, director of strategy for CMI, says: “Too many organisations suffer from accidental managers: those who have been promoted into senior management roles on the basis of strong performance in other functions, as opposed to their leadership skills.”

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Semap progress ‘After a year on the programme, I had the confidence to apply for a new role’

Rick McCann, 27 is a senior systems engineer on the Typhoon aircraft programme at BAE Systems.

I left school at 16 and joined the BAE Systems advanced apprenticeship scheme. So, rather than following the traditional route through school and university, I’ve gone the apprenticeship route. Through that I’ve done an HND in aerospace engineering, and BAE sponsored me to do a degree in computer-aided engineering at the University of Central Lancashire.

My previous role was more about how we approached engineering in the business. This opened my eyes to systems engineering - a multidisciplinary approach that integrates everything from the initial needs of the customer to the end product. Then I heard about the apprenticeships and became part of the first Semap cohort, which started in January 2016. After a year on the programme, I had the confidence to apply for a new role. I’ve just started as a systems engineer working on radar programmes.

“I know what an apprenticeship entails: combining the academic and the vocational elements in a blended approach - something that I’ve found really beneficial. It’s one thing getting the knowledge from university, but being able to apply it in work and gain the skills and experience at the same time is really valuable.

You learn the theory of doing something at university, but the finer points in the real world are often subtly different. The programme seemed like much more efficient way of progressing in my career.

The systems engineering master’s apprenticeship programme (Semap) has brought the two sides of the experience together. On the academic course, there’s a broad range of experience and backgrounds. That’s really enhanced it, as you don’t always get that level of experience in the workplace.

Doing any kind of education when you’re working full-time always has its challenges, but that’s what you take on. I don’t think the apprenticeship has added any extra pressure.

Because it’s set up as a formal apprenticeship, there’s always help around to keep me on track. I have a mentor and there’s support within the business. It’s good to make sure that you’re setting and meeting your targets.

I’ve just gone and completed a master’s on a standalone basis, I wouldn’t necessarily have that level of support. It’s going to be very beneficial to my career, and to the company.”