

[Elizabeth] So my name is Elizabeth Reichert. I am an undergraduate student. My concentration is finance and decision in the Management Science and Engineering department. And I'm the class of 2020.

[Interviewer] So the first question is, can you tell us a little bit about your background, such as where did you grow up?

[Elizabeth] Yes, I grew up in the Midwest in St. Louis, Missouri.

[Interviewer] And how was that?

[Elizabeth] Very fun. I went to a public high school and was really involved in the performing arts in school. I did a lot with choir, musical theater, I was in a ballet company and so that was kind of a big creative outlet for me. And then in terms of my coursework, I was really involved in a lot of natural science courses—biology, chemistry—and really enjoyed my time in school.

[Interviewer] So how did you become interested in engineering?

[Elizabeth] I really resonated with the engineering method, the engineering mindset of any problem is solvable. And I think that engineering, it gives you this framework to break down really tough problems. And that sounded really exciting to me. Also I think with engineering, you can have a huge impact because engineers are the people that are building the products and systems that we use every day. And so to be a part of that, I found it really compelling. I also feel like engineering is a great creative [outlet]. I mentioned before that I really love performing. And I think that engineering allows you to instill your creativity in what you build and what you're designing, because you're designing just all these really important problems. And so those are kind of the aspects of engineering that I really found compelling, which is why I chose to go into engineering.

[Interviewer] So the next question is, can you tell us a bit about your area of concentration and why you chose it?

[Elizabeth] Yeah, definitely. So my area of concentration is finance and decision, and I was really excited about that specific focus because the world we live in is very uncertain, and decision analysis provides an excellent framework to handle uncertainty and make the best decision possible given the information that you have at that time. And that's applicable to your everyday life; that's applicable to business decisions. And so I thought that that would be really helpful to have moving forward. And then in terms of finance, I think finance is such a critical aspect of business. It's how you define the performance of a business. It's also a huge gatekeeper for major decisions made in business. And so I came in not really knowing anything about finance and so I really wanted to get a good grasp of that material. So that way I felt comfortable in the business world, making decisions and navigating the finance aspect of business.

[Interviewer] So the next question is, what are your career plans for after Stanford and how did you decide on them?

[Elizabeth] That's a great question. So I'm going to be joining the inaugural cohort of Walmart eCommerce's associate product manager rotational program. Sorry, that's a lot of words all at once, but basically I'm going to be serving as a product manager and I actually just got my team assignment. I will be working in the Sunnyvale office working on a supply chain technology team.

And in kind of figuring out what I wanted to do after graduation, I looked for three things. The first was that I wanted to optimize for learning. So I wanted to be in an environment where I felt like I could grow intellectually as a person. And then I also wanted to find a place where I would be surrounded by people that inspire me, people that are really smart and really kind, and really dedicated to what they're doing. And I found that when I was interviewing at the Walmart e-commerce site, and with the team members that I talked to. And then the third thing is I wanted to make an impact. I think, especially now that there's a pandemic going on, online deliveries have become super important and that's what Walmart e-commerce does. And so I think that also really aligns with my goal of building products that people need and that improve their life. And so those are the three aspects that I looked for when deciding what to do after graduation.

[Interviewer] I like your strategic approach to what you're looking for in a job. It's very MS&E.

[Elizabeth] Exactly. That's what MS&E does, it gives you this structured framework. So that way you can, like I said before, make the best decisions possible.

[Interviewer] So the next question is, what most excites you about your future?

[Elizabeth] That is another excellent question. So I think one of the things that excites me most is the kind of learning and growth that will happen after graduation. So in college, I felt like I was in this completely new environment. I was away from home, I had all these added responsibilities, and that really helped me to learn and grow at a very quick rate. And so I think that transition from college to full time will be very similar in that I'll be experiencing all these new things, living on my own, having my first full time job and dealing with all of those challenges. And I'm excited to learn and become a better person because of that.

And then I guess another thing that excites me about my future is that I'm actually planning on living with a few other Stanford students after graduation, I'll be in the Bay Area. And so I'm really excited to spend a lot of quality time with them and my other friends that I've made in the Bay and to make new friends as well. I think that there's such a strong community of smart, talented, driven people here. And so that is something that I'm really excited to be in that kind of environment.

[Interviewer] Okay. So the next question is, what advice do you have for future students, and how can they make the best use of their time in MS&E and at Stanford?

[Elizabeth] So I would say my best advice for students in general is that, this might sound a little cliché, but that rejection kind of happens to everyone. I think when you get to Stanford and you see everyone's LinkedIn profiles and you see all of their successes because that's what they broadcast out to the world, it can be intimidating and you can feel like, wow, like I'm being rejected from this job offer; I've been rejected from this club. Or you can think that you don't fit in because you feel like you are less successful, but I would say that you shouldn't think of rejection as a signal that you're not meant to succeed at Stanford, or you're not meant to succeed. Everyone experiences rejection. And you are just kind of seeing, you are seeing the best version that people are putting on of themselves. And so don't view rejection as something where it's something bad and you did something wrong; view it as a learning opportunity. As cliché as that sounds, it's so true because I just remember the worst grade that I got, the worst job interview that I had, I learned so much from those experiences and the learnings from that directly related to my success in getting my job offer at Walmart e-commerce for full time, or becoming, being in a leadership position in a student organization, the direct learnings were what

propelled me towards success. So I think that advice just rings very true. And so I would recommend them to really take the time to think about that when they're feeling down about rejection in general. And then in terms of making the most of your time in the MS&E department, I think it's important not to be intimidated by courses that you feel like fall outside of your concentration or to be intimidated by professors or people that are in positions of authority. I think it's really easy to be intellectually intimidated at Stanford, but [the advice] I could give is that you should reframe that intimidation into meaning that you basically have a lot to learn from these people and view it as an opportunity to grow. And I would like to say that the professors in the MS&E department are so nice and so willing to help you learn and grow. And so you should not be intimidated, whether it's a class or a professor or anyone—everyone's willing to help. And yeah, that reframing is very useful to getting the most out of your time in the MS&E department at Stanford.

[Interviewer] Great advice. So the next question is, what will you miss most about Stanford?

[Elizabeth] Oh, Stanford. I will, I think the thing that I'll miss most is being around such inspiring people. I look around at my friends, I look around at my peers, I look around at the professors, the administrators, everyone at Stanford, and I'm just inspired by them all the time. They're so smart and so dedicated and doing so much good. And yeah, that is just like an infinite source of energy for me and makes me feel very fulfilled and happy. So yeah, I'll really miss those relationships.

[Elizabeth] I'll also miss the support that Stanford provides for students. I feel like if you're sick, you head over to Vaden and if you are struggling with a job you head over to BEAM, If you're worried about your academic direction you had your academic advisor. There are all of these support systems here to help you to flourish. And so I think that that is a really unique resource to a university like Stanford that is putting so much into its students.

[Elizabeth] And then I will also miss learning being my full time job. That's just kind of a thing that students kind of take for granted sometimes. And to be transitioning into a full time job where I'm learning a lot, but I'm also working for a company—I think as a student, you really can just follow your passions and what you're interested in, and having a space where you can just focus on your learning is really unique. And I'll really miss that as well. When I looked over the questions for this interview, it was making me so sentimental because yeah, Stanford has really meant a lot to me and the MS&E department, obviously it's where I've spent most of my time. And yeah, it just, it's coming to an end, but I'm really excited to apply all that I've learned in my job and moving forward. So I'm really grateful, but yeah. Thank you so much.