



A CIMBA Spotlight with Manuel Velilla Ferrer, Campus Life Coordinator and MBA Part-time Class of 2015

Hi Manuel! Please, tell us more about yourself and your professional experience.

I am originally from Colombia, but I have spent half of my life living in the USA, primarily in Texas. I currently live in Dallas where I held several roles in sourcing and product pricing for a fuel distribution company. I am proud to say that I will take the next step in my career as the Sourcing Manager for Essilor Luxottica, focusing on their North America operations. I graduated from the CIMBA class of 2015, I spent two years at CIMBA as a Campus Life Coordinator and MBA student. It was an amazing time!

How did you choose CIMBA?

I heard about CIMBA as an undergrad at Texas Tech University. I wanted to study abroad before graduation, and I was looking at all my options. I chose CIMBA because ultimately, I wanted to experience Italian culture and language, and the CIMBA program looked perfect for that due to its location. My parents encouraged me to apply for the resident assistant internship which I was selected for. After finishing my undergrad semester abroad and graduating from university, Adam Luck, one of the Campus Life Coordinators who I reported to as an intern reached out to me and asked if I was interested in joining the MBA program and become a Campus Life Coordinator. I did not think twice and decided to go for it! Sign me up.

Reminiscences of your experience in the CIMBA program. What are some of the things that changed your way of thinking?

CIMBA changed my way of thinking in regard to being open and receptive to a different way of life, culture, and thinking philosophies both academically and personally. Living in a town like Paderno ultimately makes you a part of the community. You have to interact with the locals, learn the language, build relationships, and adapt to your new environment. The program builds your character and teaches you how to be receptive to these new changes.

What was your favorite moment in the CIMBA Program? Favorite class? Difficult moments?

Being part of the cultural seminars that really made students dive straight into Italian culture, particularly culture from the Veneto region. My favorite MBA class was marketing under Dr. DJ Nayakankuppam from the University of Iowa, it was a lot of fun and we did a lot team projects. I would say that the most difficult moment of the CIMBA program is being away from your family. Luckily at CIMBA you have a chance to create life-long relationships with people that become like family.



What was the impact of the program on your life and career?

The program has had a very positive impact, I would say that for me personally working and studying at CIMBA while living in Italy made me a very adaptable person. The program forces you to adapt to a new language, culture, business culture, food, and environment. Being adaptable and flexible is a key trait that is needed in today's global business world and organizations. You have to be able to adapt to any unexpected situation and decision that may come your way, be able to pivot and make the best business choice. The program will teach you to step out of your comfort zone, expand it, then step out again.

Looking back at your professional career, is there something you regret?

No regrets! I believe that everything happens for a reason and that you ultimately learn from your mistakes. Making mistakes is a natural part of life, the key is to grow and learn from them and become a better person both personally and professionally.

What advice would you give to current or prospective students?

Take it all in! Live in the moment because your time at CIMBA and Italy will go by so fast! Learn the language, immerse yourself in local culture, build relationships, and enjoy your stint in the Veneto region. Years after you will look back at your time at CIMBA and realize how much you miss it.

Can you share a dream or future goal?

I am a huge soccer fan, a personal dream would be to go to a World Cup and a professional dream/future goal would be to do a work assignment in Europe for a year or two, preferably in Italy or in the UK.

What is your favorite movie? And your favorite book?

My favorite movie is Casino Royale and my favorite books are The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini and The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

What inspires you?

My wife, family, and friends are a huge inspiration in everything I do! I am very lucky to have them, they are an immense drive.

Is there something else you would like to add?

To all future and current students: Visit the town of Asolo as much as you can! It is the hidden gem of the Veneto region. Have fun and take it all in!