

Vision Quest: Graduate Student Seeks New Way of Seeing IT

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“I want to ask the 'why' questions about long-term strategy... .” –Ryan Elliott, '13MS-MOT

Some graduate students come to the Whittemore School of Business and Economics seeking to improve and add to skill sets and expertise. They come here seeking promotion in their jobs, or new careers. They come here seeking growth, new ways of seeing, creating, and leading. Whether they work in banking, technology, healthcare, or law, they change the way they and the organizations where they work do business.

Raised in Boardman, Ohio, and graduated from Youngstown State University with a B.S. in computer information systems, Ryan Elliott '13G kicked around in a variety of technical jobs from Ohio to New Hampshire. Twelve years ago, he had a “vision.”

“I saw myself working for ten years or so designing databases and then applying to a graduate program that would let me leverage my work experience to become a powerful businessperson,” says Elliott. “I want to ask the “why” questions about long-term strategy and design systems that add more value.”

Today, he’s seeing his vision come to fruition working at Liberty Mutual, and thanks to the Master of Science in the Management of Technology degree at the Whittemore School, becoming an IT leader.

Elliott says the WSBE program offers just the right mix of business and technology focus. For example, he describes a course in emerging technology marketing, taught by associate marketing professor Ludwig Bstieler, as “a real eye opener.”

In this course, student project teams are responsible for advancing ideas from inception to production. “You’re constantly balancing the questions of market demand and development time,” says Elliott. “But, in the end, Professor Bstieler told us to ‘listen to your customer’s voice for your answers.’”

In addition to acquiring new skills, Elliott also places a high value on the diversity of his Whittemore School classmates who come from industries as varied as defense, insurance, and consulting. “My classmates will be a future network for me. I value them a lot. They are my social capital,” he says.

Elliott puts in 13-hour days working and attending classes, but it’s all worth it to the father of a one-year old boy and new homeowner.

After all, he’s living out his vision.

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