

Having spent the past seven years working in sports public relations, I had no idea what to expect when I decided to change career paths and move to Arizona from California to enroll in Arizona State University's Marriage and Family Therapy master's program. Initially, many thoughts (and fears) crossed my mind: Would going back to school be difficult after working for many years? How will I be able to manage my internship, the program course load and a job? What will it be like moving to a new state? What if I did not like the program? Ultimately, I did not let my fears hold me back and it was the best thing I could have ever done for myself.

Going back to school after working full-time (with no homework) for several years was something I initially thought would be challenging. I thought I would be less prepared than the other students who had recently graduated college and wondered if my work experience would be a hindrance since it was in a completely different field. However, my work experience actually became an invaluable asset for graduate school. Because of my work experience, I knew how to manage my time well, a key component for being successful in the marriage and family therapy program, and was able to incorporate many of the skills and experiences I acquired in my previous career at my internship site. No longer did I view my previous experience as a limitation but instead knew that my experience made me a well-rounded student and future therapist.

Another concern I had was knowing if I would be able to balance school, the internship and a job. Although the program is challenging, it is possible to balance all three. Listening to the advice of the program directors regarding only taking on flexible part-time work and my experience in time management, I was able to create a schedule that worked for me that

allowed me to dedicate ample time to be successful in my studies, internship, job and personal life.

Another challenge I anticipated was difficulties in adjusting to moving to a new state. Although I knew a few people in Arizona, my first friends were my fellow cohort members. Because we were all embarking on a new journey together, it allowed us to bond very quickly. My cohort was made up of those who had just graduated college, those who had worked other jobs before changing careers (like myself) and others who decided to return to the work field after being a stay at home parent. The similarities we were sharing in the program bonded us more than the differences of our routes that got us to the program. As the program continued, the cohort members were the people that I could turn to who knew exactly what I was going through regarding the program and the people I could ask to tell me about places I should visit in Arizona. They have become a great resource both professionally and personally and friends that will last a lifetime.

My last concern and perhaps the greatest was what if I do not like the program after having left my previous career and moved to Arizona. Luckily, by the second day of the program, I knew I had made the correct decision. I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the program from the lectures to the course work to the internship experience. Each aspect of the program allowed me to confirm that this was in fact the career I wanted to pursue. I knew that the only way I would ever know if I had made the correct decision was to take that leap into the unknown and I am glad that I did.