

# New Territory

by Shaila Ansari (*BBA Accounting, 2016*)

One way to combat fear and uncertainty when traveling in unknown territory is to seek guidance from someone who has been there. Many of us have come here from very different places, so my transition from boarding school in India to the Baruch NYC campus was interesting, but hardly unique. Since 55 percent of Baruch students come from an assemblage of about 164 different countries, many of us faced the challenges of adapting to a new educational, cultural, political, societal and often linguistic environment, mostly without the help of family close by. I met these challenges the way many do; by getting involved in on-campus activities, cultural events, networking events, and clubs. After two years or so, I felt right at home...just in time to start worrying about what happens to me when it is time to leave here.



As an accounting major, I became focused on career questions. Will there be a job for me when I graduate? Is there anything I should be doing now to make certain there will be? Should I do an internship? If so, how do I find one? Do I look solely at the 'Big Four' international accounting firms? What do the 'Big Four' look for in student candidates? What exactly is 'networking' and how do I do it? The list goes on.

Luckily for me, my big brother Gulam Sarwar Ansari did his MBA here at Baruch in 2009 and he gave me some important advice. "Get involved in Executives on Campus (EOC)." He told me how his mentor guided him along his path to success, providing insight, advice, and encouragement along the way. Gulam still tells me that it was his EOC mentor who always motivated him to be well-rounded and active in extra-curricular activities. After seeing how EOC helped Gulam, I decided to apply to its Academic Year Long Mentoring Program.

I was partnered with Jeffrey Baliban, a CPA with an MA in Economics, who has a long (35+ year) career, and who has been with several major accounting and consulting firms over the years. Meeting someone of the age and professional stature of Jeffrey (as he prefers to be called) can be, at first, a bit daunting. After all, just how willing would he be to take time from his day and mentor me? At our first meeting, he discerned this apprehension and quickly put me at ease, explaining,

“ I have this long accounting career. The wonderful thing about having amassed all of this experience is that I can give it all to you...and yet still have it.”

Jeffrey is every bit the mentor I could have wished for. He has not only helped me with my career concerns but he always makes himself available to me, whether I seek guidance on academics or help in choosing what leadership program to go for. In these past six months, Jeffrey has coached me to become more informed about the accounting world.

Recently, I had an interview so I contacted Jeffrey for his help. He took the time to prepare me well for the interview, suggesting research resources so I arrive at the interview well-informed about the company and the markets in which it participates. He helped me hone my communication skills with mock interviews. I also wondered how I as a college student could possibly impress these successful professionals who would be interviewing me. Jeffrey told me that they were taking time away from their daily endeavors of creating firm profits to meet with promising young students who could continue the success of their individual firms. In other words, he reminded me that, as important as they were to me, I was important to them. He also told me the interview was not just for them to pick me but also for me to pick them. After all, my future career is a precious asset to me and I need to invest it as best I can.

His interview coaching coupled with these insights into the interview process had the effect of building my confidence – an important key to success. This allowed me to enter the interview with a different attitude and in the end I did really well. Therefore, my thanks to Jeffrey and the EOC program as a whole, who can do so much to help prepare me for the important decisions I am about to face.

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