AFM 415 international study course and we have four students joining us today. Cedric, Katie, Rebecca and Roseline and they're going to share their experience with this course this past spring with you and maybe help spark some curiosity in you and something that you might want to do.

In the future.

Everyone, thank you so much for having us. We just want to welcome you to our AFM 415 international study course crew cast. Today will be providing you a brief introduction of our course as well as our personal experiences going through the program to start us off, let's do a brief introduction of each of our panelists starting with Cedric.

Good morning everyone. My name is Cedric and I was part of the spring 2020 AFM international online study course, so I was part of the logistics team and what I mainly did or like. Well my team mainly did was we were kind of working on a lot of the background stuff of the class so.

That includes like scheduling.

Creating meeting minutes and organizing the meetings so those were kind of our main duties throughout the term.

So I guess I'll pass it to Rebecca for her introduction.

Hi, I'm Rebecca and I'm 3A and I was part of the you know well it should have been mailed team. However since it was a online course as part of the marketing team and I guess that's something to talk about is one of my favorite part for the course. I think being part of the marketing people just making posters and planning games for every full class we had and next I'll be passing it off to Roseline.

Hi everyone, my name is Roseline. I'm in my 4A term of AFM and I was also part of the spring 2020 AFM 415 course an I was I think I my favorite part of the course was probably just interacting with the variety of different professionals that we got to meet and just hearing about their experiences and especially those who are alumni of UW and hearing out their career kind of progressed from there.

I think next I'll be passing it over to Katie.

My name is Katie and I'm currently a 3A student and my favorite part of the course would probably just being able to meet the number of students that you meet as well as they’re pretty much people that you normally wouldn't talk to around staff. So you really think with like minded individuals just to gain a greater understanding of like business as well as what everyone's preferences are in life. So just to give you a brief overview of what AFM 415.

AFM 415 is an international study trip which is basically a 0.5 credit course to allow you to gain a greater insight into the business world through interviewing top level executives to even business professionals across a number of different industries. The courses run through the guidance of professor Steve Balaban, who is also one of your professors this term. However, this course is also very truly student run, so we basically book interviews, plan marketing ideas, even schedule what we do every day, which is all done by students. So in prior years pre COVID, we were booking hotel bookings, interviews and everything you could possibly think of were all done by students. A typical day within AFM 415 during the week of interviews with consists of.

Three debriefs three meetings with various executives, as well as many breaks in between, and you really get an opportunity to network, reach out and really gain a critical understanding of life advice, or even how these top professionals got to where they are today. And you can quite literally ask them any question you would ever want. So with this course AFM 415 it's marked on a series of things because it is a 0.5 credit course.

So that ranges from participation prep documents, which is basically a four to five slide PowerPoint as well as various reflections for each of the interviewers that you have, as well as a mini essay at the end of the interviews. So for us it was quite long at the end, but it was well worth it because you're able to meet such amazing individuals. So next will be going through committee introductions.

And I'll guess I'll pass it off to Rebecca to give us an overview of marketing and culture.

Thanks Katie. So as I mentioned before, when the course isn't actually virtual, we have is a new culture team an what the music culture team does is that they're typically the ones that looks for entertainment things for you to do on a trip, and they also book what restaurant you're able with restaurants. You guys go to on the trip.

And then for culture you would be making a cultural presentation for the rest of the class to help understand the country's culture and things to make note of when you're actually in the country. However, of course it's a virtual trip. This isn't really possible, so what Steve Balaban did with the courses he traded, the marketing and culture team, so the marketing portion is really keeping up with the Instagram. So if you guys ever looked at the SAF Waterloo Instagram you could see that, there's a story just for us that highlights for AfM415 and you speak very close, so this may be posting introduction for all the students on the cars. Or maybe doing a day in the life of the cinema part. So items like that and then what we also did was we organized games for the beginning of each of our classes, which happened every two weeks.

Just to help us get to know each other and bond a little bit because we all know that's a bit harder in an online situation and the next will be passing it to Roseline to talk about corporate religion.

Thanks so much Rebecca, um, so yeah like Rebecca mentioned, I'm part of the corporate relations team so I think this was really exciting for me because we really got to kind of. Gather the interests of our peers. So first what we did was we kind of took a survey of what the different companies that our peers wanted to talk to and speak with and then from that survey we kind of started reaching out to all these different companies and individuals from these companies that we thought would be really interesting to speak to, a lot of them were UW or SAF alumni as I've mentioned before, which made it a lot easier to establish a point of connect. I don't think, and I think it was really surprising how many people were really willing to speak with as students and just provide us with their time in their insights. So I think in terms of reaching out, we used utilized a lot of different tools. Sometimes we would find people on LinkedIn. I connect with them through there. We would use our alumni database from with the help of SAF and our professor Steve. And sometimes we would just draft bold emails to people that we wanted to speak to. So that was a really interesting and fun experience, and I think it really taught me a lot about how to develop the that first point of connection and how to maintain communication with these professionals throughout the course of the trip. Next, I'll be passing over to logistics.

Yep, so like I previously mentioned, logistics kind of serves as the backbone of the whole class. And So what I mean by that is we have the opportunity to work with all of the other teams. So for example, we work really closely with corporate relations to help with scheduling the meetings. We made sure that none of the meetings overlapped.

And we made sure that all of the people we were meeting with received meeting invites so that they were sure that they knew what time they were coming on.

And then with the marketing culture team we work with them to ensure that what they have planned for our biweekly meetings all work that we make sure the links to their games work. Then all of those logistics made sense. So it was a really good opportunity for the logistics team to kind of meet and work with a lot of these different people.

Um, yeah, so now I'll pass it back to Roseline. Let's talk about some of the companies that we work with.

Thanks Cedric. So as you guys can see from this slide here, these are a lot of the companies that we got to meet with at the end of the course during our virtual trip. And so you might recognize a lot of these names as some of them are quite well established companies. So for example, we have Deloitte one of the big four. We also have Goldman Sachs, and Blackstone.

So we really had a variety of different companies and I think the unique circumstances of the virtual coarse actually allowed us to reach out to a lot more individuals since we weren't limited to a specific destination.

I think that we also reached out to a variety of American and Canadian firms instead of just concentrating in New York, which was where our destination was supposed to be, and also from a wide variety of industries, as in telling this slide. So we had individuals of private equity and banking and investment banking, public accounting and even technology, consulting and some sports and entertainment as well such as MLSE. Yeah, so it was really amazing to hear from a lot of these individuals and they gave us a lot of great advice on how to make the most out of our time at University and how to really discover our passions. It was also really interesting to hear how all these different businesses were coping with the effects of COVID 19 and how they were adapting their technology to be able to keep up with all these changes.

I think I'll pass it back to Katie.

Thank you, Roseline. So just for some clarification AFM 415 during the winter term, as well as spring term, is the international study course and AFM 415 during the fall is the data analytics course. As these are the special topics within SAF, so we now open the floor to any questions or concerns that you might have or anything that any questions you might have for us regarding FM 415.

So feel free to send it into the chat or to any of the presenters as well.

If there are no questions, feel free to also check out the AFM 415 web page which is under the school of accounting and finance website under SAF Dash International Dash study trip. And unfortunately for the 2A students, since you guys are all on winter 2021 Co op, you are unable to apply perform 5 during the winter term. But however you can apply during any future terms where you are on campus.

And you are into your 2B term or higher, so now pass it back off to Tracy just to conclude and continue on with the crew cast.

I think Katie there are now a few questions in the Q&A.

Yeah, I can read off some of the questions. So first one I see is when did you start applying for the course and how was the application process?

Alright, so I don't remember the exact date for our application, but I'm pretty sure that I applied sometime in late

to early winter or sorry like late fall early winter.

Um, and in terms of the application process.

I believe like it wasn't anything crazy. It was kind of like submit your resume, maybe I think it was like a quick description on why you wanted to join the trip and why you would be a good fit. And then if you were selected from the application process you would then go to the interview process and what we did was we created a presentation about New York and why we wanted to go and how we fit in. And we present to that to Steve Balaban, and from there we were selected.

And yeah, don't worry too much about this specific date of when the applications are, because I'm pretty sure SAF will make sure that you remember through your emails and through the my experience app portal.

Yeah, and that's for applications. The one that is currently open is only for those who already passed through these. Unfortunately, those that were watching the two past meeting now are in 2A. So the one that is due September 17th knows about that one. That's for the winter term. However, keep your eyes open as usually there is a bit of promotion for the spring trip at the end of this fall term, especially if you are, I'm assuming you guys are in Balaban’s 205 class will likely promote you there as well.

In terms of looking at the computer question.

And of course, none of us know if there's no like secret formula on how you get selected for this trip. But knowing, like my other classmates on the trip and seeing how we how we all are, I believe just have beating yourself, especially during the interview. Presenting that to both Steve Balaban the professor, as well as the TA.

Yeah, so they kind of get to know you as well as being open to experiences and being someone who would really take advantage of these networking opportunities because there's only going to be, I believe possibly 12 students taken on the trip each year.

So they want to make sure that they're bringing 12 people that will actually ask questions, participate in the course, and they also want people that they would actually want to bring along with on a trip that think about it like a job interview, employees that they should hire people that they want to work with. Same thing for this trip, the professor and that you want to bring on people that they would actually want to go on a trip with.

Yeah, and just to add on to that, but thanks Rebecca. I think something Steve mentioned was just looking for a diverse range of interests, so don't worry if you feel like you're not sure if like your particular area of interest is like what they're looking for really looking for, like a wide variety of interests. And I found a lot of my classmates.

Had different Co op jobs or were interested in different career pathways and that made for a really wide variety of professionals that we got to speak to because of the diverse interests of our classmates. So yeah, just like was already mentioned, just be yourself and really try to express what you're passionate about and interested in.

Yeah, another question I see here is, is it possible to participate in AFM415 considering the AFM specializations and electives that you have to take so for us for us AFM415 was important part was kind of like a six course.

And as we previously mentioned, we needed biweekly and if courses were taking place in Waterloo, we would be able to meet in person for those. But we just met through Webex during the spring.

Can I add to that Cedric, I think too. If you're concerned about.

Course selection and what fits and what doesn't. Make sure you're reaching out to your academic advisor and spending some time plotting out some plans that you have. If you're thinking about an exchange. If you're thinking about how this course might fit in another specializations, then Aziza, who you would have worked with Lisa last year. But Aziza our academic, advisor is back.

So Aziza would be the individual you would reach out to, and she can certainly help you map out a plan. If you do want to find a way to maybe make this course fit for you.

I saw a question that's kind of interesting. If you knew that AFM 415 was virtual due to the pandemic, would you still have taken the course? Kind of an interesting question. Curious to hear your take on the virtual aspect of the course versus the travel aspect of the course.

Honestly, in my opinion, I would still take the course because it's a fantastic opportunity just to network with people you normally wouldn't talk to you on a day to day basis. And even when we were going in we thought it would be in person to New York City. However, I guess New York City is now the eye of the hurricane for the global pandemic, so unfortunately we're not able to go.

But I feel like it's an amazing opportunity just to meet new people. And it's a very manageable course as well as a 6 course. So I would definitely recommend taking it, and I'm sure my other panelists could also speak on their own experiences as well.

Um, yeah I can add a bit back. I think like yeah like Katie mentioned when going in we didn't. We thought we were going to go to New York City and not gonna lie like I was pretty sad when I found out we weren't gonna be there but I think looking back I definitely think it was worth it. Like I can say I would do it again even if it is virtual because.

I think even though we're not there in person, we were still learning able to learn a lot of valuable things. I think the core components of the course is still there, so really developing these networking skills and learning from these individuals and also working with such a wide variety of teammates I think are so invaluable. And like Katie mentioned, it's really.

Not too bad of a workload. I think it's very manageable and your teammates are always there to help you as well, along with whatever tasks you need to complete. So I would definitely do it again.

Great thanks, the last question we’ll answer here is the location of the trip different each term and what are some of the other places the course has taken place? So I do believe it changes each term. The location I think they've been to Germany help me out here on the other. What was the one before that?

Does anyone remember? The trip has also been to Hong Kong and then the trip before it was planning to go to Singapore and then let me cancel that one, then they were planning on going to London, but then it turned into a virtual trip.

So it does. It does change, so each term has a different sort of focus for that.

So to just finish up, I was I'm just going to ask each of you, Cedric, Katie, Rebecca, and Roseline, just given that what we know the students on this crew cast are thinking about which is that job search in that early question we had about reaching out for coffee chats. And obviously that was a big part of your course. Was connecting with people and, organizing the interview that was really going to draw out the information you were interested in getting. So maybe each of you could just offer a really short tip to our students of you know, how do you make that first point of contact or or what are ways to get a conversation started with someone that you want to learn more about?

Cedric, why don't you go first?

Yeah for sure. Yeah, I think coffee chats are something that you should never be scared about. I kind of view them as an opportunity to just meet a friend. That's how I have that in my mentality. So yeah, don't be overstressed and kind of just get to know the person and don't hope for anything too much.

Alright, Katie.

In my opinion, something we learn from the trip from someone who worked at Shopify, was be persistent so oftentimes we’ll feel like you want to just send cold emails or sending LinkedIn requests. And no one's really answering you, but what we actually learned was don't be afraid to send a follow up stating if you're free during XYZ time, just to follow up maybe a week or two later, just to see if they're still interested in doing that coffee chat, or if they're even just for example. If they're ghosting you then just following up to see if that is a possibility, and then if they don't reply then maybe look at another source of contacting them. But just being persistent in what you want, 'cause it ultimately there's someone you want to reach out to. Just try your best and don't be afraid to like gain a personal relationship with them, or even like I'm just getting more knowledge about who they are as well.

Thanks Katie, Rebecca?

Another trip tip we learned on the trip also is to reach out to Waterloo alumni. Just because these individuals are actually more likely to respond, because they remember being in your shoes and really leveraging that. And of course keeping that key information posted beginning of what messages your sending. So because one person that we talked to mention that.

When they read these messages, a lot of the time people only read like the first paragraph, and then they decide whether or not to continue reading, so making sure that you have that. Hey, I notice that your water alumni. I'm also in AFM too type of thing, in the beginning it also requesting what exactly are you trying to get out of from this message at the beginning so they know and they don't have to read a lengthy message to really figure that out.

Great thanks, Rebecca and Roseline, can I ask when you're sharing your tip and I know I'm putting you on the spot here that maybe we addressed this other question here. Was there a type of question that you really found effective at getting people talking?

Yeah, that's a great question I think.

Um?

I think people really like to talk about themselves in general, so I think if you ask them questions about themselves, generally they'll be very open to talking about that, and specifically maybe things about their personal experiences. So I think one question that made for really good open ended discussion was what was like one really big.

big thing that you learned from your experience at XYZ or what was the biggest challenge that you had to overcome or something that you were really proud of, and I think a lot of people were really happy to share those experiences, especially with students. And you can learn a lot of lessons from those as well.

Great. Thank all four of you. I will mention that Roseline and Cedric are also PSL champions this term and so they are part of the team that you'll be connecting with. Whether some of them are working with first year, some second years, but they are part of our team and will be there to offer some additional support throughout the term so.

Thank you all for your questions and thank the four of you for sharing your experience with us today. Hopefully some people are inspired to think about traveling, whether it's virtual or not.

Alright Thanks everyone.