

*“Qué será, será*

*Whatever will be, will be*

*The future's not ours to see*

*Qué será, será...”*

As a little girl, I would hum this song whenever it played on the radio. However, it would only be years later, when I journeyed into adulthood, that I fully understood the sentiment about life the song precisely described: the future is unpredictable and uncontrollable, so we must learn to accept it and carry on. My transition into adulthood, marked by boundless energy, opportunities and possibilities, was also marred by stress, constant uncertainty and ultimately, a fear of 'what's next?'. It is a time that demands making certain pivotal decisions, such as choosing a career path, pursuing further education, and building and maintaining healthy relationships. But, it is also a time of self-discovery, identifying your beliefs, taking risks and making mistakes. All of which factor into laying the foundation for the rest of your life.

To make matters worse, the universe dealt everyone a lousy hand- the spread of COVID-19 imposed social isolation, physical and mental health deterioration, and personal loss on many. Navigating life as a young adult during the pandemic was a wild ride- trying your best not to fall asleep during online lectures, cancelled parties and concerts, and making masks a fashion statement- glad that's over! But perhaps the most significant way that COVID-19 has affected young adults is in our plans for the future. Deferring college applications, challenging job searches, and cancelled travel plans brought life to a standstill. For a while, I experienced a sense of fatalism that I could do nothing to change my future. Still, in many ways, the pandemic allowed me to slow down, discover new and rekindle old interests, and eventually, it moulded me to become adaptable, creative and resilient. As a result, I came out of it with a renewed sense of purpose and appreciation of what it means to live, so I decided to chase after my dream of studying finance at one of the top financial centres in the world!

So began the daunting task of shortlisting business schools, writing personal statements - because summing up your life story in 500 words while sounding intelligent, fascinating and unique is easy, right?- and contending with the joys of visa applications and language proficiency exams. Months of hard work culminated in receiving an offer of acceptance at Bayes Business School. So I kissed goodbye to all familiar, including my mom's home-cooked meals, my dad's terrible jokes and most importantly, my long-standing apprehension for the

future. The song would now imbue a sense of optimism- I couldn't help but feel excited and hopeful for what lay ahead. It became a call to action and an important reminder to challenge myself to embrace the unknown and find the strength to take the first steps in envisioning a better future despite adversity.

When I first set foot in London, I was overwhelmed. There was so much to see and do that I had no idea where to start. The city is steeped in rich history, culture and a healthy dose of quirkiness. Also, I'm pretty sure I spent my entire life savings in the first 24 hours. Anyway, I soon learned to adapt- layering clothes like a pro and, thankfully, no longer perceiving 'alright, mate!' as a question instead of a casual greeting. Finally, I was ready to take on London, survive on a budget (ouch!) and weather four seasons in a day.

Living in a multicultural city and studying at an international business school has been an enriching adventure, opening multiple opportunities for personal and professional growth. I've interacted with people from culturally diverse backgrounds, which has developed my cultural competency, enabled me to see the world from new perspectives and helped me navigate differences in languages and customs. I've been taught by faculty, recognised for research excellence, and experienced professionals worldwide, who have provided me with valuable insights across business practices, industries, and alternative career paths. In more ways than one, this experience has broadened my horizons and prepared me to succeed in an increasingly globalised world: I've become more flexible and open-minded as I've discovered plenty of ways to approach a problem. I've enhanced my understanding of others and appreciation of our unique differences. I've learned to communicate effectively and, most valuably, adapt to a more collaborative working style by leveraging our strengths and embracing diverse opinions to jointly achieve a common goal.

As I prepare for the business world, I am no longer terrified of '*what's next?*' as I am equipped with the skills necessary to navigate a diverse and complex environment. I no longer feel stuck and defeated but confident enough and invigorated to take on the next challenge. In conclusion, even though '*the future may not be ours to see*', I firmly believe there's always a way forward if we're willing to take that leap of faith, actively pursue our goals, explore and make the most of the opportunities that come our way. Then, the future may very well become ours to SEIZE!

\*\*\*\*\*