

Ingram Scholar Alumni Spotlight



GERARD FRANKS, Class of 2017

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/gerard-franks-94679893/>

DEGREES

B.A, Economics; Vanderbilt University

CURRENT LOCATION

New York City, NY

CURRENT EMPLOYER

J.P. Morgan

CURRENT OCCUPATION

Investment Banking

DESCRIBE YOUR CAREER PATH

Around my Junior year, I knew that I wanted to work in Finance. I still remember sitting in the Career Center seeing all these people dressed up in professional clothes. I thought a typical Finance interview was simply telling them about myself and why I'd be a good fit. I had no idea the amount of preparation and studying that went into the process. I realized at that point I had to be more strategic in my approach than simply telling them about myself.

I got an internship the summer after my Junior year in Risk at Goldman Sachs in Dallas. Granted it was not the Finance related I role I was looking for, but I knew that I had to get whatever exposure was possible with a limited resume. Risk is one of the few roles in a bank where I would get exposure to learn about the numerous divisions in a bank. After that summer, I decided to accept the full-time offer knowing that it would place me in New York after graduation where I could narrow down a more specific role in Finance and try to move to that role at Goldman.

After about a year or so in Risk, I realized that Investment Banking peaked my interest. I enjoyed that the role was challenging, provided me exposure to topics outside the bank, and allowed me to further my skillset. I tried to move to an Investment Banking role internally at Goldman, but didn't have any success for the longest. This is where the Ingram community comes into play. I was at dinner with Priya Trivedi and Rob Lee one night in New York and Priya mentioned that she worked in Investment Banking and her company, J.P. Morgan, had an open role. She put me in touch with a couple of other Vanderbilt alumni and I was brought in for an interview, ultimately landing the job at the beginning of this year (thanks Priya!).

Needless to say, the current environment is not how I envisioned starting a new job. I've spent more time working from home than in the office. However, looking back I realized the importance of having patience and being strategic. I could have taken any role along the way while in Risk at Goldman, but I knew that I wanted to be in Investment Banking, so I waited while simultaneously cultivating the opportunity. Also, I was strategic in the decisions I have made throughout my career both in college and post-college. I knew the chances of landing an Investment Banking role were pretty slim during my Senior year, so I decided to accept the role in Risk knowing that it would provide me more exposure and skills to ensure I made the right next step. I always think about what it is I want to learn and what opportunity will provide that.

HOW DID THE INGRAM SCHOLARS PROGRAM PREPARE YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE DOING TODAY?

The Program showed me the importance of sharing my opinions with others. Needless to say there are a lot of differing beliefs and opinions in the Program, which is one of the many benefits the Program offers to students. However, there were times when those beliefs and opinions differed amongst scholars, which not only forced me to share my opinions but also defend them. After working full-time, I have had to do the same with my opinions on projects and the Program has prepared me to do so.

IF YOU COULD DESCRIBE THE INGRAM SCHOLARS PROGRAM IN THREE WORDS WHAT WOULD THEY BE?

My three words would be connected, consistent, and creative.

WHAT DOES THE INGRAM SCHOLAR COMMUNITY MEAN TO YOU?

The Ingram community embodies connectedness. When I head back to Nashville, I meet up with a couple of Ingram alumni and it feels like time barely passed by. Furthermore, I am

grateful for the Ingram alumni community in NYC. Everything was still kind of new and it was nice to not only see familiar faces but also talk about Vanderbilt, Ingram, Nashville among many other topics – all things that are great!

BEST INGRAM SCHOLAR MEMORY

I was always excited to attend Mrs. Ingram's Christmas party, since the party was a nice break from studying for finals and celebrating the holiday spirit. However, my first time was memorable because of what I saw, for the first time ever, these mini grilled cheese and tomato soups. And when I say mini I don't just mean kid's size, I legitimately mean mini. You should have seen the amazement in my eyes when they brought them around the room. I had never seen anything so small have so much flavor. I look forward to hopefully being invited back to enjoy those great creations in the future.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR CURRENT SCHOLARS WHO WANT TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR INGRAM SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE?

My advice goes to both the scholars and alumni – take advantage of the Ingram Mentorship Program. I am not only saying this as a shameless plug but also because of the many benefits. My mentee, Jared Lapidus, and I talk once a month on various topics ranging from new music and what's going on in the world to class and career advice. I was even able to take a trip down to Nashville where we grabbed dinner and Jeni's. Personally, I am grateful to the people that helped me get to where I am at today, so mentoring Jared reminds me to stay gracious and to also help answer the same questions that I had during college. He even passes down some wisdom to me including the fact that Rand gives away free cookies on Fridays! Also, Scholars, have fun and enjoy college. After being out of college for a few years I've realized that college is one of the very few times where you have autonomy over your time. Take advantage of it and explore as much as possible!