



An Interview with Mary-Kate Pizzuti (MScSM '21)

"The program and my sustainability journey so far have given me so much purpose in life. I wake up every day and know exactly what my purpose is."

-Mary-Kate Pizzuti

What is the most essential skill you learned from the MScSM program and that you currently use in work?

Looking at sustainability with a very holistic lens impacts our mindset of how different sustainability-related risks can affect a wide range of stakeholders. The program Director Prof. Shashi Kant taught us the ability to holistically look at sustainability issues while focusing on all three aspects: Environment, Social, and Governance equally. It is something that I resonated with and implement in my daily work life.

What are the job duties of your current role?

I am a Sustainability Consultant at ERM. I work with two teams: Climate Change and Corporate Sustainability. As part of the Climate Change team, I work on Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions accounting along with decarbonization strategies and roadmaps for companies. In addition to GHG accounting, I assist companies in developing their Sustainability Disclosures through reports based on Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), Climate Disclosure Project (CDP), TCFD, and other frameworks. I support companies with Materiality and Double Materiality Assessments through stakeholder engagement, peer benchmarking, and gap assessments, which help determine the material issues which are important to the companies from internal and external stakeholders' perspectives as well as the financial perspective.

How did you decide which sector you want to work in?

During my summer internship experience at Liberty Utilities, I realized the importance of low-carbon technologies, renewable energy, and the role utilities play in the climate transition. In my final year of MScSM, I focused my thesis on best practices for siting renewable energy in the grasslands ecosystems- a balance of meeting both climate and biodiversity targets. My interest in renewable energy and the low-carbon transition made me further explore career opportunities in this sector. After graduation, I worked with Alectra Utilities on their Green Renewable Energy and Technology Center. My experience in the energy and utilities industry helped me understand the decision-making process in the sector, and the many initiatives needed to reach a decarbonized world. I was eager to learn more and gain more experience with different industries which led me to look into consulting. I could relate my MScSM experience of learning something new every day to consulting and hence, I applied for a role at ERM. The position I was offered aligned with my professional goals, targets, and future expectations.

What is the most prominent problem that you face in your industry?

We need to constantly strive to adapt and balance time, quality of deliverables, and budget. As consultants, we aim to provide quality deliverables to our clients, but also help them achieve ambitious goals and targets that we personally envision for a company that's just starting on its sustainability journey. Gaining the executive buy-in of a strategy's feasibility and its long-term benefits is one of the challenges that a Sustainability Consultant faces.

What are your suggestions to the class of 2024 and beyond?

Identify the sector that you are really passionate about and find the alumni and connections working in that sector. Connect and network with people from that sector to understand their work and their everyday job requirements. Identifying the sector you want to work in and getting a feel for the culture and various roles helps you to understand where you can see yourself and prioritize your interests. This will enable you to build genuine relationships and strive towards your ambitions.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

During my Master's, I started volunteering for a non-profit organization- Impact Zero. In 5 years, I hope to start working full-time with them. The organization is built on the principles of circular economy, and I really look forward to seeing it grow. I just bought a house in the countryside, hopefully, in the next five years I can start a little hobby farm.

What is one sustainability trend that you foresee soon?

Biodiversity and Nature-positive solutions will increasingly become more important in the near future. Further, with the incoming regulatory requirements, Scope 3 disclosures will be disclosed by more companies than the present number.

What is your most memorable experience in the MSCSM program?

The case-study competitions in the first year were really fun and impactful. Although it was stressful at that time, I look back and think about it as a memorable and fun learning experience with my classmates.