

Intro	0:00	Hi, I'm Jacob Walsh, and I'm Orion Lamontagne. Thank you for tuning into the Manage-A-Bull MBA podcast where we have deep dive conversations with students, faculty, staff, and alumni to give you a comprehensive picture of the life inside of a top tier MBA program. In this episode, we speak with Sam Opoku and Sonya Tareke. Sam is a dual MD/MBA and Sonya is a full-time MBA. In our conversation, Sam and Sonya share their experience traveling to Ghana over their last winter break through the Global Perspectives program here at the University of Buffalo School of Management. If you are interested in participating in a global program and want to learn more about the experiences you can expect, this episode is a must listen for you. Be sure to check out our show notes where we will post links to the UB MBA web page and contact information for Sam, Sonya, and ourselves. If you enjoyed this podcast Follow us on Twitter @UBMBAandMS to stay up to date on what's happening in the UB School of Management, where extraordinary is our normal. Thank you and enjoy.
Jake	1:13	Welcome back to this next episode of the Manage-A-Bull MBA podcast. This is the fifth we are recording not sure if this is the fifth you're listening to. But today we are here with Sonya Tareke and Sam Opoku. Is that correct?
Sonya	1:30	Yes
Jake	1:31	Okay. And we're going to be talking to these two about the Global Perspectives program that is offered here at UB and it's a chance for individuals to travel abroad and to do different projects in different parts of the world through our school in both Sam and Sonya went to Ghana. And we're going to talk about that so want to just start us off with before we get into that, who are you? How about we start with that. Tell us about yourself.
Sonya	1:57	Ladies first? Sam is a gentleman, so I knew it was coming. Hi guys, welcome to the podcast, or akwaaba in Twi, which means welcome. So my name is Sonya Tareke. I'm currently a first-year MBA student here at UB. I'm really tempted to eat this chocolate that I'm having right in front of me from Ghana. But we're going to hold off till later in the segment, as Jake has planned, so yeah, I'm in my first year. I'm looking forward to talking about this trip. It was amazing. It was during the winter session, Sam and I had

the pleasure of going through the full duration of the trip. So we were there for about three and a half weeks, I would say so a lot to talk about, but you'll get into we'll get into that later. So Sam?

- Sam 2:27 yeah, well, we'll see. My name is Samuel Opoku. I am a first-year MBA as well, dual degree just finished my third year of medical school. So you know, this is all kind of coming together. For me. I got a lot of aspirations in the business realm and you know, so obviously want to be a doctor. So, so I combined, and I was originally born in Ghana myself, and emigrated to the States
- Orion 2:50 Really? Oh wow, I was actually going to ask why you picked Ghana to travel to.
- Sam 2:56 Yes, I mean, at least as far as global programs, options go, Ghana was the only one at the time that had a medical component as well, as you know, the business component. So that's that was the biggest draw. And obviously, you know, being my home country that was, you know, even more icing on the cake. Um, I came to the states when I was about two years old, I grew up in Queens, New York, so shout out to queens, and then, you know, education took me through to now, Buffalo, New York, so you know, just having a good time.
- Jake 3:36 That's, that's awesome. So I mean, one of the things with a global perspective program is the different programs kind of focus on different aspects in their relationship to business and what not. So I know, like the Costa Rica one that Sonya and I are doing later is like entrepreneurship based. The Ghana one to be medical focused. Obviously, you're a doctor Sam, what was your interest Sonya into Ghana? As it's not Do you have medical aspirations?
- Sonya 3:59 I don't. I've once upon a time did but I found out I don't have so much time to go to medical school. So I decided to go on the medical portion just because I felt like if I was going to take the trip to Ghana, two weeks, it's a whole different time zone, I'm going to have to just a whole different you know, country, I feel like I would have adjusted right at the end of the two weeks and by the time I got fully adjusted, it wasn't time to pack up and leave. So I felt like I needed a little bit more time and I felt that in the medical portion of the team, even though I didn't have

medical skills, there's still things you can bring to the table. There are still logistics involved in the hospital or medical care or in the pop-up shops that we kind of did. So, I felt like there was a spot for medical or for a non-medical student. So I'm hoping I'm working with Professor Asamoah to hopefully set up a position where there will actually be room for non-medicals to go to that portion of the trip. We're currently every single year is this is the only it's only the second year that the trip has been up and running. So you can still mold and kind of there's so many ways where you can create a position even though there is none and that's we'll talk about that later with the projects that had to do with the management portion but I like, there's always something for you to do as long as you're open and willing to, you know, learn and volunteer your time. So I just wanted to go because I felt like I wanted to spend more time here than just two weeks

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| Orion | 5:10 | Was this both of your first time traveling abroad or have you guys done trips before? |
| Sam | 5:15 | I've done a couple of trips, a couple bay-cations, as they call them now. |
| Sonya | 5:22 | You just planned a trip to Cuba right? |
| Sam | 5:25 | Yeah, actually, the week before going to God, I was in Cuba. My girlfriend took us for the holiday, which was really nice. So I got a couple of different international experiences, but nothing in this capacity, you know, the terms of just the work that had to be put in and then, you know, also in conjunction with an educational institution, that obviously has a different connotation than just traveling abroad on your own or, you know, for leisure. But it gave me a different perspective of travel that I've come to really, really appreciate. |
| Sonya | 5:55 | And likewise, this wasn't my first trip through UB but it was my first international trip. So I did a domestic service trip which is kind of similar, I don't know if it's running still, but it was alternate spring break. And we went to Bama so we got to go down south, got some good old home cooking, I still miss Martha's. We went to Montgomery; we went to Selma. We went to Birmingham. So we kind of just hopped around all around Alabama was kind of similar to what we did. But it wasn't that medical oriented, it was |

kind of volunteering and schools, churches, other spots. Whereas this was my first international trip through UB. So yeah, I figured I could have done you know, Rome, Italy, I could have done you know China, which is the go to in the School Management. And that's kind of been the school of managements baby since its inception. But you know, if I had the chance to go to Africa, at school subsidizing the part of the trip and you're getting to go with other students, I figured why not? So yeah, and my family's from East Africa. So I was able to also go to Ethiopia at the same time after the trip, so it was kind of a pilgrimage for Sam and I.

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| Jake | 6:57 | That is fascinating, you know, to be able to do that. So when did you like how did this start about before you started the program did you know about these trips, or after you got to the school was it something you started thinking about? |
| Sam | 7:10 | Um, but so for me, um, I have a friend named Evelyn. She was one of the, I guess you could say, like, grad graduate like administrators in a capacity. So she kind of helped a professor Asamoah kind of put together, you know, logistically what we're going to be doing in Ghana, she went the previous year. So she's also an MD MBA. And so I had heard wind of it from her originally. And then actually during my interview, I happen to run into professor Asamoah in the office. Yeah, and I think the first thing she said to me was, Oh, are you in? I said, Yes. And said oh cool, well we are going to Ghana in December so I'll see you there. So I was excited. But you know, I mean, it for me, like I said, I got some really long term goals, philanthropic goals specifically in Ghana that I would like to accomplish. So having the opportunities to touch on that from, you know, in an educational environment where all of this will be a little bit more structured for me and I get to kind of see kind of what Sonya was talking about with, you know, the logistics of these in in kind of getting more of the conceptual understanding of how these things are run. That was like a godsend to me. So that's great. |
| Sonya | 8:30 | Well she didn't exactly walk up to me and say we're going but a professor Asamoah was my professor in undergrad because I was also in the school management and the business program as an undergraduate. So I heard about the trip. It was a pilot trip, and I wanted to go the first semester she said, I didn't have you know, I didn't have the funds and |

I didn't save up for it. So I didn't plan accordingly. So I got a hostess gig at TGI Fridays, so you know if you want a 50% discount, come visit me Friday night this week. So I started hostessing and I saved. So I already knew before I applied to them, this was the program that I wanted to go. I just knew that had to save up for it. Because you know, when you go to Ghana and you want to buy a bunch of souvenirs, I wanted to travel beforehand and after which we could talk about later. So I did a little bit an extended trip. So yeah, I knew from the year before that I wanted to go, I just had to plan accordingly for the following year. So I traveled before and I've been to Europe before and then we also a couple of us went to South Africa after and I know you guys did Morocco.

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| Sam | 9:24 | Yes, we went to Casa Blanca |
| Jake | 9:29 | When you find yourself on the opposite side of the world, you might as well take advantage of it |
| Sonya | 9:32 | Why not |
| Sam | 9:36 | Exactly the coinage that it takes to get there, you know, you gotta take advantage. |
| Jake | 9:41 | So, take a step back for a quick second I guess or to explain a little more on it. How many people went on this trip? Like how large was this trip? And then what was the split? Because from what I understand, it's not just business students are some like just straight medical students as well. And then between the two aspects between the medical and the business portion of the trip, kind of how was that split up? |
| Sonya | 10:01 | How many were we because every time we went somewhere we would kind of take over a space that had to be mindful of that while we were there. Yeah, that was a piece of feedback, you know, because you know, we love feedback and reflection was a big piece of the trip. We were like the mindful you know, you guys are a group of large Americans. So anytime you go somewhere, you know, we tend to be a little bit more loud a little bit more. |
| Sam | 10:21 | We definitely stuck out. |
| Sonya | 10:22 | You know visually, verbally. |

Sam	10:26	So I know MD/MBA's, myself and Evelyn. I know there was a nurse practitioner. We also had MPH students.
Sonya	10:33	We had to MPH students
Sam	10:36	And then there were five pharmacists and he's on the medical side of things. So then when you kind of broken split up into the management side of things, I know, a couple of the pharmacist went back some stayed for a little bit but didn't say for the, you know, the duration, almost had some undergraduate students maybe like
Sonya	10:53	The majority of management students were undergrads. The undergrads took over on the trip which was really impressive. The MBA side, we had myself we had Alex Goldberg Ethan Sokolowski, we had Teresa Monroe was another and actually the three of us students. So yeah, a lot we had a lot of we had a couple MBAs, but the majority were undergrads. So I don't want to go through the list as much as I would love to give everybody a shout out
Sam	11:19	We had 20 of both medical and combined.
Sonya	11:23	I would say about 30 to 35. Roughly 33 between the medical management combined.
Orion	11:29	Did you guys know each other prior some?
Sam	11:35	There was a, you know, a little bit of a class that we had prior to that was pretty much for the purposes of getting to know one another before the trip, which was, which was definitely very nice. Obviously, with our different schedules. It was kind of difficult to get everyone there at the same time, but over the course of the semester proceeding the actual trip, we definitely got to see everybody.
Sonya	11:55	Certainly, I think the class is essential. Because the previous year, the first year they went they didn't have a seminar. So they kind of all met on ground zero like, hey wassup, we didn't really meet in Buffalo. So coming back I wish we had time to kind of get to know each other. Then we kind of got to know each other than at the end of the two weeks, you know, time to go home. So I think that's why they had given the class and then we all kind of got to know each other during class though the medical students

had a separate I don't know if you guys had a seminar, did you?

- Sam 12:27 So we were invited to the class as well, mom. And I guess for the medical team, we did have services that were a little bit different just in terms of like, getting to understand what vaccines we would need because obviously that the population we would be seeing a little bit different from just the standard trip to Africa or Ghana for that matter. So yeah, it was it just a couple of things here and there, but for the most part, we still all kind of interacted collectively as just one unit.
- Sonya 12:48 Get your yellow fever shots? Hit up, Michael Hall. That's another thing a lot of paid for passport help directly and we paid for it out of pocket when we did not realize that, you know, Michael Hall on the South Campus had some of the shots in supply so, you know
- Sam 13:03 I did not know that
- Sonya 13:05 For anyone who is considering the trip I would highly recommend going
- Jake 13:10 I still need a shot for ours to Costa Rica. Maybe I'll hit up over there, that's good to know. So I guess rolling on to that then I'm treatment like I'm interested, you know, what was what were you actually doing on like boots on the ground over there, you know, I'm sure that from the medical standpoint, things were a little bit different. You have a little bit more authority in what you can do there, but I'm curious, you know, like, what was the process? Where were you guys doing?
- Sam 13:35 Okay, so um, there were always say, like three main kind of initiatives that we did while we were in Ghana. So the first part, we did a clinic for pretty much like school, children, elementary school age. And so we kind of had that it was actually we set up our local tents like right outside of the school, (Inaudible name) I want to say was the name of the school. So, you know, we had, I want to say they were anywhere from like, five years old to anywhere like
- Sonya 14:07 85

Sam

14:08

Yeah, yeah. Cause that's what happens you got is, you know, when you say we're doing this program here, obviously if I'm bringing my kid and hey, I got an earache, could you look into it for me so there's a lot of that going on so did have to kind of be you know on your toes and be very flexible and adaptable which was a very big theme of the entire trip. But you know, for the most part the kids that they were just super appreciative of some of them were really sick and you know, for those we would kind of like just recommend to the hospital, but a lot of it was mostly just education, you know, so you have a lot of people that aren't necessarily exposed to specifically westernized medicine and how to approach relatively fixable ailments. So just kind of talking to them and getting them to see how to take care, you know, like a headache or I take care of, you know, like a tummy ache and it just supported measures, for the most part. They, you know, we're very appreciative of things like that. The other takeaway was that on our side, you know, there was a lot of malaria, which is not something you typically see here. So it took a lot of adapting for us to kind of get used to, you know, what medications that we should give, because some of the things that we would potentially use here in the states there even go by a different trade name, what have you. So, there was a little bit of an adjustment period, kind of get into that. But once you kind of, you know, put that all together, it's just, you know, it's just hit the ground running. And it was just a very fulfilling experience. So that was at least the balance sheet prep. I think we did that for two days. And then we left. This was the main initiative left for also place called the Dwarf Islands, and we're hoping to change the name to the Hope Islands. So that is an area of very, very underserved, you know, it took us I think, a two-and-a-half-hour bus ride to get to the dock essentially to take another I want to say is an hour-long boat ride. And that's exactly the same way how they would have to travel or to get to a hospital. So, you know, obviously, you imagine just how grueling that would be for someone, especially if you are sick at the time. So, um, you know, we finally get to the actual location and we set up our tents and kind of our, our camp and where you're sleeping, and we're going to be taking care of patients. So that in its entirety was about three days, I want to say, um, so we were at one location for about two days, and then we left in which location for about a day and a half or so, and that was the bulk of it, and we saw everything. We had a guy come in with a laceration

on his head that was really deep. So you know, we had to do some stitching and suturing of that, we had a kid coming in who had a mass on his by his jaw that, you know, we actually found out this was cancerous.

Orion

16:52

Wow

Sam

16:53

So he was able to come back with us as we were leaving the area to go back to the hospital. So he was, fortunately, able to be seen. So we did get word back that he's being taken care and he's getting the proper medication. So he's going to get through it, which, you know, if we didn't come that day, and someone didn't see that and say hey this looks like this is pretty serious. And, you know, he might still be there to this day, kind of just try to wing it off. So it's very important that we get the word out that there are places like this everywhere. But you know, if you do have the ability to help, it's it's, you know, definitely beneficial to the people and even to yourself, like I have been supremely rewarded through this experience, you know, just my own emotional security and mentally, it's just been a fantastic experience for me. I think all in all, at least from the Hope Island component, we probably saw, I want to say somewhere between five to 700 patients a day, if not more. So there were four, So they were three practitioners and then myself and Evelyn also service practitioners while we were there. So, you know, just like a regular doctor's visit come in, you know, what's bothering you do a physical exam, and then, you know, kind of proceed from there based on what we decide, you know, is going on and give you treatment or what have you. We did come with some of our own medications, which was awesome. We did get some, some forget the name of the place that actually helped donate some of the pharmaceuticals but that was a godsend, you know, so be thankful for that. And, you know, just having some supplies on hand to be able to do things like the sutures and kind of just repairing just, you know, scrapes and bruises here and there. That was something that just would be very uncomfortable for a patient on a daily but just given that, given the ability to touch them and see that, you know they're getting some type of treatment that in itself can be therapeutic a lot of the time. So that was just fantastic experience that we come into that finally came back to Accra from the islands. And we went to this was the Chiefs house, which is awesome. And the chief actually lives in a

Sonya	19:26	Palace
Sam	19:27	<p>And the chief actually lent us his palace to see some of the senior citizens in the area, which was pretty cool experience. And they man, they just full of energy and love everybody pray for us almost non stop. It was fantastic. And you know, we're able to do things like get them kind of fitted for glasses, we had some classes that were donated, it kind of just did you know, like all the spot optometry clinic there too. So you know, a very diverse range of different things that we had to try out there. And most of them had like hypertension type issues. So you know, some of the medications that we bought, are able to just give them to them, like a 30 day supply. But obviously, we want to get them to follow up and get to the doctor where they can kind of get that treatment more regularly than what we can provide it, you know, in a one week period. So it's been just a fantastic experience.</p>
Sonya	20:15	Sam's being humble, you also translated for us.
Sam	20:17	<p>Yeah. So, I mean, obviously, there's a bit of a language barrier, as you can imagine. So at least for the school, and the Senior Clinic, we spoke Twi there. And the patients, they mostly spoke Twi. And that is my native tongue. So my parents speak it at home. So I was able to, you know, help translate in that regard. But when we were actually at the Dwarf Islands they speak a little bit of a different dialect. So we had to talk to a translator at that point. Because I wasn't too familiar with the, with the tongue there. But yeah, that obviously, you could imagine how big of a barrier that would be, but having people that work, you know, able to understand the process Evelyn, one of the other MBA's, you know, also was able to translate, and she spoke the language actually, both in a Accra, which is where we had the Senior Clinic, as well as at the Dwarf Islands so she's multitalented. So, you know, they got through that</p>
Jake	21:19	<p>I mean, you know, I'm sure, especially being from Ghana, yourself, and just understanding that it's a completely different part of the world, you know, you had to have some expectations going in, was there anything that when you actually got there, and you were, you know, on the ground starting to do work that, you know, struck you or stuck out that was even different than you would expected?</p>

Or maybe, you know, any particular struggles with the people that you just weren't quite ready for?

- Sam 21:43 Sure. I mean, outside of just the access that that was the biggest things. I mean, like when we're on the Dwarf Islands, this is an area where I just literally know like, like water, electricity. So when it's six o'clock, it's nighttime. And that means options in the pretty much everything stops, you know, so I kind of didn't realize that that was something that people were still kind of dealing with in the modern world. And it was a big kind of shock. To me, it was also refreshing to me, being able to just kind of like plug out for like a solid week and I had to look at your phone and have to worry about you know, everything that goes on kind of just all the noise and that was very just peaceful for me, you know, you realize how much time in a day you waste just kind of looking at your phone screen. And I think apple tracks that right?
- Jake 22:31 4 hours a day
- Sam 22:34 So yeah
- Sonya 22:35 Have you tracked yourself yet?
- Jake 22:36 Mine's pretty low
- Sonya 22:37 Alright Jake
- Sam 22:38 So I'm aspiring to be more like Jake
- Sonya 22:40 Well for the rest of us, while recording this right now my phone is buzzing. And when we were there, you know, some places where you just didn't have WiFi didn't have service and their option to buy service, you can go through Vodafone. Yeah, we just didn't want to because it was so nice to know like you said.
- Sam 22:55 You can enjoy people's company and what people have to offer. And I think that was reflected very much in people. And can probably speak to this, but I saw, you know, just the level of hospitality people had there and just the love for your fellow man. Man, it kind of just completely changed my perspective on you know, what, what can be really considered important, you know, like we're here, I think, in the US, it's, you know, a lot of emphasis on just

materialistic things, and in trying to get to a certain point your life. But, you know, if we just appreciate one another, I think that might actually take us a lot further as a people that we are able to appreciate right now.

Sonya

23:34

And on the flip side, on a positive note, the theme of the entire trip is entrepreneurship, right? And when we got there, I was surprised to see how many people we were talking about this before the interview, how many people have a side hustle? So that's kind of almost an expectation, if you're here, I used to sell study guides back in undergrad. Okay. That was my side hustle, and I was when I was the only one who did that people say oh, you know, that's a good thing that, you know, good for you. But when I got there, it was kind of just you know, you have to have that that was sort of the bare minimum. And we're going to talk about Choco Love later on. And that was a woman who was a lawyer full time and chocolate business on the side. And even the chocolate businesses, you know, she could live off of that. To her husband's surprise. Yeah, I think the entrepreneurial spirit of the people is what surprised me the most is just the fact that you could have your day job, but that's just your nine to five, what are you doing five to nine? That's sort of an automatic question. So I think, like I said, the entrepreneurial spirit of the people, but then also, like you said, the humility, the welcoming the food, I mean I honestly gained 15 pounds while I was there, cause I was there for a good month, and that was probably the trip before and after combined but still. You know, we don't judge. During the medical portion of the trip, I was there as a non-medical student. So I was able to kind of step back and just watch them in action. And just take a minute to just see because when you were in your zone Sam, I would say yo Sam, and you wouldn't hear me you be focused on the patient. That's one thing I didn't really realize like the MDS, the Pharm/Ds, these nurse practitioners when they're in front of their patient, everything else just fades to the background. And you could even call their name and they don't hear you. They just hear what that person in front of them is saying. And so one position we kind of made up on the fly was what about if we have scribes? And I know that's an old term? I don't know what you call it now.

Sam

25:25

Oh no, there's scribes.

So you're the person who takes the clinical notes while the doctors focusing on the patient? Because they don't want to disconnect this. Okay, hold on, we just write that down. And she said, so you're kind of they're just observing. And then you kind of forget that you're even there too, because now they can fully focus, like Dr. Griswold, Dr. Griswold, who's also a doctor who came on this trip, actually is a UB faculty member, she teaches here, and I was able to do that for her and just observe, and then a lot of the things that she mentioned, they were education based. So for example, somebody who had hypertension, or who perhaps had diabetes, or you know, had, let's say, cholesterol, they wouldn't know, but once we tested? And they said, Oh, well, and then you start asking more questions about their diet and exercise and things of that nature. And when you get to Ghana, you realize the food is amazing, I love it. But you know, I'm personally a diabetic. So the carbs in the food is very high. So it makes sense that a lot of people would have these issues, and it runs in the family because you're all eating this sort of cuisine, and then also the portions. Granted, we went to restaurants, it's amazing. Because I never had to ask for an extra side. We could actually split like, me and Orion could split a plate and we would go and we would still have leftovers. That would never happen here. No offense to Buffalo and the food, but you know, you can't get full off of one plate. So yeah, it makes sense. Like, it was a great, you know, for us to experience but on the flip side on the health side, you think, you know, if it's this good there's got to be a downside. So I think part of that was education to saying, okay, you know, portion control, you know, great, you know, tilapia is gonna be here tomorrow, you know, don't gotta finish it all one sitting. So and then exercise, you know, having to because a lot of cars, that was another thing that surprised me is how many cars are riding around Ghana. So the roads can't even keep up with how many vehicles are on the roads. And I'm just that was one of the questions we asked professor Asamoah was how are there so many vehicles here? And she was saying, well, we're developing faster than we can keep up. And so that's a good thing. But at the same time, you know, you've got to develop infrastructure and roads and things to accommodate. So sometimes a family will have two - three vehicles, and sometimes a family will have drivers. That was another thing. I was surprised at how boujee, you know, professor Asamoah is very humble. Yeah. But she

said, Oh, yeah, my brother in law is sending us a driver who, you know and I was like, excuse me? why? So yeah, a lot of people are very wealthy. And then when you go, and you see some of the structures that they build people, it's not uncommon for people to build their own homes, and I'm talking from the ground up. So you don't just buy the house, you spend 10 years plus building the house, as whatever you envision, you tell the architect the draw, they create it, and then you don't take a loan. That's another thing. The culture is not about borrowing. It's not about Okay, have it now pay for it later. That is kind of the mentality we have here. Well, you know, I'll just swipe my credit card. And you know, a lot of places were like, cash only? What do you mean? So we were riding around town, and we would see a lot of structures uncompleted. And we would ask, we say, hey, why is this you know, home or building not completed. And that's because they don't take loans out. They either they own it fully 100%, or it's not getting done. And if they'd rather take the time to build it the right way, and then own it at the end, as opposed to

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| Sam | 28:39 | Building it piecemeal, as opposed to, you know |
| Sonya | 28:44 | Yeah so they could own it at the end. So yeah, I just, I was just surprised by how little I'm doing here. And how much more I could do even when there's so many, you know, we always like to blame least in this country. We're very complaint heavy. And we'd like to say, oh, there are barriers to entry, barriers to entry there. They're so difficult to get into this. Whereas a lot of people who don't have as many resources, they don't have time for those sorts of excuses. It's like, Are we going to get this done or not? Which side do you want? Okay, you're not coming. Cool, I'll find somebody else. So you stay hungry, and you get things done. Whereas here, there's a sort of complacency that I've noticed, so I was really inspired. And I plan on going again next year, you know I'm trying to convince Sam although you might be working by that time if you're in residency, but I definitely plan on returning next year. So that was a long-winded answer or tangent, I should say. But, yeah |
| Jake | 29:29 | It's all relevant. |
| Sonya | 29:30 | Did I answer the question? |

Jake	29:34	So as far as like, the cultural aspects go like, what were your accommodations, where you at like hostels, hotels, like how did that kind of work out?
Sonya	29:46	The very first year was the first year when they first started the trip, it was that hotel, then some people gave feedback and saying, you know, the hotel was nice, but I kind of would have been kind of would have appreciated being more around, you know, in the culture, and we didn't do host families this year, maybe that's something she's you know, toiling with. That might happen down line, but it is a pretty fresh program. So we stayed at GIMPA and I'll let Sam explain that.
Sam	30:09	So GIMPA is a college campus. And that's pretty much where we stay for that was like our home base.
Sonya	30:18	Want to tell them what the acronym means?
Sam	30:19	If I could remember, I thought
Sam /Sonya	30:20	(Laughing inaudibly)
Sonya	30:25	This was another thing we would always be you know shady on the trip we got to know each other. It stands for the Ghana Institute of Management and public administration. So a lot of the students who were there normally, they were on vacation, so we kind of went during their Christmas break. So we were able to you stay on campus.
Sam	30:41	know, it's all good. So, yeah, we pretty much stayed in what was equivalent to like, a hotel, you know, it really GIMPA took really good care of us breakfast pretty much every morning. You know, we had very comfortable beds, ironing, you know, room service
Sonya	31:00	Spoiled
Sam	31:01	Pretty much
Sonya	31:02	I'm just gonna, you know, the, you know, up front, people thought we were going to be staying like on farms or, you know, rural areas. They said, Oh, my gosh, did you just Wifi did you have electricity? And we were just like, yeah, thank you, we show I show people the pictures, and they

were blown away about where we're staying and the other hotel that we visited. So you know, the common misconceptions are that, you know, you're going to be out of the Safari. And it's like, na fam, there are different levels

- Orion 31:29 Was that was that an expectation of yours? Did you guys know, prior what to expect, in terms of just how these assumptions
- Sam 31:36 To some degree, you know, I had been there before.
- Sonya 31:40 Right, we're biased because we've been to Africa
- Sam 31:43 So, you know, we knew that it wasn't all just, you know, see on the Discovery Channel into that nature. But at the same time, though, I do want to get the caveat that at least, when we were at the medical component, given where we were in the lack of access, we did have to sleep in tents. But even with those tents, we were, we were with the Ghana Navy, they kind of set all that stuff. For us, they were fantastic. They also served as essentially our protectors as well as we do this mission work. So we felt very safe. And, you know, it was a great time for me. Even though we were kind of in the middle of like, I guess you could call it like a not really a forest. But I'm not even sure what the right terminology is for it.
- Sonya 32:27 I couldn't tell you, I just know that they incorporate greenery wherever they can. So we would have ant hills on the campus. You know, it just had a very natural Zen vibe to it. And that was intentional. It could have made that concrete, but they incorporated into the campus to kind of give them more of a homey feel. I think that was intentional.
- Sam 32:46 It was pretty beautiful. Very good
- Sonya 32:50 There were like two, three weddings on the campus while we were there. I'm not even kidding. We were passing by on our way to our dorm. And then there was a wedding on this side, there was a wedding on the other side the other day. So they use the event like a venue service. So they're actually very, like I said, entrepreneurial.
- Jake 33:03 Do you want to dive into the entrepreneurial half of this stuff?

Sonya	33:08	Well sure
Jake	33:10	So what else is going on? basically, like what exactly, you know, does that mean in this context? Like how are you working with businesses in the area? or What was your project?
Sonya	33:18	So okay, so those are kind of two different conversations. So the entrepreneurial side, I would say we visited a lot of we talked to a lot of entrepreneurs, we even had like an all women's panel with one man who was getting his Ph.D. studying women entrepreneurs. So that's why he was on the panel. But we got to talk to a lot of the people who are doing this like for example because I bought Choco Love it if you want to try that while I talk about it. For your listeners, we were able to visit a company called Choco Love, which is started by a female who was currently a lawyer, that's her daytime profession but on the side, she thought, you know, chocolate cocoa is a very you know, it's one Ghana's chief exports. So chocolate is a big, you know, popular product. So she figured Oh, let me do this but let me just do it better. And they're tasting it right now so I'll let you give your reviews, go ahead and tell me what you think.
Orion	34:14	It's fantastic. So this is the milk chocolate, right?
Sonya	34:17	Yeah
Orion	34:18	It seems like it's a higher cocoa content then what we would
Sam	34:22	Yeah, 100 percent
Sonya	34:31	He is clearly a chocolate connoisseur
Orion	34:33	Jake and I actually had a conversation recently, we both prefer the darker chocolate
Jake	34:38	I prefer I'm a more of a like a super dark chocolate. Yeah, myself.
Sonya	34:39	I didn't get the dark chocolate bar. I'll get you next year
Sam	34:43	Even though this is mil chocolate, If you compare it to what you would have seen here in the States, it's a lot richer.

Sonya	34:49	Isn't milk chocolate white here?
Orion	34:52	That's white chocolate. Milk chocolate is like a Hershey bar.
Sam	35:00	So yeah, it's not as much you know, like processed sugars and things of that nature. Their attitude is they try to keep it as pure as possible and Choco Love is actually a company that specializes in like luxury brand chocolates. So like being in Ghana, which is, at least for a long time, it was the number one cocoa exporter I think just recently Ivory Coast, you know, superseded them but but yeah, so you know, they have access to very pure cocoa, they have a very robust process in terms of how they process the beans and all this stuff. And it kind of took us through all of that. And, you know, just listening to them, just so like, fascinating because she literally was just, you know, kind of a lawyer and she, I think she did some type of like a catering like on the side. But nothing
Sonya	35:48	The husband was like a production manager
Sam	35:50	Correct
Sonya	35:51	So that's what he did for his living. And when she said, Hey, I want to do this he laughed her out the room and he was like, na girl this is what I do. This is what I do for a living you're not gonna be successful because you don't know how much goes into that. She's like, oh, word, okay. So I don't know if it was pettiness you know which made it happen
Sam	36:04	Sometimes you got to use reverse psychology
Sonya	36:06	So she went and made it happen. And then now her husband is helping her run the company. And I don't know if you can show them.
Jake	36:15	We will tweet a picture of these bars when we release the show.
Sonya	36:18	But I'm like, thinking like flip it to the back. Right? Do you see the ingredients? You know, when you get a traditional American item? How thick is the ingredients thing? It's like a paragraph. It's 1.5 lines, the rest of the line is no

cocoa butter substitutes. As a chocolate connoisseur, I'm sure you can appreciate very natural flavors

Jake 36:40 It's very very pure

Sonya 36:42 Next time I go, Jake, I will bring you back the dark chocolate.

Jake 36:44 Appreciate it.

Sonya 36:46 I think that was one of her most popular flavors right after milk chocolate is the dark chocolate because they're focused on health benefits the purer the chocolate, obviously the dark chocolate is the purist. I think it was 70 something percent chocolate. Pure chocolate. Yeah. And that's unheard

Sam 37:01 That's the milk chocolate brand. The dark chocolate brand is even more.

Sonya 37:07 And we went to her production line. It's what I would say three people max. And we saw it from start to finish. So within, I would say not even the room but two rooms of what we're in right now. I don't they can't see us. But it was a really tight space I don't know if you want to give them the dimensions or anything

Jake 37:23 20 ft by 30 ft

Sonya 37:26 Yeah So double this size. And we just saw from the production line and went into I don't know what you call the machines. But maybe you can help me out with that. Within like 10 minutes, you saw chucked out of this machine and it was gourmet made and then the rappers you can customize the rapper. So you can have it like this rapper right here has my name on it. So you can have your and if you want to gift it to somebody you can hit her up for that. And then she also has a shop in the airport at heart, which you're not easy to get at all.

Sam 37:58 Correct. So yeah, their brand is that they only sell for the gourmet line so they're not available readily. You only get them to like, think one of the caterers you have to call in you know, they do like parties and things that nature. So most of their clientele basis is through recommendation, just word of mouth. They have like the one stand like

Sonya mentioned in the airport. So yeah, I mean, kind of just listening to them talk about their experiences and how they got to where they got to, from where they were originally on that, that just gives you all that inspiration and kind of a little bit of that know how, you know, and then you see just how you can find a relatively, you know, proper vibe. So they, I know, they didn't have the figures readily available, but you tell just kind of from how they're talking about, it's pretty profitable

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| Sonya | 38:44 | Her husband was talking about it being pretty profitable. Because he was saying if she wanted to quit her job and just do this, we could and we would be fine. |
| Sam | 38:53 | Yeah you know, with relatively low overhead, just talked about the space that they bought, and you know |
| Sonya | 38:58 | Yeah they're expanding. |
| Sam | 39:05 | And even like how they acquire the machines was, you know, relatively like to a chance to they were speaking to |
| Sonya | 39:07 | somebody who knew somebody, that somebody was the chief executive of a chocolate company. |
| Sam | 39:11 | essentially, really interesting back stories and, you know, kind of see how these things kind of manifest from essentially nothing, you know, just an idea. And that's, that's really inspiring, especially for young entrepreneurs. So definitely think that we need more examples of that to kind of keep that knocking churning. So that's, that's really nice. |
| Sonya | 39:36 | We also did visit a factory. So we visited the milk factory as well. So we got to see both sides, from the small scale to the large scale production. So we went through the entire factory, and we saw, like, what can you compare it to here in America? Fan Milk, which we went to. |
| Sam | 39:55 | I mean, I've never been to a factory in America, sorry |
| Sonya | 39:57 | Neither have I so I don't have much to compare to |
| Sam | 40:01 | I mean, they're actually said to be like Hagan Das, but they also do a lot of yogurts and stuff, I mean, the big. So yeah, so they, there were originally an ice cream company that |

was I think, purchased by I want to say, I think I want to say Danons.

- Sonya 40:24 I think he did say Danons
- Sam 40:25 So a lot of their processes were kind of streamlined from what you know, it had been doing in terms of how they made their yogurts. So you see kind of how that implementation works in a different environment. And I think that is one of the highest, if not the, you know, top in terms of market share for Ghana. So it's just really interesting how to take elements from different spheres. So obviously, Danon, and I think is want to say Danish, but yeah, so wherever they're from
- Jake 40:58 They're a big name though.
- Sam 41:00 So they took their processes and brought it to, you know, just showing you that side of globalization, that kind of, is something that we're interested in starting to take some American processes and American concepts, try to see how we get incorporated into, you know, the West Africa, in particular, I think it's really interesting, because there's certain things that you might think intuitively, oh, you know, you should do this. But in actuality, it doesn't work that way. And I think we see that a lot of the time on it just kind of these anecdotes from different businesses. So being on the front lines and see firsthand his experience that only two people get to get up. So that was obviously a fantastic
- Sonya 41:40 So he talked market share, but then we also talk marketplace. So if you go to Ghana and I think they have pictures, hopefully, we can send that to you as well for your blog. But you go to the marketplace where they pretty much sell everything you can think of and you also negotiate that. So you want a souvenir it's all about haggling.
- Orion 41:58 That's how it is in the middle east too, its all about haggling.
- Sonya 42:01 I want to give up an idea that's gonna be Cedis, Cedis are the currency. And apparently Cedis come from cowrie shells, that's how they originated them. So I got. So you got to see this, if you pay, let's say, if you exchange one US dollar, you get about 480 490 max, depending on who

you're going to, so almost one to five ratio. So needless to say, we got to Ghana you know money to play with, low key balling because we have some of us to start spending. But when you use the marketplace, if somebody said 50 Cedis, that's just their starting point, they don't actually want to sell it to you for that they might want you know, 30. So for example, like you can do really there's a class here that, you know, negotiations, I think they recommend you take next year. So it's, it's great to take a class, but I feel like that was the best sort of class negotiations. I could take it because you were up front. And it was uncomfortable at first. Yeah, because I don't know

Sam 43:03 They hound you. Deven myself as a native. I felt like it was just, you know, a little lack of disregard, excuse me, lack of regard for your own person some space. Because they really want to show it to you.

Sonya 43:15 Yeah imagine, they really want to push up on you. Somebody did grab me. And I'm from Mt Vernon, which is by the South Bronx, you don't just grab somebody, that's how you get punched. I was restraining my reflexes for a different country, you know, adjust adaptability. So you know, a professor always preaches. And so for example, a guy wants to show me sell me on cowrie shells for 60 cedis. And obviously, I look like a foreigner. So you know, if you were talking to a local, it would have been 30 starting price, but he doubled it because he was like, Oh, I could take advantage of this girl. So I spent maybe 30-45 minutes, what you have to do is you have to play games that walk away from the shop, or the next shop the next shop and then each of them are like no no no, come to mine, come to mine. So then you put them against each other for you. You're just kind of putting them against each other, whoever gives me the best price I'll take the best price ended up being the original guy who wanted to charge me 60 cedis. So I said I'll give you and he's got down to like 40 between there haggling. So I'll give you 10 and he was like na. I'm not doing that Okay, so I left and then he's like Okay, come back come back, in another five minutes It was like all right, fine I'll give you 10. So yeah, you just really got it really pushes you to get what you want. So I really enjoyed that I felt really good about myself walking out of that shop. But um, what else is good to say, you know I lost my train of thought.

Sam	44:40	So I want to you know, kind of tie in the the application of some of the things that we're learning since Sonya was just talking about terms of pretty much using sellers against one another to lower your prices here probably learned that in school at some point so that was awesome love You know, it was definitely a thrill at first you kind of I didn't I'll admit I was, even as a native, I think I was taking advantage of my first day I might have overpaid for a couple wares but you know I remember I got like a pair of sandals really nice soccer jersey and then a T-shirt. I think I paid like what was like US 30 bucks like I wasn't ripped off from a US standpoint
Sonya	45:27	That's a lot
Orion	45:30	Did you not try to haggle at all at first?
Sam	45:33	I was like oh, its 30 bucks this is like a great deal and then you know you get back in there like man you kind of got ripped off and it's like man so then you know go back a couple of days later and I'm on top of my game because I have a little bit more awareness it becomes fun and friend of mine who was a nurse practitioner that was also on the trip he then he made a killing there just being a fantastic haggler.
Sonya	45:58	Some people got like 15 items for the same price
Sam	46:06	So which did you want to talk about?
Sonya	46:12	The marketplace
Sam	43:13	Yep. So we went to a marketplace so basically how the marketplaces you can get much all types of wears from food to little trinkets to medicines like traditional herbal medicines, lotions so they kind of I don't want to say a union. But what would be the closest thing to a union here in the States they're kind of like they get together and they put their, they pool their money together something called (inaudible). And that's kind of how they pay for some of you know the storefronts. So then, they you know, they get their wares from they all have like individual merchants that they buy from whether it be you know, fish or what have you. And they'll sell all this stuff at this you know, marketplace. Obviously, you get to see just the day to day, hustle and bustle of it. It was, man it was an experience.

Sonya	46:59	You will get shoved if you are in the way.
Sam	47:02	Yeah it's high energy
Sonya	47:04	It's organized chaos. It's organized chaos very much. So are you know, moving and shaking. But everybody always what would shake worse is we were just kind of like standing in the crossfire like, okay, where do I go? What do I do?
Orion	47:13	That to me is like New York City
Sonya	47:18	New York City? I contest, cause I'm used to it but the same thing that they have their own little system. But then also, one thing I want to talk about was the Queen mother's, which is pretty much a group of women who run the marketplace. So it was interesting to kind of see women in the leadership role, but then at the same time ordering men. So it was kind of flipped, where if they're the Queen Mother, it is not necessarily a correct me if I'm wrong, it's not necessarily passed down generationally, it's dependent on the performance. If you want to correct me on that.
Sam	47:48	I think that is what they stated, you know, the marketplace. So the Queen mother's of the marketplace is a little bit different from the traditional Queen mother's, that that is passed down more than me even then it is generational to some extent because it's based on geographical location, region. But there's also you know, a merit-based system that's kind of applied to it. And you know, you kind of got to be on top of your game and really get selected for that
Sonya	48:15	So I think the way the system works, each person gets a cedi per day. So it's about 30 cedis by the end of the month. And then that's how the (inaudible) works. So if you get a cedi from each market, for each market vendor, there's so many vendors, I couldn't even tell you how many, but the crazy thing is they pack up shop and set up shop every single day. So it's not like a storefront where you just lock the doors. No
Orion	48:36	So it's kind of like farmers market?
Sonya	48:38	Exactly. So you kind of got to pack up the whole thing, put it on a cart, and they wheel your shop whole literally and then wheel it back the next day. And it said up again

Sam	48:46	Exactly. So you kind of got to pack up the whole thing, put it on a cart, and they wheel your shop whole literally and then wheel it back the next day. And it said up again. So yeah, and then you know, I mean, just kind of more in the same work ethic. They are just insane. I mean, I saw a woman who she had a child her back, you know, we do this thing kind of like we wrap a (inaudible) behind us. And you know, she's still going about her day job selling and it's just fantastic is just really refreshing to see just how hard working Yeah
Sonya	49:09	Yeah. Child on her back, things in the hands up front, and then a massive amount of stuff on her head.
Orion	49:15	She had things on her head?
Sonya	49:20	On her head, and a baby on her back.
Sam	49:26	It kind of puts us to shame, you know we spend thousands of dollars on things and we are not half as talented.
Sonya	49:34	I think some of the undergrads started taking pictures, she started posing for her. She just made it work so.
Jake	49:44	Geeze, so. we're almost done. A couple of quick questions for you. What's Next on the agenda? I mean, do you plan I know, we're going to Costa Rica in two weeks on do you plan on doing any other global perspectives trips?
Sam	49:58	Yeah. So the with the MBA, it's kind of weird. We have to go back into our fourth year of medical school this next semester. So I'll be out the MBA school for now. I still do plan on going to Ghana
Sonya	50:08	SO are you going to be back again?
Sam	50:09	I got, you know, got the ball rolling on. I'm planning for next year already. So I can take at least from the medical side, trying to take a little bit of a different look. And obviously also from the business side. So, you know, actually just met with some faculty from the dental school yesterday. And you know, we're going to probably have other dental components. So there's gonna be some dental students on the trip too. So you know, where you got the ball rolling in making some phone calls. So it's going to be

busy, but the date should probably be around the same time around

- Sonya 50:41 December 26th to around January 4th, January 4th to January 17th, medical and management respectively.
- Sam 50:47 Yep. So as more details come out that pertain to that. But definitely, you know, keep everyone updated
- Sonya 51:01 And that's actually been a tradition since the first year, Evelyn went and Danielle Vasquez was one, and then they returned this year. This year. Sam has gone, I've Gone. And we're all three of us returning. So there's just systematically been a system of Okay, you're the returner, we're passing the torch to you right now. They'll find the next returners. So, these are usually the people who are project leads. So I don't think we had much time to talk about the management project. So I'll just give you a quick overview. We had one person doing, we had a creative problem solving, which is an entrepreneurial workshop. So one student did that with Professor Tom Ulbrich, who we all took back way back when. And we had another person actually did a coding project. So we're actually going to have this is a little plug, a fashion show, which is going to be a fundraiser here in Buffalo, it's going to be The Taste of Ghana, I will forward you guys a detailed as far as date location and feel free to come and a lot of us who went who actually got ceremonial wear, we are going to be modeling it. And we're also going to have food games. And then this is going to serve as a fundraiser to help raise funds to build a computer lab. Because the school that we went to at least when we tried to do the coding for kids project, one of the barriers that I encountered was not having enough computers. So we had to do, we had to kind of had to do an unplugged version, where we could kind of teach the concepts of coding, but without an actual computer, but it would be really nice to have them and a computer lab is one thing that the school from Ghana had actually requested is something that they're trying to have implemented. So that fashion show, I'll send you guys the details. Yeah, we're gonna do a fundraiser to build that.
- Sam 52:35 Ghanaian cuisine is going to be served.
- Sonya 52:34 Yes so expect (inaudible) rice, redred which is beans and plantains which is going to have

Sam	52:44	I don't know if it's going to have
Sonya	52:47	The menu is still coming together.
Jake	52:52	Is this a couple weeks out? A month out?
Sonya	52:54	It's in April
Jake	52:56	We will definitely have this episode up by that. So we'll post some links and information to that as well
Sam	53:01	Awesome. So one more fundraiser, we have our shoe fundraiser also, that's going to be going on, I'm just gotta get my hands on some boxes here. So we're going to be collecting like used shoes, slightly worn shoes, and we're going to be collecting them so that we can give back to the organization and then they will be sending us a check so that we can actually put some toward some of the drugs are going to be buying for next year's trip. So any little bit can help. And you know, I see the boxes going around in school management probably going to have one at the medical school in the pharmacy school as well. So you know soon as those box locations get out, we'll start putting those flyers around.
Sonya	53:36	We are also going to be collecting up school supplies. So you know, things like pens, erasers, pencils, notebooks, little things as well
Sam	53:43	These are people who are pretty much in need, and you every little bit goes a long way.
Sonya	53:49	They weren't even asking for nothing crazy, it was like Tylenol.
Sam	53:52	Yeah, it's true
Sonya	53:56	Yeah, we will send you guys all that.
Orion	53:59	Fantastic
Jake	54:01	Yeah we will put it in the show notes. And if any of you listening who found this particularly interesting, we will post links to the UB web page that has all the information about the different trips that the school offers. As I previously mentioned, Sonya and I are going to Costa Rica

in a couple of weeks, and we're actually going to do a podcast while we're down there with the people we are working with. So we'll have an onsite live on set podcast.

Sam	54:22	Working on your Spanish man?
Jake	54:23	Not as much as I wish. Yeah
Sonya	54:25	Un Poco
Jake	54:29	Yeah, there's lots of coolest trips. There's a China trip, the Ghana trip, as we've mentioned, there's the Costa Rica trip I mentioned there's one to Prague and Budapest I believe
Sonya	54:34	Domestic trips as well.
Jake	54:36	Yeah. And then there are a handful domestic trips, too, so
Sonya	54:38	Cali, Florida, Chi-town.
Jake	54:40	. So if you're interested in coming to the school, or if you're already here and want to know what you can do, there's plenty of opportunities for travel. Thank you for joining us, Sam. Sonya
Orion	54:48	Thank you so much.
Sonya	54:52	Our pleasure
Orion	54:53	I mean, you guys are so passionate about it, this is fantastic,
Sonya	54:51	Cause you guys see us in MBA class and we are like okay let's just focus on opps, this is like fun
Jake	55:00	Absolutely
Orion	55:01	These are like cool stories, awesome
Jake	55:02	Well thank you, until next time. Or however, it ends.