

If you asked me a year ago if I would be applying to graduate school to pursue a master's degree in Industrial & Operations Engineering, I would have said you are crazy. I was living in a city I love and transitioning to a new job I was extremely excited about. In the back of my mind I have always considered graduate studies, but never acted on it. However, between being furloughed from my job because of the coronavirus pandemic and being diagnosed with cancer, some parts of my life have started to feel out of control. My mindset has changed. I would like to use this degree as an opportunity to push the reset button and take back control of my career trajectory.

Last summer, I began having leg pain and started losing weight rapidly. After numerous bouts with physical therapists, doctors, and months of increasing pain I was finally referred for an MRI. It was then the doctors found a football sized tumor in my pelvis that had caused my leg to be pushed out of place by two inches. I was quickly rushed to the emergency room to perform more tests and receive a final diagnosis: Stage 3 Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. My mind raced with concerns: "Can I beat this? Will I lose my job? How will I pay my bills?" The heaviness of being a young professional going through cancer treatment began to weigh on me.

It was in that exact moment I remembered a phrase a family friend, who he himself was a three-time cancer survivor, used to say: "This Too Shall Pass". This simple mantra made all my fears disappear. Any hardship or obstacle that faced me started to melt away. Having to spend 120 hours straight in the hospital every three weeks for chemo infusions, "This Too Shall Pass". Having to experience some negative side effects of the treatment, "This Too Shall Pass". Having to eat that terrible hospital food, "This Too Shall Pass". But I don't think this phrase is quite complete. After learning many lessons while dealing with this terrible disease, I'd like to add to it: "This Too Shall Pass, ... AND The Future Is Bright!"

Our world is in a time of uncertainty during this global pandemic. For me, it feels disturbingly similar to how I felt during cancer treatment. Right as I was supposed to go back to work post treatment, I was furloughed to cut costs due to lack of business. Therefore, I have chosen to face this challenge in a similar way ... through education. I would like to use this moment as an opportunity to acquire new skills, develop my technical understanding, and learn how to apply engineering principles to drive business success. I am choosing to pursue a Master of Science and Engineering in Industrial & Operations Engineering at the University of Michigan to reset, work towards something, and take back control of my career.