Independent study turns into peer-reviewed practitioner article

December 17, 2024



In the wake of an independent study, Professor of Accounting Jasmijn Bol, left, collaborated with MBA student Marie Gares (MBA '23), right, on the article "Will AI Take Over Your Job?", which was published in November 2024 in *Strategic Finance Magazine*.

Did you know Tulane graduate students have the option to pursue an independent study?

For Marie Gares (MBA '23), this opportunity turned into an exceptional success story.

“An independent study hadn’t crossed my mind until my final semester,” Gares shared. “I was struggling to choose electives that felt both useful and rewarding, and I remembered how much I enjoyed Professor Jasmijn Bol’s *Operational Risk Management* class. It was a strategic accounting course with practical

applications in fraud prevention and business management. I loved Professor Bol's book and wanted the opportunity to learn more from her, so I approached her about doing an independent study."

Professor Bol agreed but wanted the project to deliver mutual value.

"She had several ideas," Gares explained, "and together we chose to adapt one of her academic research papers on the role of tacit knowledge in accounting professions. The goal was to modernize its insights and make it accessible to a broader audience."

The biggest difference between an independent study and a traditional graduate course is the absence of a pre-defined curriculum that outlines step-by-step instructions for success. Instead, an independent study functions as a collaborative process between the student and professor, rather than a structured course with regular, bite-sized deliverables. This format demands a higher level of maturity and self-discipline from the student, as they must take the initiative to drive the project forward and stay engaged throughout the process. As Gares said, "Engaging in an independent study makes you take responsibility for the workflow. In my final semester at Tulane, it was a great way to transition back from the security of academic structure to an outlook closer to the reality of professional life. In high-stakes professional roles, nobody hands you a curriculum—you have to figure it out and proactively drive results."

"This mindset helped me immensely with my first post-Tulane MBA job as a CFO," Gares continued. "I proposed and executed an overhaul to the management control system, something that the CEO later realized was critical to sustainable success. It also prepared me for my current role in operations in an M&A-heavy environment, where I regularly reevaluate priorities and provide proactive and actionable solutions to leadership for both financial and organizational challenges. The independent study fostered critical thinking and the ability to move projects forward independently."

The mindset of adaptability and initiative cultivated during the project not only shaped the process but also influenced the direction and content of the project. While the original plan focused on the importance of skills in professional success, the introduction of ChatGPT during the project shifted the focus to an even more timely question: *"Will AI Take Over Your Job?"*

In their article, Gares and Professor Bol explore the impact of AI on the workforce. They argue that while AI is poised to take over repetitive, data-heavy tasks, the future for higher managerial roles lies in collaboration, not replacement. The article emphasizes the importance of focusing on human strengths — creativity, critical thinking and leveraging tacit knowledge. "Let AI handle the mundane," they write, "while you drive innovation and strategy." Gares' experience demonstrates the power of independent

study as a bridge between academic learning and professional success.

As a successful Tulane alumna, Marie recommends that students carefully consider independent study in their final semester, provided they have an affinity with the professor and a clear goal of what they wish to accomplish and how it can further nourish their innovative thinking and professional development.

To read their article “Will AI Take Over Your Job,” visit Strategic Finance Magazine.