Why Stanford MBA / MS CS joint program? I wanted to sharpen my technical expertise while also learning foundational business skills that would make me a strong and empathetic leader. I knew I always wanted to work on technical products (e.g., dev-tools and AI related) so it was advantageous if not uniquely differentiating to have both the MS and the MBA. I also knew I loved working with people and leading teams, so having the MBA on top of the MS would teach me a lot of valuable skills that I hadn’t focused on in the past (I didn’t study business and started my career in software engineering at Two Sigma). I also wanted to take advantage of two of Stanford’s world class programs, meeting business leaders and some of the brightest research minds in Silicon Valley.

Why Stanford? The entrepreneurial energy is unlike anywhere else in the world. I wanted to learn some of the “move fast, break things” mentality and build my own style that incorporated positive impact and inclusivity. I wanted to focus on the cutting edge of AI and there is nowhere like Stanford for learning and getting involved in the latest software technologies. I’ve taken so many cool classes including on deep generative models, and AI alignment and safety.

Why leave your career path to go to Stanford? I wanted to invest in my long term growth and figure out what type of career best aligned with my values and life goals. I wanted to define a more flexible career that involved multiple things I’m good at (technical understanding, product mindset, etc.) which today looks like entrepreneurship. I wanted to be surrounded by an environment and community of really smart and inspiring people who work across so many different disciplines and job functions.

What about the financial trade-off? It’s a big cost for sure but I was lucky enough to feel like I could take the jump. I felt reassured by so many alum who said the long term pay-off is so worth it in terms of self-discovery, career trajectory, and friends and community.

Any advice for people who want to end up where you are today at Stanford? Think a lot about what makes you happy and fulfilled, and what you want to dedicate your life’s work to – and make that shine in your application. Talk to a lot of students and alum to learn more about whether the school is the right fit for you.

Are there a lot of other engineers at the business school? Not a lot but we’re a tightly knit community and are really well-respected across the entire class. Even though we aren’t from a traditional consulting/finance background, my peers really respect our opinions and are eager to learn from us (and vice versa).