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Honor Code: A Sticky Situation in Business School (A)

Have you ever felt that you were on top of the world? Everything is clicking on all cylinders, and all fronts of your life are humming? That's how I was feeling as I entered the Executive MBA program at the University of Michigan two years ago. I was one of the youngest directors within my company, managing a \$350-million division, which was growing at a rate of 15% annually. My family was adjusting well to our most recent move (the seventh within the last thirteen years), and I had been chosen by the board of directors to participate in an Executive MBA program of my choosing. I was accepted at the top eight programs, and decided to attend Michigan due to its reputation, program, and flexibility. That decision proved to be the right one. Although the adjustments that school required were not easy, the learning process became much smoother than anticipated, thanks to my team, the professors, and supportive staff.

More than halfway through the program, things could not have been any better. My grades were much better than I had anticipated, and I was applying my new learnings to work and seeing direct results. My company's board, as well as my family, were extremely supportive in allowing me the time and space to succeed in the program, and I was perceived as a leader among my fellow classmates. But the saying "all good things come to an end" would come to truly resonate in my life, given decisions I made that changed everything.

The downward spiral commenced with my job. The board of directors that had supported my Executive MBA had been dismissed. A new board was appointed and an under-performing company was absorbed into ours. I was soon notified that the board preferred that I drop out of the EMBA program. I was able to plead my case and continue the program, but the pressure was on and the emotional support was gone.

Added pressure came with the new company's integration into ours. Head count reduction was inevitable—consultants had entered the picture—and I was fighting for my job as well as the jobs of employees who had worked so hard for me over the years. The pressure was affecting all aspects of my life. My family had not seen much of me, and when I was back in town, I was in the office either working or studying. I was a bear to live with and little relief was in sight. On top of all this, I was in the middle of taking one of the toughest classes in the EMBA program. The material was simply not registering in my head! I was struggling immensely; it was like no other class I had taken.

The weekend that was allotted for the final examination in this class was in the midst of our kids' spring break, and I had long ago booked a vacation home for the family and friends who were visiting from Atlanta. This was to be a very special gathering, as our friend's son had been diagnosed with an advanced level of



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