I head the team of credit adjudication and portfolio management at the National Bank of Canada. I took the RMA/Wharton Advanced Risk Management program to broaden my horizons. I had a strong credit background but not as much exposure to the entire suite of risks present in a large bank (operational, market, compliance, reputational, cyber, emerging risks, etc.).

The program was excellent. It was really about opening your eyes on different practices and angles, to give you a more holistic view of risks. The length of time and the intensity of the course were perfect for an executive. The assignments between the sessions, and the relationships you could create with people, were just stellar. The learnings were actionable and I had a ton of ideas about things that I could really apply or improve upon at my bank.

Another key takeaway was the quality of the faculty. I appreciated the mix of academia and real-life practitioners; it was the best of both worlds.

I particularly enjoyed Dick Herring’s presentation about what happened in 2007-2008, which gave a general understanding of the mechanics of what can go wrong. That’s what we have applied in our team to think about detecting patterns in our own bank. To paraphrase Donald Rumsfeld, there can be “unknown unknowns”: questions I did not even know to ask. The program made me a better question asker.

The course gave me many industry contacts. It was a very diverse group geographically, in the types of risk in which people operate, and the types of financial institutions. This yielded really unique perspectives. The way you interact with the other participants, and the questions that they ask in class—especially deep domain experts in a certain risk that you’re not absolutely familiar with—to academia members who are also deep experts in that risk, brings you an exponential level of learning.

I would give the program a ten out of ten. It was above expectations.