

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Two brothers share the family secret to success

Intro by Amanda Sebesta



Pictured (from left) Mauricio Franco (MBA '09) and Gustavo Franco (MBA Candidate '14)

Although they never served on the Cougar Fund together, brothers Mauricio Franco (MBA '09) and Gustavo Franco (MBA Candidate '14) have kept the tradition of managing Bauer College's multimillion dollar private investment fund in the family. The Cougar Fund holds equity securities that are traded on U.S. markets and is run by select Bauer MBA and MS Finance students, who deal with real money and real investments.

We spoke with the brothers recently about their time at Bauer and with the Cougar Fund, and how each coupled an engineering background with an MBA.

Q: Why did you get involved in the Cougar Fund?

A: GF: My exposure to financial classes throughout engineering was pretty little. Soon after graduation, I realized that a strong financial background is essential to either move up the corporate ladder or successfully open a business.

MF: Coming from an engineering background, I knew it was vital to develop strong financial and analytical skills to progress in my career. When Professor Tom George pitched the Cougar Fund to us, I decided this was the right move for me given what I wanted to get out of the MBA.

Q: Why did you choose Bauer?

A: GF: I completed my engineering background at UH. My brother gave me a good reference of the Cougar Fund and Bauer's professional MBA program in general. I needed an MBA program that accommodated my work schedule and budget. Bauer MBA was the best option.

MF: I got my bachelor's in industrial engineering from UH as well, so I liked the school to begin with. I learned that the Bauer MBA had excellent

programs and faculty that included professionals with many years of real-world experience in several industries.

Q: How did your time in the Cougar Fund help you attain the skills needed for your career?

A: MF: My first job in finance was as a senior financial analyst at Continental Airlines, a position I was referred to by a Cougar Fund colleague. This position required solid analytical thinking and financial modeling skills, which I thoroughly built through the Cougar Fund training.

Q: How do you think the Cougar Fund will help you in your career?

A: GF: The Cougar Fund gave me the skills to analyze problems at a macro level, which is a prized strategy when presenting results to senior management. As an engineer, you tend to focus on small details and tend to forget the big picture.

MF: It has already helped me a lot. It provided me with the skills and training to successfully perform at my current position and prior jobs. I was part of the team that won the CFA Society–Houston Investment Research Challenge in 2008, which I joined after being selected from a pool of Cougar Fund students. The Cougar Fund preparation was critical to win this competition.

Q: What sets Bauer apart from other business schools?

A: MF: I think the different programs Bauer offers sets it apart from other schools. The Cougar Fund is one of a handful of student-run funds that manage private capital. It has excellent programs focused on energy or entrepreneurship, so you have flexibility on where you want to focus your MBA and get the most out of it.

Two brothers with engineering backgrounds found that Bauer's Cougar Fund was instrumental in advancing professionally.