Moderator

Aaron P. Baca, ’06

After leaving The Farm (which we never really do!), life has been a whirlwind of change, opportunity and exciting challenges. I played it safe with a cushy finance job for a year before moving to New York and running a small healthcare company on a shoestring budget. It was a crazy rollercoaster that eventually brought me back to the Bay Area and looking for a new job! I spent a lot of time asking myself what really mattered in life and eventually found that path focusing on family, community and healthcare. I launched Mox Capital to build exciting healthcare companies, but the road here certainly had its twists and turns. I now live with my wife and two sons in Half Moon Bay and take any opportunity I can to stay connected with my Stanford community.
Heather Hernandez, ’09

I graduated with a BA in Human Biology. Once out of school, I worked for Penumbra Inc., a neurovascular medical device startup. During my tenure at this rapidly growing company, I worked in partnership with doctors, nurses and research teams throughout the US and China to advance clinical research trials on stroke treatment with the Penumbra devices. Working at a startup is wonderful and also nuts! It really challenged me to consider my values and priorities. During this time in my life I was focused on my career, leadership development and scientific research above other priorities like my health, family and friends. It was a tough decision, but right for me at that time. I then moved to FibroGen Inc. to manage early phase studies on a pancreatic cancer therapy. I am very proud of my work, athletic and volunteer accomplishments over the past five years. Committing time to these activities has meant lots of late nights, hard work, pre-packaged meals and Diet Cokes, the occasional breakdown and also lots of joy! I realize that I have developed a ton and that I still have a long way to go. I would love to share insights on creating your own definition of success, creating your own “development curriculum” and managing your goals. I am very honored and excited to have some “real talk” with Stanford students during this panel.

Clayton Holz, ’12

Since graduation I’ve been something of a tech mercenary—working in a variety of very small companies, none of which have grown much larger than a few people. As an English major, the transition to tech involved a bit of grunt work getting up to speed with programming, but overall things weren’t too difficult. Currently, I’m a product manager at a small startup in the food/tech space called Barnraiser. On the side, I’ve experimented with all sorts of things, including running a stock-trading game, a semi-legal betting service and a short-lived prediction market. All have proven enjoyable learning experiences. In my spare time, I try to spend as much time outdoors as San Francisco living will allow, and I remain close to a large group of fellow Stanford alums.

continued
Maya Humes, ’14, MA ’15

Gosh, it is so weird to be writing an “alumni” bio right now. I’m just a year ahead of all of you, having graduated last year and now coterming in Media Studies. So I definitely don’t feel old or wise enough to be telling you about the post-grad life, especially considering that I still get southwestern chicken salads from Tresidder and I still spend all of dead week in Green. Here’s what I will tell you about post-grad life, though—everything and everyone is still shifting. I have friends who love their jobs and can’t imagine doing anything else, I have friends who are applying to med schools and law schools across the country, and I have friends who have either quit their jobs or are thinking about quitting. I personally want to move to San Francisco next year (I can’t imagine living anywhere else right now) and go into journalism, but I know that dream could change. Shoot, at the end of junior year, I still thought I was going to law school.

Karen Nga, ’08

I entered Stanford in the fall of 2004 as a premed, and I was as doe-eyed and optimistic as they come. I wrapped up Stanford with a degree in Human Biology. I loved the study but had some anxiety about a life in medicine. When the quarter-life crisis hit, I abandoned the premed ship (much to the chagrin of my parents) and pursued some roles in the startup space. It’s been a wild ride since my days on the Farm. I still don’t know what I want to do when I grow up, but I’m optimistic I’ll get to do something impactful and hopefully start a family along the way.

Dontae Rayford, ’07, MA ’07, MBA ’14 NYU

After graduating, I spent my summer digging into all of the non-glamorous aspects of startup life right here in Palo Alto. By fall, we’d exhausted our capital, and I set sail for Sacramento to spend a year working in state government. Instead of applying to law school as I’d originally planned, I opted for a return to the friendly confines of the Bay Area and accepted a position at Google. After spending four years tackling various challenges there, I decided to get my MBA from Stern at NYU. Opportunity came knocking at Google once more and I’ve spent the past year working in business development for Android, Chrome OS and Google Cardboard.