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## **University of Oklahoma Online MBA Application Personal Statement**

Don't bother googling "cinematographer MBA." I can tell you too that most of the conversations I've had with my creative peers about advanced business degrees don't usually go well either. Filmmaking is labor-intensive and no formal degree is required for the industry. It's a great line of work for the curious and self-motivated, especially considering the endless information and free tutorials available on the internet.

Over the last twenty years, documentary, commercial, and narrative film projects have taken me all over the U.S. and to thirty countries. I've been detained in a Vietnamese Police station without a translator, blacked out and puked in the backseat of an F-16 after pulling nine Gs with a fighter pilot, and sprayed with fresh cow fat while filming industrial chainsaws at a meat processing plant.

No question one of the best parts of my job is learning about the world through the viewfinder of a camera, but that's an incredibly small aspect of what I do. Realistically, as an independent cinematographer, producer, and director, I'm only on a production set around 60 to 90 days a year. The rest of my work schedule is spent pouring over spreadsheets, interacting with clients and vendors, and developing new projects.

Freelancing is inherently unpredictable, so I've learned to develop infrastructure and systems to better manage the feast-or-famine nature of the work. Major capital investments in high-end production equipment have allowed me to improve my profit margins, produce my own independent film projects, and build a digital asset portfolio that now generates enough licensing revenue to cover my monthly overhead.

Soft skills like communication, leadership, and problem solving are essential in getting projects from concept to final delivery. You'd be surprised at the CEOs and politicians I've worked with who lead and inspire their people daily, but inevitably freeze up on camera and look to me to help them craft their message. I've also learned how to hire and lead teams of creatives and work within client expectations, budgets, and deadlines. In my experience, learning to navigate the business side of creative work is just as important as constantly improving my artistic skill.

Working behind a camera has been my window to the world. Moving forward I'd like to become more valuable to my clients in helping them better communicate their messages. The independent film projects I've developed have always involved financial risk, so a deeper entrepreneurial understanding and approach can only help make those projects more sustainable and attractive to potential investors. In further developing my financial and economic literacy, I'll be better equipped to make short and long-term financial decisions for my creative work and other investment decisions. Pursuing an MBA at the University of Oklahoma would help to reinforce and grow the business practices I'm already using as a self-employed creative and deepen the professional network I have locally and abroad.