Rebekah: Welcome to Simon Biscast, a podcast of prospective business school students navigating the admissions process exploring student life and more. Join us at the University of Rochester, Simon Business School for our advice and take on all things B school.

April: Well, hey Jenny, thank you so much for joining us today. We wanted to get your thoughts and your insight specifically in Simon Games, but we will talk a little bit more about your background and your experience. I'm interested to hear what sparked your interest in Simon Games?

Jenny: So, I actually graduated from University of Rochester undergrad and so [Simon] students were kind of this elusive group who dressed to the nines to go to class. Meanwhile, the undergrads were just kind of casually walking around in pajamas and it was always something that, you know, drew my interest anyways. And for a long time, I worked at Strong, and I drove past this massive Simon Games billboard by the airport every single day on my way into my shift. And I was like, wow, that'd be so cool to win that scholarship. And it was just something I never really thought much of just because I was working in hospitals and not in business. And I had this really cool job opportunity over the last few years where I grew into a management position in a retail company. And then I grew into a director level position, and I realized I have no education in this, I have no context. I have no background. So, I thought back to when I saw all of those billboards and the elusive suits on campus and I was like, well, you never know if you don't try. So, I signed up and I, yeah, I can't believe I'm here now recording with you. To be honest with you. So yeah, that's kind of how I sparked my interest.

April: Wonderful. And, and for those of you who haven't read this in the description, Jenny won the last Simon games competition, the Fall games for entry into the spring. She did an excellent job in both the simulation and her presentation report to board. So, congratulations hard work, you know, paid off there. So, congratulations on, on that.

You told us a little bit about kind of a sneak peek there about your current, you know, job experience in your previous job experience. Tell us a little bit more about who you are, your background, your journey. I know you mentioned U of R, what was your, your background and your academic background.

Jenny: Sure. So, I graduated with an undergrad in Psychology. I was really studying more of the developmental biology stuff, but I ended up studying Psych mostly. So, I ended up with a psych degree. I went to school for two years in Buffalo at University of Buffalo. And I also, while I was at University of Rochester when I transferred over, I studied abroad in South Africa. So, I went to University of Cape Town as well. I knew that I always wanted to help people. And I think if you hear that sentence coming from an 18-year old's mouth, everyone tells you to become a doctor. So, I started to work in hospitals. I was an EEG tech, so I was doing epilepsy studies over at Strong and Highland in an outpatient clinic. Loved it used my tuition benefit to do some Post Bach classes in physics and Bio Chem. And I started applying to medical school, which is really quite the process. Decided to actually go for my masters in anesthesia. And then after a year, I realized I really wanted to work in New York State. So, I switched into Fisher's Pharmacy school. So, I did a year of pharmacy school actually. And I think I just got pretty burned out by healthcare, to be
honest, like most people during COVID did. And as unfortunate as it was kind of right at the same time, I have always been a snowboarder. So, I started working at a snowboard shop, just selling snowboards, thinking nothing of it. I just liked doing it. It was just a hobby of mine and a full-time opportunity presented itself at this company Neon Wave. And I couldn't say no, it was just too good. I work with people that love what I love, and I love doing what I do and being a director for this company is insane. So yeah, how I went from studying pharmacy to selling snowboards is kind of a weird story, but it all worked out in the end. So, I actually love it and it's funny because, you know, I grew in this position in business, in retail, in sales and I really had no background and for everyone listening who actually could never know this is not only did I win Simon Games, but April was actually the person that called me and told me that I won. So, she's seen this growth in real time and is now recapping it with me. So, she called me to actually tell me about the Simon games and what was involved and what timeline and what I should do. And then she called me to tell me I was a finalist which I couldn't believe. And I was on the road coming back from a business trip and when she called me and told me that I won, I was at work not thinking anything of it. They told us we'll call you around five. So, I went to work like it was a normal day and she called me and yeah, I mean, April definitely knows a lot of different versions of me that no one in this podcast listening could ever know.

April: It's, yeah, it's been, it's been a day to witness. I will say that. It's been great kind of chatting with you when you had this idea in your head, right? Like I could feel that energy of, *I'm excited to do something new*. And so, it's been great. It's been a, a nice ride. I will say also you had a little bit of a leg up when it came to Simon Games competition because the simulation has to do with jet packs, right? So, if I can share a little bit about that, I've been telling folks who are interested, of course in the professional MBA and the executive MBA, they're going to be dealing with jet packs in their simulation and you have a little bit of experience there. Do you mind sharing a little bit of that?

Jenny: Oh, yeah, this is actually so funny. I was so on the fence of even sharing this because I don't know, I was just very stressed about the whole process. I had very high standards for myself for performance and creating a business plan, which again, I don't have an education in business, so I was very anxious about it. But yeah, I went on a trip to Mexico actually, probably 10 years ago now. And while I was there, there are jet packs that are real life. You can really buy them. They're an attachment to the back of a jet ski blower and you can go and just put on a helmet and these people will take you out and you put like you strap into your feet as if it's a snowboard or something and they control the throttle, and it just sends you into the air and there's YouTube videos on this everywhere. It's wild. The people that actually are good at it are really good at it. I just luckily got a photo from someone taking it on the side. And so, I used the photo of me on a real life jet pack for my presentation as a finalist, which was very daring, but it did pay off apparently.

April: Yes. No great job there. And, and yeah, you did, you did such a great job of, of tying in, of course, your strategy, you know, things that you learned throughout the simulation, maybe things that you would have done differently with a little bit of a personal kind of, here's, here's something about me, right, that you may not know. So, I appreciated that you, that you did that. To those of you who are listening and are wanting to participate in Simon games and do the simulation, no prior experience with jetpacks is necessary. We just want
To share that tidbit there. What was your, so since we're talking about Simon games and what was, what was your favorite part? What was it that, that kind of resonated with you that you really loved about that experience?

**Jenny:** To be honest, I think my favorite part of from start to finish was meeting everyone in the business school. Meeting you, talking to you, you called me from your personal cell phone, and you were like, if you have any questions, just text me, reach out to me, call me that it just feels so different than having to call a random U of R phone number and then figure out your extension like from the get-go, it just felt very personal. And I think from there, you know, becoming a finalist, there was this happy hour that kind of welcomed us all and a lot of people came in from out of town. So, there was this nice happy hour that they had beforehand and there were so many snacks and Emma was amazing at putting that all together. But it was cool because advisors came and some of the judges who I didn't know would be judging us the next day were there and you could just meet people and meet competitors who didn't really feel like competitors at all. You could just meet people and figure out how they ended up in the same room as you. And they're now, some of them are actually still, you know, classmates of mine and some of them are now going to start in like the next upcoming semesters too. So, I think it just felt genuinely personal and not just please come to our school, it really felt like this is my background. Here's what I like about the school. Here's what I like about working for the school. Here's what I like about talking to students from the school. I just graduated from here. I'm just here hanging out not knowing that these people were judging me. And I think that that was really cool. And then we came to the finalist presentation and people were properly taking us on tours and answering questions genuinely about financial aid and all of these concerns that everyone's having. And I think that that was just knowing that people were appreciating us, especially in the professional MBA program that we come with full time jobs that we come with biases that we come with experience that's going to be all over the board, right? It was welcomed and not just acknowledged. There's such a difference there between all we know all backgrounds exist, but we're excited about all backgrounds is totally different.

**April:** Yeah. You actually hit on the head there about having that personal approach, which, you know, I've worked at other institutions and, and genuinely working at a place where you can feel how the staff, the faculty, the folks who are making things happen in the background and, and kind of in the forefront as well, are really interested in you as a person. And I think that there that kind of weaves into a lot that folks see at Simon. So, I'm glad that you were able to, to experience that. What tips do you have? I know a lot of folks are going to want to know the nitty gritty details about the simulation or the competition without spoiling too much. What is something that you tell folks that you might tell yourself if you could go back in time, you know, what would you tell Jenny joining the simulation and jumping in? What are things that you would, you would share with prospective students?

**Jenny:** Oh, there's so much to that question. I think, first of all, I know it's hard, it's hard to give one piece of advice, but maybe I'll just give two. First of all, just don't take it so seriously, you know, part of this being a simulation, part of this being not real life is that people don't exist in it. So don't take the judgment of like oh, you had a bad quarter and take it so seriously. No one's going to fire you because your quarter was bad.
April: Right?

Jenny: You're not going to lose the game because you had one bad quarter. Just brush it off. They'll make a totally different plan and be like, well, this is why it didn't work. Ok, don't ever do that again. And then the other thing too is to be just creative, be outlandish, you know, do something that you wouldn't normally do. At the end of the day, winning the simulation isn't what wins you, the scholarship. Get to the finalist table, go meet the people. The whole thing is an interview. It's not just, can you get to the top number of some obscure revenue or asset or something like that? It, it's not, it's not an obscurity. You're going to meet real people along the way if you can just get to that top finalist position. So be outlandish. Be obscure, make a mistake and then take the mistake and get better in the next quarter. You have 10 quarters. So, one isn't going to be the be all and end.

April: Right. Yeah, absolutely. And a lot of folks kind of think about, they spend a lot of time trying to analyze the decisions and sometimes you have to, I hesitate to say, go with your gut, but your gut many times is what you've learned over your however many years you've been on the planet, right? And so, some of that is, is knowledge that you've accumulated along the way. And so, sometimes you do have to go with your gut to kind of save a little bit of time in your 10 decisions that you have to make. But hopefully it was a good experience and obviously manufacturing jet packs and, what are the, the kind of, decisions or the things that you had to plug in to for your company to kind of move it forward to the next quarter or the next decision deadline?

Jenny: Yeah, you just kind of had to be committal. Pick your company's vision. You know, there's this kind of jet pack, there's that kind of jet pack, there's that kind of jet pack. Which one do you want to sell? Well, there's not really a right answer. It's a computer algorithm. So, if you sell one really well, you'll sell really well. You know, you don't have to go all the way across the board so commit to what it was. And I think for me, I just used my bias, right? Like, I just did real market research on. Ok. Well, is there an adventure sport that is gas powered? Because I don't sell anything gas powered. I know nothing about a gas-powered marketplace. I've never sold a car in my life. So, what is it about buying a car that people really are drawn to? Right now. And like today, right now in Rochester, New York, why would you buy an electric car? Why would you buy a gas car? Why would you buy an SUV? Why would you buy a fast car? And I took that, and I just made a project. I made a company vision that was based in reality for my computer and then I just stuck with it. Stick with your guns, stick with your bias. Just run with it. It's fine. You know? So, you had to really just pick which kind of jet pack you want to develop. Are you going to build factories? Are you going to rent factories? You had to pick how hard you make your employees work. You had to pick marketing, you had to pick how hard you're going to market your products to win over contracts to win over sales. And it's nice because it's B to B so you're not selling to the marketplace, you're really selling for contracts to other businesses. So that makes it a little bit easier. You don't have to win over a million people, you just have to win over one company. But all of that being said, just pick a plan that's good enough to get to the finalist position and then tell people why you picked that plan. I think that's really the key is that there is a human component of this just tread water to get to the human side.
April: Sure, yeah. Well, speaking of, of sticking to your guns here, you're, you're now past halfway mark of the first term of graduate business school. So, congratulations on making it that far. We've got a few just talking before about finals are coming in the next few weeks before you know it, Jenny, you're going to be walking across the stage, with your diploma very soon. So, we're shifting gears a little bit now. But I want to get your thoughts on the MBA. You mentioned kind of seeing the suits walking around campus. What were your hesitations? I know you; you mentioned kind of not having that background. Anything else that kind of jumped out at you as you were thinking about embarking on this MBA journey?

Jenny: Yeah, I think I suffer from something that a lot of people could relate to in some way or another, which if you don't know what it is a textbook name, go ahead and Google it because it's very easy to find a million examples but definite imposter syndrome. I think if anyone has imposter syndrome, it is me above all my friends. I am a woman in snowboarding and outdoor sports, which is unheard of. And I'm a woman in business and leadership, which again is also frankly unheard of. And I'm a woman, you know, that was studying science and hard science, chemistry, pharmacy, health care, those things are not really heard of and to have my entire life been defined by each of those positions. I've never really had a spot. I've never really had a spot where it seemed like from the outside I should belong. And I've never really had role models or a group in that. You don't have a female group of snowboarders in your lesson groups when you're 10 years old and it just doesn't happen. So, I think my biggest hesitation with even pulling trigger on playing as Simon games was just, am I good enough to do this? Can I really survive this if you know, business or science or snowboarding is a man's world? Can I really hang? And can I really win the scholarship? Is it even worth my time? Is it worth my energy? And, you know, at the end of the day, the answer is 100% yes, because it's not anybody's world, it's only yours. So, you just have to pull the trigger. You just have to go; you have to get after it. You have to just be the best version of you. And when I told myself that, you know, 20 I guess my anticipated graduation would be 2026. If I do two classes at a time, the whole way through which I hope I can do. you know, 2026 will come to an end in 2027 will happen. I will either have an MBA or I won't, but 2027 will still come. So, I could be a better version of myself, and I don't know what that will bring me, but I don't know what it will bring me if I don't even try. So that kind of just pushed me into saying yes, I guess.

April: Beautiful, I think we should just end here. I don't think you can. That was very, I there's nothing else to add to that. But I appreciate your, your transparency and you, and you're being vulnerable with folks who may find themselves in a very similar position, right? They're thinking about all the other brilliant people who may be in their classroom as well. And so, imposter syndrome is real. And so, thank you for highlighting that because that, that is absolutely something that a lot of folks can, can encounter. And, and, and here you are, right? Despite all of that, you're here and you made it and you are, you know, doing well and you finish Simon Games number one spot. And so, so for those who are asking themselves, right? Can they do it? Absolutely, they can. So, thank you for sharing that, by the way, what classes are you, are you taking? So, we, we're classmates actually. So we are, we're both taking accounting on Wednesday nights. How are classes going for you and, and what classes are you taking?
Jenny: Talk about a full circle moment as you helped me apply to this whole program. And then you showed up at orientation day like, *Surprise! I was applying this whole time too.*

April: I think I literally said surprise.

Jenny: It was hilarious. So yeah, we take accounting together. I love that class. And then I'm also taking business modeling right now. So, two of our beginning core classes is what I'm told. Modeling is really hard. Learning a completely different language to me. Where I very much work in things that you could read in a textbook. That's, I mean, I've self-studied to the position that I work in right now. And so, modeling is exactly the opposite. It is reading Excel sheets and it's a tough one. It's just relearning a different way of looking at things and solving the same problems that I've been solving the [inaudible] version of that if that makes sense. So that one is definitely a little bit harder for me. But accounting, I absolutely love. It's pretty retail focused because this particular professor is pretty retail focused in general, which is really helping me. And it's crazy because you go from learning something in lecture on Wednesday night to practicing it and understanding why we're doing what we're doing Thursday morning. And I don't know, it just comes full circle like yes, I should be here, I did make the right decision. This is going to help me do my job.

April: Love that. Yes, I love any time you can apply what you're learning directly into what you're doing on day to day. That's perfect. So, one of the things that we chatted about briefly before we, we started was kind of life and balancing all the things. I know you're starting your, your journey here at Simon. And so recently that's probably been a, a whirlwind of trying to figure out what's the routine. What's the cadence of studying versus class and, and all the things. So how have you been learning to kind of manage, you know, your time to do, to do all the things?

Jenny: Yeah, it's a big one. The first six weeks are a shock to the system. You know, you, thought that you would leave work and go for a run, or you thought you leave work and have dinner with a significant other or a dog feed your dog at 5 a.m. and when you're up studying until 2 a.m. you just aren't walking your dog at five. I promise. It was definitely a shock to the system, but I think there's something really cool about Simon in particular, which is again the not just acknowledgment but welcoming of all backgrounds where I'm taking two classes right now. This transition has been very tough. Just I pulled back a couple of my hours at work and trying to reassign some of my tasking and I can just, for no reason at all, unapologetically only take one next mini semester. You know, I can actually just pull back. I think just knowing that I can do that, is it just relieves pressure for me, you know, will I make that decision? I'm not sure. I honestly, I can barely think to tomorrow at this point, but, and especially the finals two weeks away, but I think that there's this really cool ability to have class just in the evening. That's only your time. All of our groups get together where we can zoom in, we can go in person, there's tens of meeting spaces there, but you can also get into any zoom meeting you want and everyone's flexible. So yes, it's definitely been tough to reassign a lot of my responsibilities and it's definitely been tough to kind of just restructure my daily schedule for my personal life, but it just comes with time and knowing that everyone's there supporting you and welcoming you and ready to help you with. That transition is super helpful and relieves all the pressure in the world.
April: Yeah, everyone's in the same boat, right? Everyone is also trying to navigate this and balance all the things. And so, I love that there's an aspect of this teamwork, right? That's a part of a huge part of the classes. And so being able to depend on, on your classmates and them on you is really helpful and it, and it adds another layer of learning and understanding the content that I think is really valuable.

Jenny: 100% having the team is saving me.

April: best of luck in classes this term. And wanted to kind of, you know, help some folks who are looking at kind of, you know, Simon games and things like that. So, I appreciate your, your insight on that. What's next for you, Jenny? What is happening after the MBA? We already pictured you walking across the stage in today's podcast. So, what's going to happen for Jenny after the MBA?

Jenny: Yeah, you know, I remember walking across the stage after undergrad thinking I cannot believe that four years just happened, and I just graduated high school yesterday. So, I can't imagine how quickly this next two years is going to go by. Yeah, I have no idea which I think is the coolest part of my experience right now where, you know, I've had some friends go through an MBA program because they had a specific promotion that required it. And so, their employer actually put them through it in order to reach a target for their own position. OK? Right? So, they have this kind of prep prescribed track. I've also had friends that are going to take over a family business. And so again, with a prep prescribed track, they have, you know, I need this amount of information and my diploma. Thank you next. But for me, I am taking in everything. I don't know what's next. And there's this amazing career center assignment. There are such amazing connections. The professors are insanely friendly, and they tell you all about their research. So, there's connections in classmates and groups, you know, I can't believe the things that I'm learning people do, you know, and it's just jobs that you didn't even know existed. So, I think the coolest part of it is not just learning textbooks, not just learning in a classroom, but really getting these business connections, really learning what other jobs are out there really learning how to apply skills to the same job in a different company or the same position, but a different industry. And so, I don't know, I'm just really looking forward to hearing all of that stuff and seeing what I don't know who's handing me my diploma in two years. And I know, well, keys, I'll get with it I guess.

April: We will have to stay in touch, and we will do, we'll have to do a part two later on when it's alum Jenny to share what you've accomplished and what all the, the fun things that you've done. So, there's an excitement about the unknown, right? Best to you and, and hopefully all goes well for you. But we do have one final question. So, what we've been doing with our Simon stories is asking our folks in our, in our last final question on the podcast, if you had your dream company, right? And you had to select three people to serve on your company's board of directors, whether they be dead or alive, fictional, or not, who would they be and why?
Jenny: I actually had to look up the names of two of these people because I'm a big book person, but I can never remember authors. It is like toxic trait of mine. I had to look up their names. So, don't judge me for this one. So, I read maybe five years ago now an autobiography of an astronaut. His name is Scott Parazynski. His book, The Sky Below, I believe it's called. Insane. He's on my board of directors hands down. So, he goes to medical school, and he tells Harvard medical school in his interview, he's going to medical school to become an astronaut and they looked at him sideways. He's also climbed Mount Everest. Well, he did become an astronaut and he also did become a doctor. He got in [to Harvard] and is a doctor. Then he hikes Mount Everest and then he's like Mount Everest wasn't high enough. I'm going to space, and I think you need somebody like that in a board of directors. I think you need somebody that looks at, you could never do this. You're not going to survive medical school; you're not going to survive this course load. If you don't even want to do this job, like you have to be in it, there has to be a passion and he's like, yeah, there is a passion. It just doesn't look like what yours was and he just defies it all. You know, I think there's something to be said about somebody who is so gung-ho and so ready to put in the work, no matter what that work looks like to get to the goal that he's there. And also, I want to hear stories about Mount Everest because definitely bucket list. That would be so cool. Not to get sidetracked.

But other one, I just read this book actually in, I read it over New Year's. It's called The Psychology of Money. And if you're listening to this podcast, you're probably really business savvy. You've probably heard of this book, you've either read the book and loved it because there's no other option if you've read it or you've heard of the book, and you haven't read it yet and you should totally pick it up during break week this year. So, his name is Morgan Housel. And Morgan basically writes about the difference of a hard science of money and a soft science of psychology and how those things are so different, but they're so reliant on each other. He talks about what's rational and what's real and why you should do this because a spreadsheet tells you but why I know you won't do this because you have feelings, you know? He uses such clear examples, and he makes following a hard science seem palatable, you know, where following a spreadsheet is generally not a palatable thing. And I think there's so much shame around money management and he just removes it all. Right? He talks personally. He talks corporate, he talks good, bad, ugly and then he talks about his own experience with it too.

So, if you can see a theme here, I love hearing how people perceive the world and I love autobiographies. So, if you have any recommendations, please. So definitely a steadfast person, definitely someone who's analyzing what can be done versus what will be done versus how people are thinking around you versus chatting lightly into this is what we should do, but this is what we might do instead and the acknowledgment of person versus company. So that, and then the third person was actually, so this is someone that I know, and she is a huge partner of mine in work in general. She is my coworker. Her name is Alyssa. The two of us I think just work as a well-oiled machine. She's coming with me because I don't see being a leadership in any company without her. She just works so hard. She makes it work. She makes it run. If there's something that needs to be stepped up and done, she's 100% signing herself up for it. She has grown from someone that used to work for me part time to literally someone I couldn't run this business without. So, it's been an insane growth for both of us and yes, she's not losing me. So anyway, that's my three. Scott and then Morgan and Alyssa.
April: What a rock star board of directors! And shout out to Alyssa. Hopefully she's hearing this now. But I don't think I've heard a more well balanced and great board of directors there. So, kudos to you! I also will need you to send me the titles later so we can chat about it. Thank you for the recommendations. But Jenny, thank you so much. It's been such a pleasure just getting to know you through this time before you're even, an official member of the Simon community. It's been such a great experience to get to know you and see you as we've been talking kind of full circle, but I think the circle is not ended. Right? Like I still, I feel like there's still, you know, a, a percentage of the circle that we've just started here and scratched the surface, especially here at your time with Simon. So thrilled to see where this goes from here. But thank you so much for sharing your insights on Simon Games, your experience at Simon thus far and, and best of luck to you on finals coming up very soon. So, thank you for joining us Jenny.

Jenny: Yeah, same to you. And thank you for having me because it really, it's cool how our perspectives of each other and like our journey is actually strikingly together. I've kind of just kept, you know, kept intersecting. So, I'm really excited to, you know, honestly, be a classmate of yours now too and then also keep our connection over the next couple of years. So, it's going to be really cool. So, thank you.

April: Well, Jenny, thanks so much. Have a good night and thank you all for listening.

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