

# IMPACT

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**ON THE COVER:**
(L-R) Nikita Verma, Shaista Khodabux, Dean Maury Peiperl, Madison Leigh Stoermer, and Kaleb Lewis. Photo by Ron Aira

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George Mason University School of Business

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PHOTO BY EVAN CANTWELL

# Message *from the* Dean

## DEAN MAURY PEIPERL

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
**MISSION STATEMENT**

We prepare a diverse student body to succeed in a global business environment. We produce outstanding scholarship in business and work to maximize the impact of our expertise. We endeavor to instill a strong ethical compass, and a lifelong habit of learning, in our students and stakeholders.

I recently met with the president of a large regional bank to talk about the future of education and talent in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Northern Virginia, of course, accounts for a significant (and growing) portion of the area's economy, and likewise, Mason is one of the largest providers of higher education in the capital region. Yet we are so grounded—for good reason—in our Northern Virginia identity that we often fail to consider our effect, and our potential, in the wider "DMV." That's probably why I was surprised to hear this CEO say, "I think if there is one school that can be the future of higher education and talent for the greater Washington area, it's George Mason."

This business leader went on to explain that Mason's reputation for developing graduates who know how to get things done and who are more interested in results than in status really sets us apart from most of our regional competition—and not only in Northern Virginia. He encouraged us to look for opportunities to serve the entire Washington, D.C., region. We are only too glad to take up that challenge, particularly in line with Mason's mission "to be a university for the world."

Washington has nearly all the ingredients to be a global city, particularly the combination of leading international business, government, and NGO entities to which it plays host. The economy is diversifying well beyond the federal government-focused domain, and the arrival of Amazon's HQ2 heralds the advent of a consumer-oriented, high-technology environment that is increasingly seeing talented employees exit the government and government contracting sectors. As our School of Business continues to grow and to provide a talent pipeline across the region, we are increasingly becoming the school of choice for both students and recruiters, whether in Washington, D.C., Maryland, or Virginia. We seek to provide the right educational experience for everyone—of any background and with any business career focus—who is part of, or seeks to become part of, that growing regional economy.

> As our School of Business continues to grow and to provide a talent pipeline across the region, we are increasingly becoming the school of choice for both students and recruiters.
>
> —Dean Peiperl

To get to fully global status as a city, however, Washington has one more challenge to overcome: the way in which our division of jurisdictions often prevents us from full operational integration. In the past year I've become familiar with, and am now honored to serve as a board member of, the Greater Washington Board of Trade (GWBOT). This venerable organization, founded in 1889, has been a central driver in the creation of such Washington, D.C., institutions as the Kennedy Center and Metro, among other things. Recently, the GWBOT, along with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Area (of which Mason is part), announced the launch of a "smart region movement" called Connected DMV. Its aim is "to enable an inclusive, trusted, secure, and sustainable digital environment for our region that improves how we live, work, connect, and prosper." When this project comes to fruition, it will mean less traffic, more flexible and stable infrastructure, and better access for all to now-basic amenities such as water, electricity, internet (5G), and public transport, to name a few. And it aims to create a seamless experience with these amenities across state or city borders.

Ambitious? Certainly. But so are Mason students, faculty, and alumni, and part of seeing our school develop into a regional powerhouse should be, in my view, to help more and more of them find roles in helping to shape the region's connected future. For even as we work to build a better world *around* the world, we are also part and parcel of the DMV. Like so many of our Mason family, I'm a product of this area, and I dream of the day Washington can be a fully connected and, in due course, fully global city.


**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS SENIOR ADMINISTRATION**

**Maury Peiperl**, Dean

**Anne Magro**, Senior Associate Dean, Strategy and Impact

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**David Miller**, Executive Director, Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

**JK Aier**, Area Chair, Accounting, and Director, Investor Protection and Corporate Fraud Research Center

**Jackie Brown**, Area Chair, Business Foundations

**Laurie Meamber**, Area Chair, Marketing

**Nirup Menon**, Area Chair, Information Systems and Operations Management

**Alexander Philipov**, Area Chair, Finance

**Masoud Yasai**, Area Chair, Management

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS DEAN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL**

To deepen the business community's participation in the development of future business leaders, the Dean's Council provides strategic guidance as the School of Business seeks to align its programs to the needs of the business community.

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**Teresa A. Weipert**
Sutherland Global Services Inc.

**Raymond L. Winn III**, '82, '85, '86, '90
Deloitte LLP

## Escaping Routine: Learning Real-World Skills through the Power of Play

BY ADRIENNE BENSON

In an escape room—a storyline-themed room that teams have to escape using mission-related clues and tools—decision making, clear communication, creative thinking, and collaboration are critical skills. Of course, these same skills are also critical—and highly sought after—in the workplace.

"In business foundations, we purposely have smaller, more interactive classes," says **Jackie Brown**, area chair of business foundations. This is critical to BUS 303 Developing Your Professional Skills, where students learn and develop both life and professional skills. Using the power of play to teach students critical thinking, cooperation, and creativity, faculty from the School of Business, College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA), and College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) came together to propose an interdisciplinary module for this class, which they submitted during the call for proposals for the 2018-19 Provost's Curriculum Impact Grants. The proposal won, the project received a $21,500 grant, and the module, Civic Engagement, Critical Thinking, and Experiential Learning through Escape Rooms, was piloted in two sections of BUS 303.

Brown and **Cameron Harris,** business foundations instructor, developed and led the course modules with support from **Seth Hudson**, assistant professor of game writing in CVPA's Computer Game Design Program, and **Doug Eyman**, director of CHSS's PhD in Writing and Rhetoric Program and associate professor of English. Students put the skills learned in class to use by working in teams to conceive themed escape rooms based around specific professional skills like ethics, resiliency, and diversity. The course brings experiential learning to a wide swath of the student population—arming them with necessary skills and powerful problem-solving experience.

Using the power of play to teach students critical thinking, cooperation, and creativity



PHOTO COURTESY OF RACHEL CHASIN

## Expanding the Curriculum in Business Analytics

BY ADRIENNE BENSON

Business analytics is the unseen force behind the pop-up ads on your Facebook page that seem tailored exactly to your recent Google search and the coupons for diapers that magically appear in your mailbox right upon the arrival of your second trimester. Analytics is also the way mission-driven organizations build algorithms to predict refugee movement, design methods for targeted outreach to underserved populations, and determine the strength of social movements. It is a science that can help professional basketball teams woo the exact player they need to fill skill gaps or provide granular-level insight into how households vote. In short, it's the brave new world that business and nonprofits alike need to live in and, more importantly, staff.

**Pallab Sanyal**, associate professor and MBA director, sensed that more and more companies would require people with the skills to analyze the large volumes of data they collect. The statistics agree. In January 2019, the job site Indeed released a study showing that the demand for data scientists has grown by 344 percent since 2013, while the number of job seekers with the skills to fill those positions has only grown by 14 percent. Sanyal was integral to creating several programs at Mason geared toward filling that staffing gap. A graduate certificate in business analytics has been popular among our MBA students. An undergraduate minor in business analytics allows students with concentrations in accounting, finance, operations, and marketing to add business analytics to their arsenal of knowledge. A business analytics concentration will be offered by fall 2020.

Businesses need analysts to make use of the vast amounts of data they collect on consumers through websites, social media, location-based advertising, and by studying customer records to track interaction. Sometimes, businesses buy the raw data from third-party sources, which brings up the issue of ethics. There are innumerable ways the data can be used well and an equal number of ways it can be used badly. Sanyal notes that while Mason does not offer classes specifically on the ethical use of data, the subject is discussed at length in classes related to data analytics.

Data—when crunched and analyzed by those skilled in the science—can give companies, organizations, nonprofits, and political campaigns amazing amounts of information that help design products, offer services, and inform strategies. Sanyal says, "Most decisions will still come down to a combination of hunches and data. Data can tell you there's a 60 percent chance of snow, but it's still up to a human to decide if a district should close the schools. Data can tell you the probabilities various projects have of succeeding, but a human has to decide which project to undertake based on those probabilities."

There are no classes for hunches, but thanks to the work of Sanyal and his colleagues, Mason students have the opportunity to gain highly sought-after skills in data analysis.

## Art and Analytics Collide in Washington, D.C.

BY JENNIFER BRAUN ANZALDI

Finding the integration of art with our evolving world of technology and science can be challenging. Recently, the Smithsonian's National Gallery of Art (NGA) in Washington, D.C., took steps to bring together artists and scientists in a unique event.

A multidisciplinary team consisting of **Paul Albert**, a Mason graduate student in art history and computational social sciences, and School of Business faculty members **Gautham Vadakkepatt**, assistant professor of marketing, and **Laurie Meamber**, associate professor of marketing, were recently invited by NGA to join a team of data scientists and art historians to analyze, contextualize, and visualize their permanent collection data. The study culminated in a two-day Datathon, during which the teams finalized their visualizations and presented their findings at a public livestreamed event on October 25.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURIE MEAMBER

**Paul Albert, Gautham Vadakkepatt, and Laurie Meamber**

NGA is the first American art museum to invite teams of data scientists and art historians together for this analysis.

"Data analytics and the visualization of data touches many fields, including art," says Meamber. "The National Gallery of Art offered this incredible opportunity to us to learn more and share our insights about the permanent collection. Our team, led by Paul Albert, examined the popularity of artists in the NGA's collection by developing an engagement measure based on Wikipedia page views. The engagement scores for the permanent collection artists can assist the NGA's marketing and social media efforts to generate interest and inform visitors."

Meamber says the team came together after Albert approached her. "Paul's background combines art history and computational social sciences. He was looking for team members in marketing that could lend expertise in the domains of display, assortments, and merchandising more generally that could be potentially useful for looking at art display in museums. I reached out to Gautham given his expertise in both retailing and marketing analytics."

In addition to Mason, participating institutions across the country included Bennington College; Carnegie Mellon University; Duke University; Macalester College; New College of Florida; University of California, Los Angeles; and Williams College. For Meamber, participating brought "a great opportunity to work in a multidisciplinary team with both Paul and Gautham, to interact with and learn from National Gallery of Art representatives and with the other teams at the Datathon, and to spend some dedicated time at the National Gallery of Art and with the data, learning more about the permanent collection."

The Datathon is one of many efforts by the gallery to make its collection more widely available to the public. The gallery currently offers 53,000 images available to the public for download.

> "Data analytics and the visualization of data touches many fields, including art."
>
> —Laurie Meamber



Dennis Kelly at Hinson Ford Cider and Mead in Amissville, Virginia

# Bees Are a Sweet Link between Mason and the Community

BY ADRIENNE BENSON

Honey is the base ingredient for mead—the world's oldest wine—and also the passion project of **Dennis Kelly**, co-owner of Amissville, Virginia's Hinson Ford Cider and Mead. Honey is also the connection between George Mason University, Kelly's alma mater, and Hinson Ford. "I read about the Honey Bee Initiative (HBI) before we opened Hinson Ford," Kelly says. "It struck me how cool an idea it is, especially the interdisciplinary aspect of it." George Mason's HBI is a collaboration between the School of Business and the College of Science that works on honey bee sustainability by taking innovative approaches to education, conducting collaborative research, and establishing community partnerships in the Northern Virginia region.

"We noticed a growing market for mead," Kelly says. "People are so aware now of the plight of the honey bee and how it affects humans. It makes them want to support bees and beekeepers." Kelly met **Germán Perilla**, the cofounder and director along with **Lisa Gring-Pemble**, cofounder and director of strategy for the HBI, at a Mason event in 2012. Shortly afterward, Kelly emailed Perilla, suggesting they think about ways to work together. At that time, the HBI needed space to establish new hives. Hinson Ford was game to host, knowing the bees would bolster the growth of the tulip poplars, black locust trees, clover, and wildflowers on the property.

Gring-Pemble sees the HBI as an incredible educational opportunity. "This is everything higher education needs," she says. "It's problem driven, so it's not about 'What's your major?'; it's about a challenge you want to solve and it involves the greater community—people like Dennis Kelly and experts who can work with students. That's the kind of college experience we should be offering." Her enthusiasm is infectious—both for the HBI and for the idea of social entrepreneurship, a notion the George Mason University School of Business takes seriously.

The bees—which, for logistical reasons, no longer live on Hinson Ford land—were unaware of the role they played in connecting George Mason to the wider community, but their legacy continues. As Gring-Pemble says, "We're focused on bees, and we're focused on how sustainable beekeeping can empower communities. It doesn't matter whether that community is in Colombia or if it's the Covanta landfill. The point is that we're improving lives in communities."






PHOTO BY CREATIVE SERVICES

## Brewing a Better World

**George Mason's Honey Bee Initiative (HBI) has established a new collaboration with Beltway Brewing Company to offer Patriots 57 Honey Beer. In this new partnership, Beltway Brewing Company was given creative freedom in designing a beer recipe from grain to glass, with one unique ingredient that had to be used: honey from Mason's Honey Bee Initiative apiaries. The results created a unique blend that was recently showcased to the HBI and friends of Mason. Sales of Patriots 57 support the HBI. Visit bees.gmu.edu to learn where this new brew is available for purchase.**

# Business as a Force for Good—Creating Value for All Stakeholders

BY DAMIAN CRISTODERO

With a focus on addressing the world's most dire problems and changing the face of business to reflect the motto "Doing well by doing good," the School of Business is poised to take a leadership role in climate change and sustainability—the impetus for the Business for a Better World Center, the brain child of **Lisa Gring-Pemble** and **Anne Magro**.

"Our mission at George Mason is to be the best university *for* the world," Gring-Pemble says. "The business school emphasizes being a place of opportunity where business is a positive force in the world. Essentially the center is a living example of Mason's vision, and it's having a significant and measurable impact on our students, region, and the globe."

The center launched on November 11, 2019, with the first of a series of center-sponsored speakers, featuring Jeff Foote, former director of sustainability for Coca-Cola, at the inaugural event. "The George Mason School of Business is breaking barriers," Foote says. "There has to be a better way to do business."

The center embodies the spirit of a recent Business Roundtable statement—that the purpose of a corporation is to create value for all stakeholders—and aims to integrate and uphold the United Nations' Six Principles for Responsible Management Education: purpose, values, method, research, partnership, and dialogue. Gring-Pemble and Magro see the speaker series element of the center as critical to the "dialogue" principle.

"Speakers on campus learn from our students and faculty just as we learn from them," Magro says. "Speakers learn about student concerns and passions and gain practical insights from cutting-edge faculty research. Students and faculty have the opportunity to learn from leaders at the front line of addressing the complex challenges facing our world. The center will further promote dialogue by hosting industry roundtables posing challenging questions like how corporations can generate value for all stakeholders."

If there is one issue facing the world that demands immediate attention and action, it's sustainability as a way to ensure global futures. Truly a matter of life and death, the problem demands collaboration and an integrated approach to finding solutions. To that end, the center has faculty affiliates from nearly every school and college on campus, all strongly interested in collaborating on research, teaching, and community partnerships. The center also has the potential to inspire and involve students from across the university. "One in four Mason undergraduates takes a course through the School of Business—what a tremendous opportunity to influence students from all majors," Gring-Pemble says.

> "The business school emphasizes being a place of opportunity where business is a positive force in the world."
>
> —Lisa Gring-Pemble



Dear Alumni and Friends,

This issue of *Impact* highlights much of what is special about the George Mason School of Business. On these pages, you will read about successful alumni who volunteer as mentors and speakers, community leaders who engage with our students and faculty, and advisory board members who advocate for the school and help sculpt our programs and courses to ensure they are as relevant as possible. We are stronger for your involvement, emboldened by your support, and fortunate for your engagement and commitment.

George Mason University provides an education that few other institutions can match—one that is affordable, impactful, relevant, and transformative. The School of Business is a critical part of this successful model. Our students graduate with the ability to think critically, to communicate effectively, and with the desire to make their lives, their communities, and their world better. They contribute to our economy and have an outsized impact on our region's growth and prosperity. With your help and generous support, their success becomes our success.

Creating an outstanding educational enterprise takes more than just dollars and cents. What differentiates us from other schools are the more than 200 community leaders who volunteer on the school's advisory boards, the 100 businesspeople who come to campus to speak to our students about their areas of expertise, and the numerous volunteers who mentor students or serve as capstone judges. A strong educational program depends on a strong community of support.

Thank you for contributing to student success. Your time, energy, and remarkable generosity extend through our graduates into our economy, strengthening our businesses and communities. Thank you for being a part of this vibrant, committed community.

With gratitude,

Eleanor Weis
Director of Advancement and Alumni Relations

## Your Gift, Your Choice

There are many ways to demonstrate your support for the School of Business. You choose when, how much, and where to give—with several ways in which you can make your commitment and ongoing support known. Gifts of any and all amounts go a long way in supporting the School of Business.

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**BUILD A PARTNERSHIP WITH CORPORATE GIVING:** Mason offers businesses access to talent, expertise, and infrastructure—striving to create partnerships that provide industry leaders with high-demand resources, enrich the student experience, and promote regional economic development.

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Contact Eleanor Weis, director of advancement and alumni relations, at eweis2@gmu.edu or 703-993-2412 to learn more.

# Mason Business Welcomes New Dean's Advisory Council Members

BY KATHERINE JOHNSON DIAS AND NIKKI JEROME OUELLETTE

The School of Business recently welcomed six new board members to the Dean's Advisory Council. The council acts as a partnership between the school and business leaders in order to deepen the business community's participation in the development of Mason business students. Members of the council represent a variety of industries and provide a real-world perspective that ensures the school's program curricula meet current industry needs. "Crucially, council members share our story, which is essential in helping raise our profile and in celebrating the way Mason makes it possible for so many people to tackle real-world business issues in a holistic, sustainable fashion," says Dean **Maury Peiperl**. Council Chair **Dusty Wince**, EMBA '12, founder of Aligned2, says, "This important connection enables the dean to build new partnerships and deepen existing relationships to raise the profile of the school."

## MEET THE NEW 2019 MEMBERS



**Debi Beck Corbatto**
BS Marketing '86; MS Exercise, Fitness, and Health Promotion '03; PhD Education and Human Development '18

Deputy Athletic Director, Internal Operations and Risk Management, Senior Woman Administrator, Intercollegiate Athletics, George Mason University

Corbatto has extensive experience in working with elite athletes and has completed rotations with USA Basketball and the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. She serves as the vice chair on the Virginia Board of Medicine's Athletic Trainers Advisory Board.



**Clement Chen**
Chief Strategy Officer, Leidos Health

Chen leads strategic planning, mergers and acquisitions, and business development operations for Leidos Health. He also guides the creation and pursuit of new strategic growth initiatives.



**Ginny Heine**
Senior Vice President and Commercial Bank Manager, Greater Washington Region; East Coast Group Head, Aerospace, Defense, and Government Services, City National Bank

Heine has more than 30 years of financial services experience. She is committed to giving back to the community and has served on numerous boards and committees for organizations such as the National Kidney Foundation, United Way, Easter Seals, WFCM, and the Salvation Army.



**Deepti Malhotra**
President and CEO, Vision | Mission | Drive Corp (VMD)

Malhotra cofounded VMD in 2002 and today serves as its chief executive officer. She has been named one of the 50 Most Influential Minorities in Business. VMD has been on the "Inc. 5000" list of fastest growing companies.



**Scott Plein**
Principal, Equinox Investments LLC

Plein is the founding principal of Equinox Investments LLC, a real estate investment, development, and management firm specializing in community planning and entitlements in Northern Virginia. He has served on several local and regional boards including the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance and NAIOP Northern Virginia. Plein is the past president of the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association and the past chairman of Mason's Center for Real Estate Entrepreneurship.



**Geoff Weber**
BS Accounting '91 and MBA '98
Principal, Federal Advisory Services, KPMG

Weber leads services associated with technology and risk for federal government clients. He has deep knowledge in areas of enterprise architecture, systems integration and implementation strategies, system implementations, and IT controls.



# FROM MASON TO WALL STREET

## Business Alumni on Careers in Finance and Investment

BY KATHERINE JOHNSON DIAS




**Tom Webb**, BS Business Administration '74 and MBA '77
**1998 Alumnus of the Year**

**Tom Webb** recently retired from CMS Energy, where he spent 16 years as the executive vice president and chief financial officer. During his time at CMS Energy, Webb led the company to a total shareholder return that exceeded 2,000 percent over 15 years, delivered a 7 percent EPS growth each year, and used more money for customer service improvement than his peers.

"I enjoyed the challenge around creating an atmosphere that led to a keen drive throughout the company to serve customers and investors. The best ideas and results come from a well-aligned high-performing team, rather than a C-suite-dominated approach. Sustaining the performance, aligning Wall Street, and communication with customers and investors work," he says.

Webb spent 42 years in finance, also serving as executive vice president and CFO of Kellogg Company for three years, vice president and CFO at Visteon, and holding senior finance positions at Ford Motor Company for 22 years.

Webb says the key takeaway from his career was the importance of focusing on both customers and investors. He expects downturns to occur but says, "Companies and banks that successfully serve their customers and their investors will come out of the next downturn as big winners. It's possible to win in the good times and the tough times."

**Ivy Zelman**, BS Accounting '90
**School of Business Prominent Patriot**

**Ivy Zelman** serves as chief executive officer of Zelman & Associates, which she founded in 2007. The company provides housing market expertise, research, and analytics. Zelman remembers the launch of the company as invigorating and rewarding, with 75 clients signing up the first day.

On a typical work day, Zelman is either traveling for speaking engagements or attending on-site meetings with clients. When she's at her home base in Cleveland, Ohio, she leads a team of 12 analysts, whose research projects she oversees, and networks with new and existing lists of C-suite executives to investigate new trends in the housing market.

Zelman values her team, saying that every person matters and she doesn't work in isolation. However, as the CEO, she must make the difficult decisions. "We have to be bold with the changing business dynamics, and that's what the CEO does. I collaborate with my senior team members, but ultimately the decision comes down to me and my partners, and what we do will determine our success or lack of it," she says.




As for the future of the housing market, Zelman says it depends on the economic backdrop. Currently, the industry is experiencing a massive tailwind of older millennials purchasing homes. However, she believes there will be challenges in the next 10 years, including increased supply when aging baby boomers put their homes on the market. However, Zelman & Associates is doing the research now to forecast future trends.

"We really have to use our resources and provide as much insight as we can," Zelman says. "We can start educating people now about what's going to happen."

## **Brandon Nestor**, BS Finance '17

**Brandon Nestor** is a senior analyst on the investment team with Aldrich Capital Partners (ACP), which invests in growth-stage companies, usually in technology and software. Nestor has been with ACP, based in Vienna, Virginia, for more than two years. He is responsible for working on new and existing deals with companies and managing existing portfolio companies.

"Helping entrepreneurs grow their business is the most interesting and rewarding part of my job. They're doing really well but want to take that next step, and we get to be part of their story and support them," Nestor says.

Nestor says that the quantity of activity in the private-equity industry is lower than the current activity in the hedge fund industry. However, there's still much work to do, and ACP can only make so many deals each year with early- and growth-stage companies.

"The overall investment process can take longer than people may expect. It's a funnel game, so part of that is understanding that most of the deals we review, we won't end up doing, and [then to] understand why. It can be challenging to flush out the options," he says.

ACP has invested in three Virginia-based tech companies. "I think the idea that you need to be in New York or Boston or Silicon Valley to start a software company is no longer the case. Nowadays, with remote working and cloud technology, folks are finding ways to build great companies outside of traditional geographies," Nestor says.

As a Mason School of Business student, Nestor helped launch the Student Managed Investment Fund (SMIF). He believes it's important for finance students to have hands-on experience with investing. SMIF and prior experience also help students identify their passion.

"It can be difficult to know what you're passionate about at an early age, especially in finance. Don't think that the best way to embrace finance is to be at a financial services firm," he says. "There are so many different areas of business that are interesting and rewarding for finance folks. Expand your horizons and look at different industries."





Becky Anderson, BS Accounting '10, School of Business Alumni Chapter President

## From the Alumni Chapter President

Dear School of Business Alumni,

As president of our alumni chapter, I have connected with numerous alumni representing classes from every decade and heard stories about how times have changed. In so many ways, the experiences we had as students are much different from student life today. However, there are still parallels: the rewarding experiences of a great education, learning about yourself as a young adult, and forging lifelong friendships.

The old brick apartments have been torn down to accommodate new and improved housing options. We have new residence halls, many configured as apartments with amenities like private bathrooms, air conditioning, and wi-fi.

No more searching through the Fenwick Library stacks or overflow books in the Johnson Center to research a topic for a class. Online databases available through University Libraries allow students to access a vast array of print and electronic resources anywhere in the world. Now, the Johnson Center has space to house more study rooms.

Do you remember the last time you visited Mason? If you have not returned recently, consider planning a trip now. Beautiful new spaces are here to welcome you and all Mason alumni, no matter which campus you attended or which one you return to. Walk around the Fairfax Campus and see the new construction at the site of the former Robinson A building. Take a tour of the beautiful renovations in Fenwick Library, or visit Peterson Family Health Sciences Hall, the new building that houses the College of Health and Human Services. You might even spot some of the university's food delivery robots on your visit.

Outside of Fairfax, but still in Virginia, Mason hosts the Smithsonian Mason School of Conservation in Front Royal. The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution now hosts the Point of View International Retreat and Conference Center in Lorton, and the College of Science opened the Potomac Science Center in Prince William County.

These are just some of the advantages of today's student experience. I welcome you back to Mason to enjoy them as alumni.

—Becky Anderson

### SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ALUMNI CHAPTER BOARD

**President**
Becky Anderson, BS Accounting '10

**President-Elect**
Christine Landoll, BS Accounting '89, MS Tax '92

**Immediate Past President**
Jason Howell, BS Accounting '97

**Chair of Diversity and Inclusion**
Jennifer Rhodes, Executive MBA '05

**Chair of the Program & Events Committee**
Curt White, Executive MBA '96

**Chair of Outreach**
Kristin Discher, BS Marketing '08, MBA '13

**Chair of the Fundraising Committee**
Michael Gallagher, MBA '94

**Secretary**
Chaimaa Fekkak, BS Finance and Management '13

**Treasurer**
Scott Hine, BS Decision Science '85

**DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE**

David Atkins, BS Decision Science '90

Keith Callahan, BS Finance '86

Chuck LaRock, BS Finance '07

Michael Ly, BS Accounting '12, MS Accounting '13

Alison Nashed, BS Finance '14

Joe Whitebread, MS Real Estate Development '15




MASON GEAR IS HERE

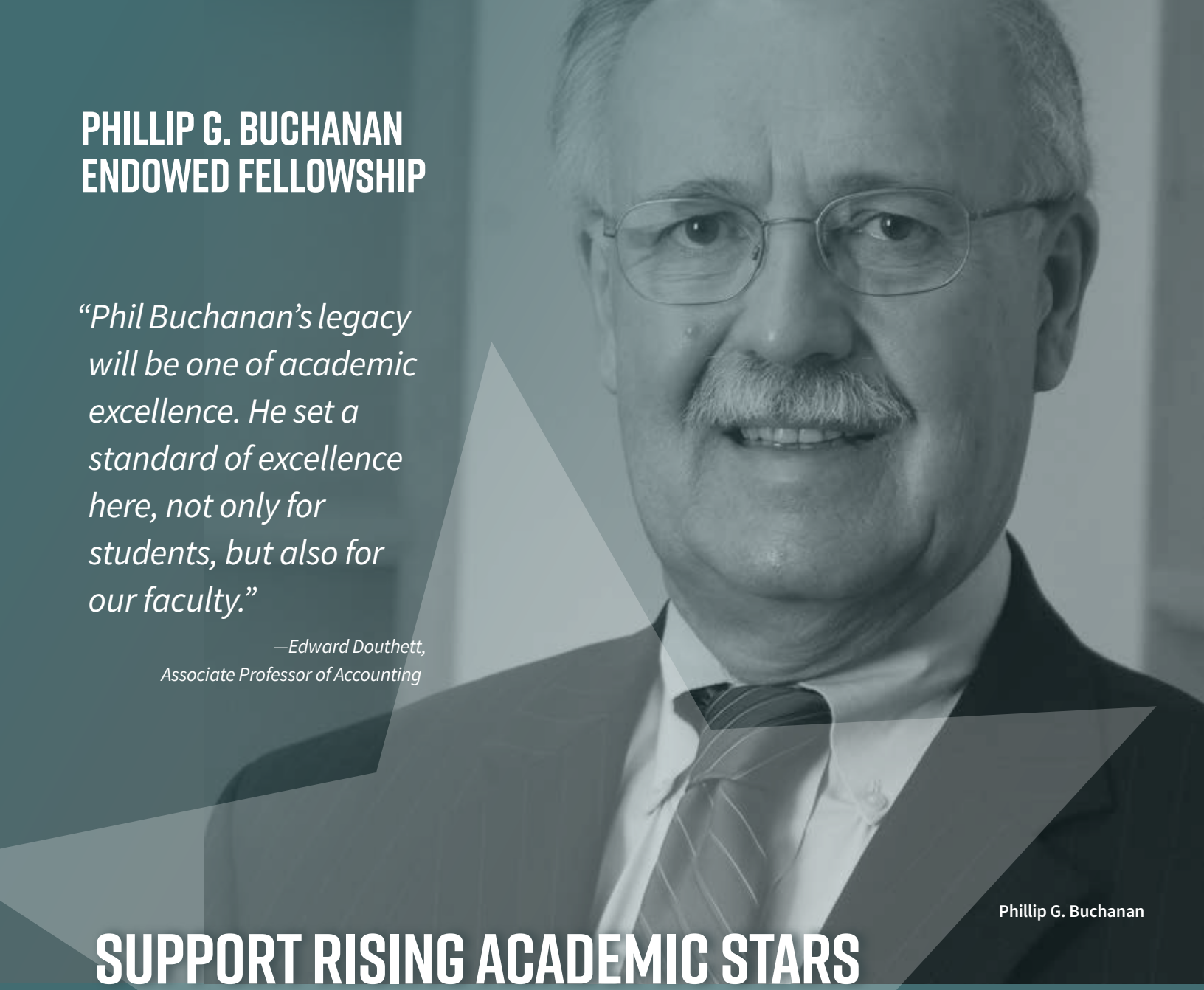
**Supplies are limited!**

Visit the George Mason University Bookstore in the Johnson Center for the latest School of Business gear, or email bizalum@gmu.edu.

# PHILLIP G. BUCHANAN ENDOWED FELLOWSHIP

*"Phil Buchanan's legacy will be one of academic excellence. He set a standard of excellence here, not only for students, but also for our faculty."*

*—Edward Douthett,*
*Associate Professor of Accounting*



Phillip G. Buchanan

# SUPPORT RISING ACADEMIC STARS

Endowed professorships and fellowships are awarded to faculty who have demonstrated the vision, research, and teaching critical to the advancement of their fields of study. These awards are among the highest honors bestowed in the academic community.

Your support will allow the School of Business to

- Attract and retain talented faculty who are rising stars in business research
- Reach our goal of being recognized as leaders in specific business disciplines
- Sustain the important contributions our faculty make to teaching, scholarship, and industry research
- Provide funding to promising young faculty members to launch or progress in their research careers

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY | School of Business

# The Mason Experience: **Student** and **Alumni** Voices

BY KATHERINE JOHNSON DIAS

STUDENTS

## NATHANIEL SISAY

Information Systems and Operations Management
Expected Graduation: May 2020

***Why is being involved and connecting with peers important?***

It's very important to form relationships with not only other students in the School of Business, but also faculty, since they are the ones who can help you succeed in your four years at Mason. Expanding your network can create opportunities to build relationships that can lead you down the right path in your career.





## CHEYANNE ANDAYA

Marketing
Expected Graduation: May 2020

***Why should students start to build their professional network at Mason?***

Building a professional network is extremely important as a student because when you surround yourself with other driven individuals, it encourages you to push yourself to try new things. A professional network can help you realize your potential and help you reach or adjust your goals.





## CHRISTINE LY

Finance
Expected Graduation: May 2020

***Who has played a role in your success at the School of Business?***

Some of my most meaningful and helpful connections have been within my major's department. Finance itself is already a challenging profession to get into, especially as a woman, and all of my professors have been so fundamental in helping me further my growth in this field. Two specific professors who have guided me along this journey are **Steve Pilloff** and **Shelly Canterbury**. I have grown extremely close to these two, and they have been huge mentors for me, along with **Yena Kim**, my advisor. These three people have consistently helped me find opportunities within and outside the university, and have had a large hand in developing my understanding of finance to get me where I am right now.

## COURTNEY BURCHETT

Accounting and Information Systems and Operations Management
Expected Graduation: Fall 2020

***How can fellow business students make the most of their time at Mason?***

Take the time to understand the resources available to you and then use that information to determine what you want your future career to be. That research will guide you throughout your years at Mason. Additionally, being active on campus helps students find a greater purpose or even long-lasting relationships. It's great to find others who are passionate and motivated like you, and, once you start, so many other doors will open.

ALUMNI









**SIRENA JOHNSON**, BS Accounting ’99
Partner, Co-practice Leader, Government Contracting
Citrin Cooperman

***How did your experience at the School of Business prepare you for career success?***

I felt that when I left school and entered the workforce full time, there was practical application for what I learned at the School of Business. This put me ahead of my peers because I not only knew the theory but also how to apply it in the business world. It really set me up for success.

**JOHN GUSTAVO BLAIR**, MBA ’04
Emerging Technologies Business Investment Manager
Fairfax County Economic Development Authority

***Why is it important to stay connected and engaged as an alumnus?***

My life is richer because I have kept my friendships that I developed as an MBA student at Mason. Just as important as camaraderie are the professional relationships and opportunities that have come from those friendships. During the MBA program, we got to know each other not only by working on projects together, but also by spending time with one another outside of class. For me, this has led to new opportunities, and my network of friends from school continues to be part of my life.

**SHAUNTAE BARBER**, BS Marketing ’04
Senior Data Analytics Specialist
General Services Administration

***What School of Business faculty member left a lasting impact?***

I still keep in contact with **Laurie Meamber**. I’ll never forget her course on consumer behavior. We had to watch a movie and understand the different consumer behaviors in that movie and how they applied to the real world when it comes to marketing. She helped us see how to apply these concepts and recognize them in our everyday life. I took that course more than 15 years ago, but I still remember it and her. Anytime I have questions, I can still email her. That’s what a professor should be. She still wants to help us be that great marketer or businessperson in the workplace.

**MIKE CREASY**, BS Accounting and Decision Sciences and Management Information Systems ’91
Audit Services Practice Leader, Atlantic Coast Market Territory
Grant Thornton

***What’s something you would go back and tell your college-aged self now?***

One thing I’d say is slow down. Don’t race through the four years. I graduated in four years, so I was on a traditional path. But when I graduated, I don’t think I was ready for the real world. Some people might be, but I knew I was not. I think I probably would have benefited from slowing down and taking a fifth year. Obviously, the cost of a fifth year factors into that decision, but I will encourage my sons to take a gap year to do something meaningful between high school and college and/or to graduate in five years. If possible, don’t sprint to the finish… enjoy the ride.



# Mason Alumni Power Couple Committed to Serving Community

BY KATHERINE JOHNSON DIAS

Since attending and graduating from George Mason University, **Marc** and **Shaza Andersen** have embedded themselves in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. From establishing careers, marrying, and starting a family, to giving back, the Andersens have achieved several milestones in the region. They are two dedicated community business leaders who recognize the values and impact of the School of Business.

The Andersens serve on the School of Business Dean's Advisory Council, with Marc also sitting on the Center for Government Contracting Advisory Board, which he helped start.

Most recently, Shaza, BA Area Studies '89, launched Trustar Bank in July 2019, serving as chief executive officer and founder. Trustar Bank is the first community bank to be chartered in Virginia in more than 10 years.

"With all of the bank consolidations in our marketplace, there was a demand for a new community bank," she says. The response has been overwhelming.

Shaza says that both this demand and having a proven team of leaders from her previous job allowed the process to move quickly. "Our regulators were great in working with us, and many knew us from the past. That made a big difference," she says.

Previously, Shaza served as vice chair of the board of Sandy Spring Bank and was founder and CEO of WashingtonFirst Bank. She says the team looks forward to growing the bank by delivering superior service and strong returns to shareholders.

Marc, BA Economics '90, has spent more than 17 years with Ernst & Young LLP (EY). He currently serves as a senior global client service partner advising global technology, public sector, consumer products, and banking and capital market clients. He also served in strategy, public policy, and market leadership roles, to include creating EY's U.S. federal consulting business.

He has dedicated most of his career to EY because of the people and culture. "EY provides an incredible platform to create and build businesses, grow and develop people, and serve clients globally. It's fun," he says.

Marc is passionate about innovation and entrepreneurship, the "key ingredients for driving meaningful change and growth."

"It's about understanding what's possible and then the impact you can make. I'm passionate about bringing the best of the private and public sectors together to solve complex problems by driving innovation and investing in entrepreneurship," he says.

Marc also enjoys mentoring and investing in professional development opportunities for military and veterans as they transition to the private sector.

"We are both committed to doing what we can to help make a difference and to have an impact. Mason has come a long way since we graduated, due in part to alumni and friends staying active and committed to the university's

> We are both committed to doing what we can to help make a difference and to have an impact.




PHOTOS BY JOHN BOAL

success," they say. "From a community perspective, we recognize an opportunity and responsibility to make a difference where we can in the areas that matter most to us: youth, education, and entrepreneurship."

As board members they recognize the advantages of a Mason business degree and future industry success.

"A degree from Mason's School of Business sets students apart in what it communicates. The business school does a great job in preparing students to enter the workforce. In addition, as many students work while attending school, it also communicates the ability of Mason students to meet the many demands required to be a successful professional," say the Andersens.

They encourage students to work hard and make the most of their education and professional development opportunities.

"Understand that success and your career are something that you need to consistently invest in over time. Take risks and do something that you are passionate about and take the time to invest in others and in our community."

The Andersens look forward to the future and doing more of what they're passionate about—building their businesses, investing in the community, traveling, and spending time with family and friends.



> A degree from Mason's School of Business sets students apart in what it communicates.

# George Mason School of Business: A Regional Economic Engine

BY KIEL STONE

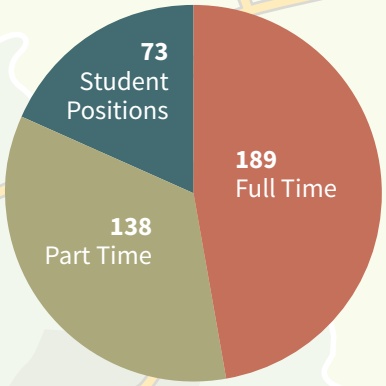
Located just outside Washington, D.C., at the intersection of international business and politics, the George Mason School of Business and its commitment to the region balance well with the global focus of our programs and diversity of our student body and faculty.

**Total Economic Impact: $360M**

Total economic impact of the George Mason School of Business on the Washington metropolitan region

**Total Jobs Provided: 400**

We also support an additional 1,994 jobs in Northern Virginia, through our spending, which generates additional economic activity.




**Induced Economic Activity: $80M**

Additional economic activity generated by the school's spending in Northern Virginia

**78% of Students Completed an Internship**

Our job/internship listing platform, Handshake, currently lists 3,952 internships, which includes opportunities for students across all School of Business concentrations.

**87,150 Internship Hours Worked Over the Past Five Years**

**UNDERGRADUATE**

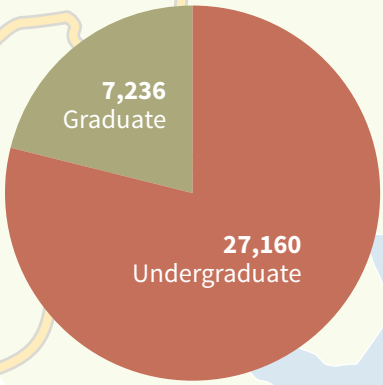
- BUS 492 Internship in Business
  - + 413 undergraduate students
  - + 61,950 total working hours (Each student must complete at least 150 hours.)

**GRADUATE**

- BMGT 692 Professional Development Experience and ACCT 695 Graduate Field Experience
  - + 168 students
  - + 25,200 working hours

**33,380 School of Business Alumni**

Total Degrees Conferred: 34,396




**204,258 Total University Alumni**

Alumni counted once for first degree only

All economic impact numbers are estimates, adjusted for inflation as of 2019, and calculated based on data provided in the 2013 Economic Impact of George Mason University Report completed by the Center for Regional Analysis.

## FINDING HIGH-PAYING JOBS FOR STUDENTS

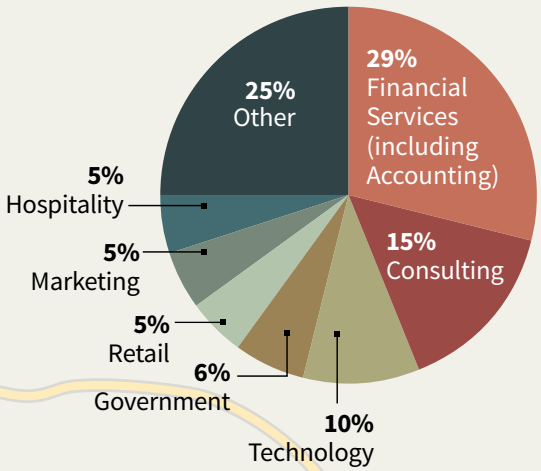
The School of Business Office of Career Services actively supports the university's career readiness initiative through the creation and expansion of strategic partnerships with our local, regional, and national business community. Programs include

- **Internship for Credit Class:** BUS 492 Internship in Business is a 3-credit, major-specific course that gives students the opportunity to gain practical and professional experience.
- **Employer in Residence:** A variety of employer representatives hold "office hours" in the School of Business Career Services suite to discuss career opportunities with students.
- **ProfessionalQuest Networking and Speaker Series:** Employers participate in panel presentations geared toward different career fields for undergraduate and graduate students. Networking time with students follows each panel presentation.

### Full-time Employment Data of Graduating Students

| YEAR | EMPLOYED/ENROLLED IN GRAD SCHOOL | SALARY |
|---|---|---|
| 2017-18 | 82% | $61,740 |
| 2016-17 | 76% | $56,170 |
| 2015-16 | 72% | $59,470 |
| 2014-15 | 71% | $50,218 |

### Top Employment Industries for Recent Grads (2017 and 2018)




**141,532**
**Mason alumni live in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area**

**72%** **of School of Business alumni live within a 50-mile radius of the Fairfax Campus**

**According to the recent CollegeNet Social Mobility Index, George Mason University is the highest-ranked Virginia institution for social mobility.**

### Regional School of Business Alumni

| WASHINGTON, D.C. |
|---|
| 3,295 |

| VIRGINIA | TOTAL |
|---|---|
| Fairfax | 2,279 |
| Alexandria | 1,756 |
| Springfield | 1,357 |
| Arlington | 1,118 |
| Woodbridge | 997 |
| Centreville | 965 |
| Falls Church | 901 |
| Herndon | 830 |

| MARYLAND | TOTAL |
|---|---|
| Rockville | 86 |
| Silver Spring | 73 |
| Bethesda | 73 |
| Potomac | 45 |
| Gaithersburg | 44 |
| Germantown | 43 |




SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

# Distinguished Alumni Awards

## 2013

**First Class of Prominent Patriots**

School of Business alumni honored as Prominent Patriots each year epitomize the Mason graduate. Peer-nominated and peer-selected, Prominent Patriots represent School of Business alumni as the very best in demonstrating citizenship, scholarship, and leadership in their daily lives.

## 2005

**First Annual Business Celebration with awards**

195 total alumni awards presented over 15 years

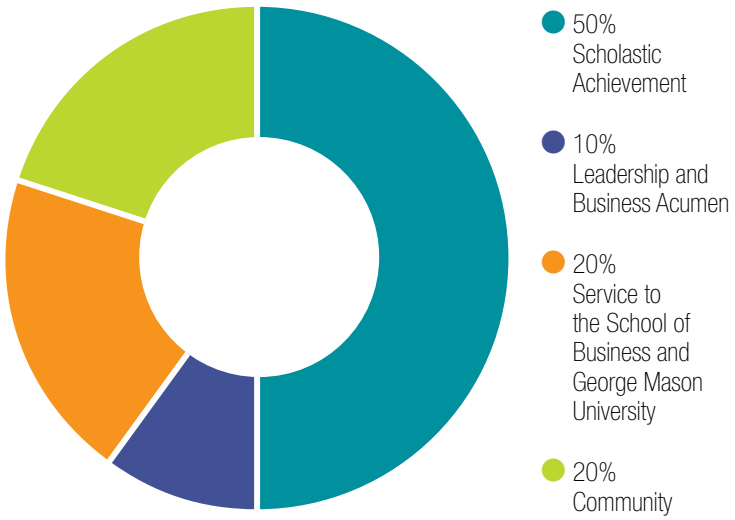
## 1993

First award ever given was for the Alumnus of the Year at the Celebration of Distinction to Robert S. Muzzio, BS Decision Science '87.

## EMERGING BUSINESS LEADERS

Presented by the School of Business Alumni Chapter, these awards annually recognize graduate and undergraduate students who have demonstrated the desire and aptitude to become outstanding business leaders and distinguished representatives of George Mason University's School of Business.

Student award recipients are chosen based on the following criteria:





# DISTINGUISHED SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AWARDEES

## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA OF THE YEAR



**KRISTEN CAVALLO**

CEO, THE MARTIN AGENCY
MBA '93

## ALUMNI SERVICE AWARDEE



**ANNE ALTMAN**

CO-FOUNDER, EVERYONE MATTERS INC.
BS MARKETING '82

## PROMINENT PATRIOTS



**BECKY ANDERSON**
BS ACCOUNTING '10



**MICHAEL CARTER**
EXECUTIVE MBA '16



**MIKE CREASY**
BS ACCOUNTING '91



**EVAN DEL DUKE**
MBA '18



**PETER FARRELL**
BS BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION '79, MBA '85



**KATE FRY**
MBA '18



**CORNELL HARRIS**
EXECUTIVE MBA '96



**GINA HEALY**
BS ACCOUNTING '93



**GREG HOFFMAN**
MS REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT '16



**CHAKIB JABER**
MBA '05



**HAL NESBITT**
BS MARKETING '03



**JOANIE NEWHART**
MBA '91



**JOEL ANTONIO REYES MOLINA**
BS MANAGEMENT '14



**PATRICK RICE**
MBA '92



**MARIE ROBLES**
BS ACCOUNTING '94



**BRADLEY ROSENBERG**
BS ACCOUNTING '82, EXECUTIVE MBA '93



**SCOTT ROTTMANN**
MS ACCOUNTING '97



**MELISSA SIZEMORE**
BS ACCOUNTING '07



**JENNIFER TAYLOR**
MBA '98



**NESTOR TEZNA**
BS MARKETING '07



**JEANNE TISINGER**
BS MANAGEMENT '84



**CITO VANEGAS**
MBA '00

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY | School of Business

# Event Recap

PHOTOS BY JOHN BOAL











JULY

### Power Networking
**July 16, 2019**

Members of the Women in Business Initiative, School of Business graduate students, and alumni gathered at Verre Wine Bar to expand their networks and make meaningful connections.

### Mason Collective Impact Series
**July 26, 2019**

The first of its kind at Mason, this new speaker series brought together Mason faculty, alumni, and affiliated partners to share their expertise in a "TED Talk" format, with each person having eight minutes to speak. The inaugural event, presented by The Stevie Awards, was titled "The Power and Direction of Social Media."

AUGUST

### MS in Real Estate Development Groundbreaking
**August 15, 2019**

Every August, the MS in Real Estate Development Program (MRED) hosts Groundbreaking—its signature fall reception—to open the new academic year. The event reunites current students, alumni, and board members after the summer break and also serves to welcome new students into the MRED community before they begin classes. Scholarships, made possible by the generosity of the real estate industry, are awarded to outstanding MRED students, and the new MRED Industry Group Alumni Chapter members are announced.

### Colorado Alumni and Friends Reception*
**August 25, 2019**

Alumni and friends living in Colorado gathered at the home of **Katherine Clark**, EMBA '95, and **Bradley Rosenberg**, BS Accounting '82 and EMBA '93, to make connections, share experiences, and learn from Dean **Maury Peiperl** about what is on the horizon for the School of Business and George Mason University. Attendees included alumni from the School of Business, College of Health and Human Services, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Schar School of Policy and Government, and Volgenau School of Engineering.

**The Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations is always looking for ways to connect with our alumni and friends across the globe. If you are interested in hosting a gathering or would like to learn more, please contact us.*

SEPTEMBER

### ProfessionalQuest: Accounting
**September 4, 2019**

The School of Business Office of Career Services hosted a new industry-focused networking event series, ProfessionalQuest, which kicked off with accounting. During the first hour of each event, students network with employer partners and, during the second hour, participate in an industry-specific employer Q&A session.

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

PHOTOS BY JOHN BOAL







### EMBA Alumni Reception
**September 5, 2019**

Executive MBA alumni from the past 25 years gathered to reconnect and celebrate.

### Scholarship Luncheon
**September 10, 2019**

School of Business 2019-20 scholars, scholarship founding donors, faculty, and board members gathered for an afternoon networking lunch and a meaningful program that invited students to share their thoughts on the transformative power of generosity with the donors.

### WelcomeFest
**September 11, 2019**

The Office of Student Success and Academic Services sponsors WelcomeFest at the beginning of each fall semester. This event is a chance for staff, faculty, and student organizations to welcome our new and returning School of Business students and provides an informal setting for students and faculty to interact with the School of Business community.

PHOTO BY RON AIRA




### Mason Night at the Nationals
**September 27, 2019**

School of Business alumni gathered for the annual Mason Night at the Nationals to enjoy Washington Nationals baseball and networking.

### Annual Business Celebration
**October 17, 2019**

Nearly 350 members of the School of Business community celebrated continued progress and success at the annual networking gala, business showcase, and distinguished alumni awards. In addition to the valuable connections made, attendees generously supported student scholarships and School of Business initiatives.

PHOTOS BY JOHN BOAL






### Brown and Brown Speaker Series featuring Andy Pharoah
**November 20, 2019**

Students, alumni, and community members attended an interactive presentation on corporate sustainability by Andy Pharoah, vice president of corporate affairs, strategic initiatives, and sustainability for Mars Inc.

# Giving Back:
## Business Alumni Invest in Mason Students

BY KATHERINE JOHNSON DIAS



PHOTO BY RAFAEL SUANES

**Debi Corbatto**, BS Marketing ’86, MS Exercise, Fitness, and Health Promotion ’03, PhD Educational Psychology ’18, has invested more than 30 years at George Mason University, from earning her degrees to serving as the deputy athletic director with Intercollegiate Athletics, where she’s responsible for internal operations and risk management.

In addition to her roles as a student, alumna, and employee, Corbatto has given back to the School of Business through her time and resources. She’s a new member of the Dean’s Advisory Council and previously served on the Women in Business Initiative.

“I invest both my time and financial support with our School of Business. The resources available to our university from the Commonwealth of Virginia fall far short of the actual cost to educate a student,” Corbatto says. “It is imperative that we help fill the gap in these educational expenses in order to maintain a robust environment for higher education that is affordable for our talented students.”

Corbatto values paying it forward and encourages other alumni to “stay connected to the source of one’s success,” whether it’s through volunteering time and expertise, or making a gift to the School of Business.

“Mason School of Business gave me a solid foundation to develop as a professional,” Corbatto says. “I value this relationship and want to pay it forward as we work with current and future students in building their careers.”



**Pete Farrell**, BS Business Administration ’79, MBA ’85, holds multiple roles as alumnus, faculty member, and volunteer. Farrell is a Department of Information Sciences and Technology faculty member and capstone coordinator. He joined Mason as an employee after holding several volunteer positions, including president of the Alumni Association and various other roles during fundraising campaigns. Farrell is currently a member of the School of Business Building Campaign Steering Committee.

Farrell enjoys interacting with undergraduate students in his senior design course and sharing advice. “I let them know that a degree, and related major, is just a start to their career,” he says. “Their unique interests will take them in directions they never dreamed of, but that match their skills and personality in a particular way. It is the joy of the unique journey, not just a career.”

Similar to Corbatto, Farrell says it’s important to pay it forward. “Once you have the opportunity to meet the students—our future—you want them to succeed. Being involved with the School of Business and university is an important avenue for helping the students succeed.”




# Tradition Keepers: Preserving Mason's Legacies

BY NIKKI JEROME OUELLETTE

George Mason University's School of Business is piloting a new program, Tradition Keepers, to preserve and further the legacies of the university and School of Business experiences. These rites of passage were established with the insight of current and former business students and include activities such as rubbing the toe on the George Mason statue, attending a basketball game, and visiting Career Services. The traditions encourage students to experience everything that Mason has to offer and help to establish a lifelong connection. Upon graduation, students turn in their completed Tradition Keepers booklets and receive a unique pin for being part of the society.

Tradition Keepers builds pride among students, creating a culture of student engagement and philanthropy that can extend long after graduation. The program was established by School of Business faculty and staff members **Kaleb Lewis**; **Nikki Jerome Ouellette**, BS Government and International Politics '09 and MPA '13; **Maxwell Gocala-Nguyen**; and **Christine Landoll**, BS Accounting '89 and MS Taxation '92. George Mason University Alumni Association staff members **Chris Clark-Talley** and **Adrienne Teague** assisted the group.

The pilot for Tradition Keepers is currently only available to School of Business students, with hopes of the program becoming a university-wide initiative.

## MASON'S TRADITIONS

- Showcase your spirit in green and gold on Fridays
- Plant flowers for the Honey Bee Initiative
- Make a gift on Giving Day
- Network with professionals at ProfessionalQuest
- Rub George's big toe for good luck
- Jump on the plaques at graduation
- Go to a Mason Athletics event

# Data Security and Cognition: How Executives Select Measures Is in Their Personality

BY ADRIENNE BENSON





It is a truth universally acknowledged that a person in possession of any official, medical, or financial paperwork must be worried about potential data breaches. We live in an online time. Information is stored virtually. Just as old-time bank robbers could access vaults if they had the inclination, modern criminals can—if they have the right skills—access all that data online.

Information security is a critical part of every organization. However, it's also expensive—a problem for executives deciding on funding allocation. **Nirup Menon**, professor and chair of information systems and operations management, along with coauthor Mikko Siponen, delved into the role personality plays in determining how executives react to information security costs. Their paper's premise is simple: Security managers propose system security measures, and the executive makes a decision depending on a variety of factors, including cost, risk-benefit analysis, and—it turns out—the executive's "preferred subordinate influence approach." That is, the X factor in whether an executive adopts a proposal is in his or her cognition—whether they are emotional or rational.

In the paper, "Executives' Commitment to Information Security: Interaction between the Preferred Subordinate Influence Approach and Proposal Characteristics," Menon and Siponen note, "In information security, subordinates can frame a proposal positively (e.g., action increases protection) or negatively (e.g., inaction increases risk). The framing of information security proposals affects the motivation of the message recipient to exert effort in decision making." In short, data security proposals should be customized to the receiver. It's not only the message but the way the message is received that safeguards information.

# Bridging the Gap between Ratings and Reviews

BY ADRIENNE BENSON



Online shopping is exploding, with more customers double-clicking instead of wandering store aisles. The drawback to online shopping is the inability to touch items, to feel the fabric or inspect the shoes. Do they look cheap? Do they run small? Is that vacation destination nice, or are the rooms stuffy? Online businesses rely on customer reviews to offer these answers.

User reviews often comprise two parts, the starred rating and the review. **Jingyuan Yang**, assistant professor of information systems and operations management, noticed a problem in that system. In her paper, "NeuO: Exploiting the Sentimental Bias between Ratings and Reviews with Neural Networks" (with coauthors Yuanbo Xu, Yongjian Yang, Jiayu Han, En Wang, Fuzhen Zhuang, and Hui Xiong), she notes that often the review is missing or doesn't match up with the rating. This gap is problematic because, she says, "It is really important that users' ratings and reviews be mutually reinforced to grasp the users' true opinions."

Yang and her coauthors exploited two-step training neural networks, using both reviews and ratings to grasp users' true opinions. They developed an opinion-mining model using a specialized linear mathematical operation called convolution to ensure ratings. They used a combination function designed to catch the opinion bias and proposed a recommendation method using the enhanced user-item matrix.

Virtual businesses need healthy user reviews. When customers don't feel they can rely on reviews, their trust in the company falters. Yang and her team have helped shore up the review system, an effort that will go a long way toward building happy customer bases.

# When Value Is in the Service, Not the Ownership

BY ADRIENNE BENSON



It's a cliché, but the car has shaped American history and culture since its invention. Even the American landscape evolved around the rise of the private car—train lines were abandoned as railroad tracks were pulled up in favor of highways; gas stations and motels sprang up in otherwise desolate places; and cities scrambled to design systems for getting millions of cars in and out efficiently. We could ask which came first, the car or the cultural identity related to the freedom cars provide, but, once again, the relationship Americans have with cars is changing. We still want to get from point A to point B with the speed, efficiency, and privacy cars offer, but the urge to own them privately is waning.

**Ioannis Bellos**, associate professor of information systems and operations management, began researching service design as a PhD student at Georgia Tech. When talking about his research, he quotes advertising icon Leo McGinneva who famously said, "People don't want quarter-inch bits, they want quarter-inch holes." That is, the customer wants what the product can do, not necessarily the product itself. Bellos was drawn to researching businesses that don't link customer value to product ownership. Car sharing, offered through services like Car2Go, Getaround, and Zip Car, is a perfect example. "In the context of mobility, getting from point A to point B is what matters, not owning the vehicle," says Bellos.

American car manufacturers are scrambling to reinvent themselves in many ways, from developing electric cars to driverless ones, but Bellos points out an interesting effect of car sharing: The car manufacturers are in on it and are trying to figure out the best way of not selling cars. He notes that many car-sharing companies are actually owned by manufacturers. "Car makers, especially high-end ones, saw an opportunity for market expansion," Bellos says. "They can reach out to more customers by providing a way to use the cars without owning them." Car sharing offers ease of transport with the privacy of a personal car but without the headache of upkeep—giving the customer that quarter-inch hole while bypassing owning the drill altogether.

# Examining the Untapped Potential of Blockchain Technology

BY ADRIENNE BENSON



The internet changed everything in our lives—from our social lives to the way we do business. The internet also created myriad ways for businesses to collect and harness vast amounts of data and, in doing so, opened doors to scams, frauds, and murky dealings. This is where blockchain technology may potentially create benefits of similar magnitude.

**Jiasun Li**, assistant professor of finance, is researching this new tool for internet commerce. "Blockchain is a kind of distributed ledger that could change how business activities are organized," he says. "It essentially provides an alternative way for economic activities to be conducted."

Blockchain is a cryptography-secured database that registers ownership and transactions. Every time a transaction is made, details are secured in "blocks," which are linked together and replicated in multiple computers linked to the system.

The technology makes forging or tampering with these records easily detectable. In turn, this security makes the many intermediaries currently necessary to secure transactions redundant. Removing the market powers from intermediaries could potentially reduce transaction costs.

Li imagines that blockchain technologies will eventually be used not only to reduce transaction costs, but also to create new markets. He asserts that, because of the potential to revolutionize commerce, understanding this new technology is important for everyone in the world of business.

"Any business leader with an entrepreneurial mindset, or those in traditional industries facing potential opportunities or threats from these new markets, should gain a better understanding of blockchain technology," he says.

Li's interest in blockchain grew out of his curiosity about new technologies, including Bitcoin, which was created by the same individual or group as blockchain under the moniker "Satoshi Nakamoto." Blockchain has great potential, Li says, but he warns against getting excited too early.

"Blockchain technology is still in its early days," he says. "We should, on one hand, avoid hype and be patient with its progress and be objective with its current bottlenecks. On the other hand, we should avoid being overly dismissive and missing the possibilities."

# Don't Mind the Gap, Harness It

BY ADRIENNE BENSON

> People who respect one another are more likely to be patient and gather more information when they disagree with each other.
>
> —Matthew Cronin

We have more in common than not. It's a sentiment that comes from a good place. In a diverse world where the cacophony of opposing opinions seems to get louder every day, we need to recognize the traits common to our shared humanness.

On the most fundamental level, we all push forward in our lives by following a basic human script. But what about the layers and layers of cultural, gendered, familial, and individual ideas, opinions, experiences, and viewpoints that, from birth, begin to layer like strata, one atop the other, on those purely human traits?



"We all approach the world with knowledge that is infused by our own values," says **Matthew Cronin**, coauthor (with Laurie R. Weingart) of the research study "Conflict across Representational Gaps: Threats to and Opportunities for Improved Communication."

"Our perspectives are influenced by our own—often unconscious—experiences. That is, we always believe we're seeing 100 percent of the world. In reality, we see about 5 percent."

Those experiences grow from our culture, our families, our education, and the infinite amounts of other data we take in—and they become intrinsically tied to the way we see the world and communicate our ideas to others.

Cronin's paper notes, "Perspectives are automatically generated frameworks of assumptions used to interpret what is communicated." Put simply, if two people are having a conversation, the layers of perspectives created by their life experiences are the filter they each speak and hear through. The participants may share a common language and understand the words traded in the conversation, but their perspectives color how those words are both intended and interpreted.

Most of the time these unique perspectives, the experiences, are, as Cronin and Weingart point out, "implicit and taken for granted. People are rarely cognizant of the assumptions that they make, and thus struggle to recognize how such assumptions limit their thought."

In short, it doesn't occur to either of the conversation partners that their words might be interpreted in ways vastly different from what the speaker intended. These spaces between how words are intended and how they are interpreted are defined as "representational gaps," or r-Gaps, in Cronin and Weingart's study.

Cronin, an associate professor of management in the School of Business, holds an MA in developmental psychology and a PhD in organizational behavior. He points out that "r-Gaps can become a source of conflict because humans make assumptions based on their knowledge and experience. When what we 'know' to be true doesn't align with what we are hearing, we tend to deride the new information."

Research on differences in how language is interpreted is widespread—Deborah Tannen is known for her work on gender differences in linguistics, and there are many more people working in various aspects of the field—but Cronin and Weingart's take is a shift.

They ask us to rethink the notion that the key to effective communication is finding common ground. Rather than coming to social interactions prepared to seek commonalities, they suggest that the job of speaking and listening requires actively knowing that every conversation is potentially riddled with r-Gaps.

As a researcher in creativity and collaboration, Cronin believes that when these differences are channeled, they contribute to innovation. This requires mutual respect.

"People who respect one another are more likely to be patient and gather more information when they disagree with each other instead of immediately deriding what they take to be in opposition to what they know."

In a sense, we all speak our own individual languages, colored by what we think we know. Innovation benefits from all these diverse outlooks and interpretations. The trick is to see them and embrace them. Instead of insisting on seeing through our own experienced lenses, we'd be better off seeing through the kaleidoscope of multiple views.

Put simply: It's not that coming to social interactions prepared to assume commonalities is a recipe for disagreement, but rather that the one commonality we should assume is that we can't assume anything.

# MASON'S BUSINESS PROGRAMS RISE IN RANKINGS

BY ADRIENNE BENSON

Two School of Business programs dramatically scaled the 2020 rankings compiled by *U.S. News & World Report* for best online higher education programs.

The rankings, released January 14, show that the business non-MBA master's program in accounting climbed 20 spots from 39 last year to its current place at 19th nationally. This leap upward is both a feather in Mason's cap and a signal that programs like this have incredible potential. Perhaps even more remarkable is this year's showing of the online MBA program. Still in its infancy, the program debuted barely two years ago and was unranked in the 2019 *U.S. News & World Report* list. This year, the program flew up the list to land at No. 123 of 335.

"The online option of our MBA program is only in its second year, so it's fantastic we jumped into the *U.S. News* rankings at No. 123," says Dean **Maury Peiperl.** "Our online MBA offers an identical curriculum to our in-class MBA, which *U.S. News* ranks No. 32 among part-time MBAs. There are many ways students can achieve their academic and professional goals. The rankings demonstrate our commitment, and that of our outstanding faculty and staff, to deliver high-quality programs in formats that are flexible and convenient."

The rankings for online programs and traditional programs are separate, but the increasing importance of online programs is a reflection of what the School of Business has known for years: The flexibility of an online program combined with the rigor of an in-person program is a potent and popular combination.

In addition, the School of Business is now ranked No. 79 on the list of Best Undergraduate Business Programs, up from No. 92 last year. The school's undergraduate Accounting Program is ranked No. 68 in the country. Additionally, Mason was named Virginia's most diverse and most innovative university among national institutions, as well as one of the most diverse and innovative in the nation.



# Eight Minutes Each: New Speaker Series Showcases Mason's Thought Leadership

BY KATIE PARKES GREENE

The first of its kind at Mason, the new Mason Collective Impact Summer Speaker Series brought Mason faculty, alumni, and affiliated partners together to share their expertise in a format akin to the TED Talks series, with each person having eight minutes to speak.

The speaker series provides a forum to explore diverse areas of public interest, discuss current trends, and introduce students, alumni, and community members to those Mason alumni and faculty behind the ideas.

The inaugural event, titled "The Power and Direction of Social Media" and presented by The Stevie Awards, focused on topics ranging from social media and climate change to modern technologies monitoring social engagement.

Creators **Nikki Jerome Ouellette**, BS Government and International Politics '09 and MPA '13, and **Evan Del Duke**, BS Government and International Politics '15 and MBA '18, both associate directors for advancement and alumni relations, dove into the topic with the hope of piquing broad interest about social media perspectives and understanding our world through those lenses.

"The goal of this collaborative School of Business and College of Science event was to be educational, fun, and showcase the thought leadership of Mason—think TEDx meets summer happy hour," says Ouellette. "With more than 100 alumni, faculty, and community attendees participating on a Friday evening, and a reception that featured Atlas Brewery and Geo. Mason Wine tastings, it exceeded our goals."

The second annual Mason Collective Impact Summer Speaker Series will be held in 2020.


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WELLS


DAKIN

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## The Power and Direction of Social Media

**From #ClimateGrief to #ClimateHope**
**SHAUN DAKIN**
Adjunct Professor, Marketing, George Mason University
Social Media Director, Moms Clean Air Force

**Social Media and Sustainable Resilience**
**LINTON WELLS II**
President and CEO, Global Resilience Strategies

**Is Technology Really Driving Our Society to be Anti-Social?**
**SCOTT CULLATHER**
Cofounder and CEO, INVNT

**Public Engagement in Social Media Following Mass Violence**
**ARIE CROITORU**
Associate Professor, Geography and Geoinformation Science, George Mason University
Director, Center for Geospatial and Open-Source Intelligence

**Social Media Marketing and Product Sales**
**GAUTHAM VADAKKEPATT**
Assistant Professor, Marketing, George Mason University

**Publishers, Ad Fraud, and the Unplanned Internet**
**ARAM ZUCKER-SCHARFF**, BA English '11, BS Information Technology '11
Director for Ad Engineering Research, Experimentation, and Design Group, *The Washington Post*

**Attention as a Currency: Not All Attention Is Equal**
**AMIR ZONOZI**, BS Psychology '07
Chief Strategy Officer and Cofounder, Zoomph

#MasonNationImpact

# Executive Development Program Helps Women Succeed at the Bargaining Table

BY ADRIENNE BENSON

**Suzanne de Janasz** is an expert in conflict resolution and negotiation. She is also a passionate and well-published advocate for women in the workplace and the founder and leader of the three-day Engaging and Succeeding in Negotiations program, one of the newest of the School of Business executive development programs. Lifelong learning is a key element of Mason's core mission, and the programs offered by Executive Development reflect a variety of professional needs. Offerings range from custom programs developed for companies or organizations, to those designed for individuals seeking career growth as leaders in data analytics, risk management, and human capital advancement.

Women are the target audience for de Janasz's program, and the first cohort in April 2019 was all female. Perhaps this is appropriate. In the closing months of 2019—postmillennial and mid-#MeToo movement—women still negotiate only 25 percent as often as men, unsure of their ability or afraid others will see them as aggressive. This often leads women to not asking for what they deserve, or to accepting the first offer.

Beyond salary and other macro-negotiations, the daily micro-negotiations—the "death by a thousand cuts" of women's workplace satisfaction—include unspoken expectations that women do the unpaid, menial tasks such as note taking, organizing parties, and tidying office kitchens. These chores are not counted in performance reviews or compensated and leave women overworked, underappreciated, and with less time for their actual jobs, making it harder to achieve the same successes and promotion rates as male counterparts.

Feeling hesitant or disempowered to negotiate these areas of work life can erode a woman's career satisfaction and desire to do better. When female staff feel undervalued and unable to speak up, companies suffer through attrition, lost productivity, and erosion of critical diversity. This diversity is more than a nod to social norms—it affects a company's bottom line. Numerous studies demonstrate that the more organizations embrace elements of diversity—including gender—in their culture and on their board, the more prosperous the company and more satisfied and loyal its workforce.

In her sessions, de Janasz guides program participants through an exploration of the fears and unconscious biases they have, as well as the vast differences between the ways men and women present—and listen to—information. The narratives shared imply that men respond less well to unsupported requests—an issue of communicative dissonance not appropriately accounted for in most workplaces. To address this, de Janasz teaches participants to prepare clear requests comprising facts and data.

Engaging and Succeeding in Negotiations has a different feel than the other executive education programs, which are longer and cover broader business topics. Using her research and global experience in negotiation, leadership, and gender, de Janasz has developed a three-day course that takes a deep dive into the culture of negotiations. It's a hands-on exploration that enables participants to recalibrate their views on, and approaches toward, asking for what they want and deserve. In the end, the course leaves both individuals and organizations in a stronger place.

> "Learning how to better utilize my emotions in negotiations has been a liberating experience."
>
> —Course participant


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# MAKING BOLD MOVES

## MASON BUSINESS STUDENT COMPLETES GOOGLE INTERNSHIP

BY KATHERINE JOHNSON DIAS

**Tyler Tep**, a senior majoring in information systems and operations management (ISOM), spent 11 weeks of summer 2019 in Colorado as a solutions consultant intern with Google's Building Opportunities for Leadership and Development (BOLD) program. Tep leveraged the services of the School of Business Office of Career Services to complete BUS 492: Internship for Credit.



"Naturally, I was really intrigued by how Google functioned, and that was one of the main reasons for applying to and participating in the internship," he says. "I really wanted to see how Google functioned and learn about some of the innovative things they were working on. I was also really interested in the people that interned and worked at Google. Not to my surprise, everyone I interacted with was extremely nice and crazy smart."

As a solutions consultant intern, Tep optimized advertising initiatives for Google advertising clients and worked on side projects in various departments. "My favorite was my work with Launchpad Research, Google's startup accelerator," Tep says. "I specialized in market research within developing countries, focusing on the venture capital and industry trends within these ecosystems, for Google to make informed decisions on potential investments."

Tep has completed numerous internships and externships during his time at the School of Business, including an internship with the Walt Disney Company, but says Google was one of his more challenging experiences thus far due to his heavy workload and the company's high expectations. However, he cites amazing colleagues for their support.

"The biggest takeaway I have from interning at Google is how much I valued the people I worked with. I really enjoyed being able to work with such amazing, intelligent, and caring people across the board," Tep says. "I also really enjoyed being able to work at the cutting edge of innovation; some of the things Google is working on could possibly change the way we live our lives. That was super exciting."

Tep believes his educational journey in the ISOM area at Mason prepared him for Google. "My major and background have versatility within the business world," he says. "Having such a flexible degree really helped, as I was working at the intersection of business and technology while at Google."

Tep plans to graduate in May 2020. He would like to work full time with Google or another major tech company in their product marketing, strategy, or global business teams. In the future, he'd like to work internationally in the European, Asian, or Latin American markets. After gaining experience, Tep hopes to start his own company in the technology industry.

> "Having such a flexible degree really helped, as I was working at the intersection of business and technology while at Google."
>
> —Tyler Tep

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