Dear Alumni and Friends:

Each day, the Haworth College of Business brims with activity, ideas, exceptional teaching, cutting-edge research and in-depth learning that have a significant impact on the world. The energy in the college is contagious, and it ripples throughout the business community via our alumni who are providing business leadership in companies and organizations around the world.

In this issue of the college magazine, you will find stories that illustrate two of the hallmarks of our college and of any successful business—innovation and process improvement. Whether you are reading the cover story about alumnus Brian Thomas and his leadership in fostering innovation at OtterBox, the faculty features on Dr. Ann Veeck or Dr. Paul San Miguel and their approaches to teaching, or one of the other stories featuring the successes of our alumni, students or programs, you will see the drive to create and elevate.

Innovate, improve processes, repeat—a formula for success! Our alumni, students, faculty and staff have a deep commitment to the complexity inherent in reshaping business to achieve better results.

Innovation and process improvement are central to our work within the college. Talented faculty members are constantly improving our curriculum in partnership with industry so that students are ready to add immediate value to organizations upon graduation.

Here are just a few of the innovations that we have initiated in the past year:

- Entrepreneurship Forum, a new speaker series devoted to stories of start-up success
- A dedicated center for integrated supply management, enhancing our ability to deliver leading-edge instruction and enhancing industry involvement in the supply chain program
- A university-wide business pitch competition that tests students’ business ideas and pitching skills
- Two new concentrations in the MBA program—Aviation and Health Administration, as well as the ability to offer handcrafted MBA programs at individual companies
- A communication center focused on refining the communication skills of all business students
- A business accelerator where students can access resources to develop and grow their own businesses

We retain our core of solid, foundational business knowledge and focus on experiential learning. And my commitment to you is that we will strategically innovate and improve our delivery of business education, thereby adding value to a degree from WMU’s Haworth College of Business.

Regards,

Kay M. Palan, Ph.D.
Dean, Haworth College of Business
Greetings from the Dean’s Office 2

Features
OtterBox: The Innovation Series 4
Idea to Reality 7
Digital Evolution 8
Innovation Lessons 10
The New Breed of Financial Executive 16
Process Makes Perfect 18
Leading By Example: Getting Fit Physically and Fiscally 22
In-House Experts 24
In the Spotlight 26
Making a Difference 30
Faculty Focus 32
Celebrating Alumni and Friends 36
Alumni and Businesses to Watch 40
Class Notes 44

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On the Cover: Business Bronco Alumnus, Brian Thomas, B.B.A ’96. Cover photo provided courtesy of OtterBox.
Brian Thomas, B.B.A.’96

The text message you saved from your first date. The Skype interview that led to your current job. The FaceTime spent with your grandkids. The ability to handle a work crisis from anywhere.

Today, mobile devices represent much more than simply a phone or a tablet computer. They represent connections, memories, business, relationships and a way of life. And no one understands that better than OtterBox President and CEO Brian Thomas. As the industry leader in protective cases for mobile technology, OtterBox has made protection its business.

But the concept of protection goes far beyond state-of-the-art cases and applies to every aspect of the business. The company’s culture of hard work, innovation and perseverance, and protecting that culture, is essential to the entrepreneurial, creative and responsive spirit that drives its success. “Our business fulfills a ‘need’ rather than a ‘want,’ but that’s not enough to achieve a higher level of success,” says Thomas. “There are many things that contribute: passionate employees; strategic and systemic thinking; relationship building; authenticity with our consumers; and caring for our customers. Innovation is the foundation on which all of our success is built—not just one innovation—but a series of them.”

The Armor Series, the Defender Series, the Commuter Series—OtterBox is known as an innovation series. OtterBox: The Innovation Series.

“I use an OtterBox for every single one of my phones and tablets, and I have all of my family use them as well!”
— Alan Rea, professor of business information systems

“I am a first-time user of the OtterBox. The best aspect of my OtterBox is the durability. I dropped my Galaxy S III on the concrete, and my OtterBox and phone were both unharmed. I will never use anything except OtterBox.”
— Tomika Griffin, B.B.A.’04, M.A.’11, academic advisor

“I used to break EVERYTHING; then I bought an OtterBox. Now I can have nice things!”
— Jacob Davis, student, sales and business marketing
for its flexible product lines that can adapt to a range of consumer needs. Yet the “Innovation Series” that Thomas identifies—the thousands of decisions, adjustments and improvements that all employees make—has led to a 3,000 percent three-year revenue growth, expansion into global markets, being named in the top ten on Forbes magazine’s list of “America’s Most Promising Companies,” and being ranked 7th on Fortune magazine’s list of The 25 Best Medium-Size Companies to Work For.

With a list of engineering and innovation awards longer than your smartphone contact list, OtterBox is the #1 selling smartphone case in the nation.

What are the fundamentals that have positioned the company as the market leader?

Leadership

Founder Curt Richardson began the company in 1998 after developing the original dry box line from the comfort of his Fort Collins, Colo., garage. The waterproof, crush-proof dry boxes, popular among water sports enthusiasts, gave rise to the name OtterBox. He quickly saw the market opportunity for device-specific protection products—first for PDAs and then the current lineup of smartphone and tablet cases.

Thomas joined OtterBox in 2002 as its sixth employee. “I took an entry-level position in the sales department when I started at OtterBox,” says Thomas. “At every level I was at in the organization, I always looked to do a good job, but I was also thinking strategically about the business as a whole. I thought about the company like I was an owner, even though I wasn’t. I was focused on the progress of the company, not my career.”

Strategic thinking, leading by example and putting the company first are among the many reasons that Richardson tapped Thomas for the role of president and, eventually, CEO. “I knew there was something different about Brian when I first met him,” says Richardson. “The way he thinks and processes information to arrive at solutions is extraordinary. He is a catalyst for positive change and a lifelong learner, which is why he is the perfect person to lead the company.”

Thomas has been mentored by Richardson for more than 10 years, pointing to Richardson’s “wisdom, risk-taking, vision, investment in working smarter and emphasis on giving back” as the core values of the company’s success.

“I’ve applied the fundamental concepts that I learned at the Haworth College of Business as an overall theme in my career. It was a great foundation and has enabled me to get to where I am today.”

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“Sure enough, within the first week of buying my phone, it went flying through the air. It landed hard on the concrete but thanks to my OtterBox I haven’t had a single thing go wrong with the phone.”

– Rachael Bower, office associate and management student

“My OtterBox provides me with peace of mind. I know, from experience, it will protect my iPhone when it is accidently dropped onto the floor or a hard surface. It is the best insurance policy I could have for my mobile device.”

– Phil Straniero, executive-in-residence, food and consumer package goods marketing

“My OtterBox has saved my phone numerous times!”

– Karla Willmann, office coordinator
Protecting Otter Culture and Having Fun

Fun is a critical element for innovation notes Thomas, “Our company is fun. We want people to enjoy coming to work. Employees—or Otters, as we call them—understand their goals and objectives and how those play into the overall success of the company. With this clarity, we have a high-performance culture in which people are self-driven. When people are comfortable with their surroundings and roles, they will be more creative and won’t feel limited. That’s when innovation happens.”

And looking around the OtterBox headquarters, the playful atmosphere is evident. From the espresso bar, which has become a hub for collaboration and brainstorming, to the spiral slide, which is the quickest route from the second floor to the main level, the vibe at OtterBox is creative. Space is designed with the employee in mind.

Protecting the Otter culture is one of the greatest challenges for the rapidly growing company. “Maintaining our culture is a challenge with our growth,” says Thomas. “For the last few years, we’ve been hiring more people throughout the year than we had to start the year. When you’re bringing on that many people, hiring for culture and continuing to encourage culture can be hard. It is something we work at each day.”

Thinking Outside the OtterBox

Richardson, a native of Fort Collins, has always put giving back to the community at the forefront of OtterBox, and that is the aspect of the company that makes Thomas most proud. “The jobs and opportunities that this organization has created and continues to create are the greatest measures of success,” says Thomas.

The community relationship is symbiotic. OtterBox contributes by being an economic engine and a good corporate citizen and through charitable giving facilitated by its OtterCares Foundation. The community gives back through support of the company’s continued growth. OtterBox has created more than 500 jobs to date and has an ultimate vision of adding 1,000 more positions to its downtown campus.

In addition, the company supports employee innovation. Executives support entrepreneurship from within the company, investing in potential spin-offs and new ventures. “We believe in investing in and nurturing entrepreneurship,” says Thomas. “Some companies created by employees were spun out to directly support OtterBox, while others do great things outside of OtterBox. What it really comes down to is the ability to create opportunities, a better standard of living and a better community.”

What’s Next?

“We’re in the process of transitioning from a case company to an overall mobile accessory company, and with that, we’re becoming a technology company,” says Thomas. “With consumers relying more and more on mobile technology, devices are becoming integrated into more aspects of everyday life. People are looking for app-cessories—accessories that interact with applications that make their devices more robust. We’re expecting a lot of change due to the growth in the global market for mobile technology as well as an increasingly competitive landscape. Change has always been a part of our industry, so we are looking forward to the next phase.”

And as the company blazes a path to its next series of new products, whatever they may be, one thing is clear: a series of innovations will pave the way.

Fun Facts

Thomas’s nickname at WMU—You guessed it: Otter.

At age 14, Thomas visited WMU’s campus and knew right away that he wanted Western to be his university. “It just felt right,” he says.

Thomas’s mother bought him his first OtterBox. Four years later, he applied for his first position in the company.

“Ever since I upgraded to an iPhone a year and a half ago, I’ve only used the OtterBox Defender case. It saved my phone from a fall that both my phone and I took down a flight of wooden stairs onto rocks, and it has protected my phone on multiple other ‘oops’ occasions.”
– Holly Evey, student, food and consumer package goods marketing

“You just can’t beat the quality, design and durability that an OtterBox case provides. Whenever someone asks me what case they should get for their phone, I always say, “Get an OtterBox!”
– Russ Hildensperger, student, computer information systems

Testimonials and a reputation-based approach are important parts of OtterBox. Broncos were eager to share their testimonials and are proud to have Thomas at the helm of OtterBox.
Landing a coveted internship with Stryker Instruments was one thing, but senior Sara Simic's determination earned her recognition at the company that was unexpected.

When she joined Stryker, Simic was tasked with developing a sales enablement tool for the company's neuro, spine, ears, nose and throat department and found she was improving Stryker's business as a result.

"I was given the contact information of SAVO (the company that provides the tools), and I took over this project on my own," says the food and consumer package goods marketing and integrated supply management double major. "It was a very large responsibility, but I had full faith in myself that I could do it."

Simic developed the concept for the new sales tool and worked with SAVO in Chicago to ensure the tool provided the needed results.

"Two months later, my sketch came to life," she says. "The next step was to share the good news with the department's sales force—all 130 of them. Simic did so by sharing a "teaser" of the new tool during a department meeting last August.

Simic completed her year-long experience with Stryker in May and is spending the summer in L.A. "I accepted a position with Johnson and Johnson on the Neutrogena team as a supply chain co-op in L.A., so I can get some experience in the supply chain industry before I complete my degree."

Students from across WMU were invited to present their innovative business ideas at “PITCH: A WMU Business Pitch Competition,” the inaugural business pitch competition for WMU students, organized by the Department of Management in the Haworth College of Business and sponsored by Educational Community Credit Union.

The competition drew 32 pitch teams, the maximum capacity for the event, and students were judged in progressive rounds by faculty, administrators and business community members, including many business owners.

The field was narrowed to eight finalists for the final round of competition where Nate Norman, a sales and business marketing major from Portage, Mich., captured the top prize of $1,200 with his business idea for Fish Ninja Labs, a business providing aquarium solutions for the everyday aquarium enthusiast through automated monitoring and maintenance.

"It was an honor to win first prize at PITCH," says Norman. "It was a great eye opener to the incredible network and support system within southwest Michigan for entrepreneurs. The panel of judges that WMU assembled was outstanding, and I was honored to network with all of them. Dr. John Mueller did a great job organizing the event. I would expect to see it grow even larger in the future."

• Second place and a prize of $700 went to Erik Chmelar, an MBA student from Midland, Mich., who presented TPimPAWster, a spinning cylindrical cat toy that keeps cats occupied and out of mischief. TPimPAWster was also voted by the audience as the most entertaining pitch, earning Chmelar an additional $200.

• Third place and a prize of $400 went to a team of graduate students comprised of John Fry, graduate student in educational leadership from Boyne City, Mich.; Ashley Agler, a graduate student in earth science from Watervliet, Mich.; Pawel Majkowski, an MBA student from Ann Arbor, Mich.; and Ryan McNally, an MBA student from Portage, Mich., for Tech Guardian, an app that disables a teen driver's ability to text or make non-emergency calls while driving.

"ECCU is pleased to have been a part of PITCH by sponsoring the event," says Christine Camp, ECCU’s vice president for marketing. "As a judge, I was impressed with both the quality of the presentations and the enthusiasm that the students had for their unique business ideas. I was rooting for them all."

View the pitches of the finalists at wmich.edu/management/pitch.
Innovation and recognizing an important niche were key as the agency made its first foray into digital. "The shift began opportunistically in the 90s, when we started experimenting and investing in digital," says Gerfen. "In some cases, we gave our services away just to get our clients interested in it. As a result, we built a competency much earlier than most agencies."

The instigator of the dive into digital was former owner and CEO, Ron Davis, B.B.A.'66, MBA'73. Gerfen and business partner Jane Tamraz continued the transition after they acquired the agency in 2000. The complete transition took 10 years and consisted of three phases. In the first phase, the firm was a traditional agency experimenting with digital. In the second phase, the company positioned itself as a "hybrid" agency. And in 2008, the agency shed its last traditional client, and the transition was complete.
The digital Biggs|Gilmore bears little resemblance to the pre-digital agency: clients, structure, skill sets, processes and technology are all different. But what has not changed is the role of agency staff as brand builders and problem solvers.

Earning the reputation as one of the best in the business was a goal of the agency, and the leadership team focused on two key ways to establish its place as a go-to provider of leading-edge creative work in digital. First, the agency ensured its reputation within its current client base was as good as it could be. “Being an independent, mid-sized agency, headquartered in Kalamazoo, Michigan, we had a bit of an underdog mentality,” says Gerfen. “We simply felt that we had to outperform any other agency our clients might be working with or considering, and we obsessed about exceeding our clients’ expectations. This allowed us to expand our business with current clients, which is the easiest way to grow and cement long-term relationships.” Second, the firm focused on some very influential award shows in the digital industry, did well in them and publicized the results. “We don’t do the work for the awards, but we do find that these particular shows are good measuring sticks for how we stack up against our competition,” notes Gerfen. “We have been fortunate to consistently do very well against some of the best agencies in the world, including many who are multiple times larger than we are.”

Biggs|Gilmore’s clients—Kellogg, Kimberly-Clark, Heinz and Stryker, to name a few—have seen that the agency can offer them effective, targeted messages and a pipeline of consumer feedback, all with a significant return on investment. “From a brand’s perspective, we now have the ability to target and deliver relevant messages, regardless of where the consumer may be in the decision journey,” says Gerfen. “From initial consideration to active evaluation, to moment of purchase to post-purchase experience, and subsequent repurchase, the tools now exist to talk to people in a way that is most relevant to the stage they are in. From the consumers’ perspective, they have much more control over how and when they engage with brands. They also have the ability to voice their opinion and be heard, both by brands and by other consumers. Taken together, this makes the communication process more valuable for both sides.”

So, what’s next for the agency that has been developing “what’s next” for their Fortune 500 clients? The agency plans to continue to build platforms that allow continuous brand touches, focus on core offerings and add services such as CRM and shopper marketing capabilities. “We have a saying in the agency that we repeat often, ‘Frequent evolution, infrequent revolution,’” states Gerfen. “The first part means we are not afraid to continuously experiment and tinker. The second part is equally important and means that we don’t waste time with unnecessary distractions. Our team is quite simply the best; they push each other in positive ways to make sure we are bringing the freshest approach to the challenges at hand. Much of our innovation is organic, happening one project at a time.”

Innovation

More than 25 Broncos are employed at Biggs|Gilmore. Additionally, the firm has had an internship program with WMU since the 1970s and has hired more than 50 WMU interns.

The work we have done for Kellogg’s Pop-Tarts has been one of the most transformative campaigns for the agency because of the approach, its duration and scale, and the recognition it has received. The Flavor Tournament, Pop It Forward and live music events have successfully engaged consumers with this iconic brand.

– Mike Gerfen

An early mover on Facebook, Pop-Tarts now has more than 4.5 million fans.
Innovation—It is the lynchpin for any successful business that seeks to thrive in today’s dynamic and competitive landscape. We asked five alumni in key leadership roles to share with us important lessons about how innovation impacts their industries and workplace environments.

Culture

Joy VanOeffelen Martinez, MBA’10

Corporate culture has the power to turn a company into an incubator for innovation. If cultural values that foster innovation are articulated, supported and rewarded, a company can benefit from the type of outside-the-box thinking that is vital to success in today’s rapidly evolving business environment. Joy Martinez, marketing programs manager at LeanLogistics, possesses the vantage point of someone who has worked for several companies with a varying spectrum of cultures.

“Building a corporate culture takes time,” says Martinez. “Long-term thinking and investment are necessary for success. If only short-term thinking is involved, the culture won’t last and even modest improvements in innovation will be short-lived.”

To harness the full potential of a company’s culture, Martinez notes that two essential groups must be engaged. “First, the senior leadership team must be fully committed to the culture,” says Martinez. “Equally important is a strong commitment from the ‘keepers of the culture’—those people within the organization that employees look up to and who may or may not be part of the senior leadership team.”

Martinez identifies four core values needed to establish a highly innovative culture:

- Communicate for innovation: It is important to precisely communicate the strategic vision and goals of the organization. The vision should be inspiring, and the goals should be specific and measurable.

- Hire for innovation: Ensuring the right mix of people with the right skills in the right roles allows for success in innovation and achieving the company’s vision. Employees who use their strengths every day will be more satisfied and engaged in their work, which will ultimately drive innovation.

- Structure for innovation: Although there are many different ways to structure a successful organization, some common elements lead to innovation. Open communication, a collaborative atmosphere and a solutions-oriented approach will promote nimble problem-solving. Company processes and work environments should be designed to ignite innovation. Some elements to consider are communication processes (for in-office and remote employees), office layouts (to promote collaboration and brainstorming) and leadership styles.

- Measure and reward for innovation: Measuring performance against goals is crucial. Evaluating progress, including successes and failures, maximizes organizational knowledge. In addition, employees are motivated and inspired when they are recognized and rewarded for their efforts; this is a vital, but often missed, component in the innovation process.
Bruce Rasher, MBA’02

Is manufacturing in the U.S. poised for a healthy comeback?

“Manufacturing in the U.S. has an extremely bright future,” says Bruce Rasher, redevelopment manager for the RACER Trust. “There’s an undeniable trend toward re-shoring as labor and capital costs overseas have increased. Many of the properties we are marketing for redevelopment have the assets and infrastructure that manufacturers need to expand capacity in a cost-effective way.”

And Rasher should know. The RACER Trust was created by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court to position for redevelopment properties and facilities formerly owned by General Motors. When the RACER Trust formed, it owned properties at 89 locations in 14 states, principally in the Midwest and Northeast. Rasher’s job is to be an expert in finding a fit between the needs and trends in the manufacturing sector and the opportunities that existing properties can provide to both the manufacturer and the community.

“My first job is to work with the local communities to understand their goals and aspirations for the properties; then we work to find buyers and other end users whose plans align with the community’s vision,” he says. “That generally means significant job creation and investments that will result in renewed economic growth for the community.”

And what are the industries that are looking at these properties? Aerospace, automotive, alternative energy and others. “There is great potential for these innovative companies to grow and expand in our own backyard,” notes Rasher. “Manufacturing has been a bedrock of the U.S. economy, and we are seeing the next iteration. We’re managing and marketing assets that once belonged to a world-class manufacturer with the necessary infrastructure, workforce and IT to support a variety of modern, high-capacity end users. The future for domestic manufacturing is bright indeed.”

“My first job is to work with the local communities to understand their goals and aspirations for the properties; then we work to find buyers and other end users whose plans align with the community’s vision. That generally means significant job creation and investments that will result in renewed economic growth for the community.”

– Bruce Rasher
Innovation Lessons

Liz Berger, B.B.A.’88, MBA’02
Stunning views of the Grand Traverse Bay, rolling vineyards, fine wines—it is hard to imagine a more idyllic setting. Chateau Chantal, nestled on Old Mission Peninsula, near Traverse City, Mich., is fertile ground not only for the grapes and cherries that go into the winery’s vintages but also for innovation.

Named a Top 10 U.S. Wine Country Inn and drawing nearly 100,000 visitors to the tasting room each year, the winery boasts notable chefs and the winery’s own wine experts to lead visitors in onsite cooking and wine classes.

Liz Berger, operations manager at Chateau Chantal, examines every aspect of the business regularly for possible innovations and cost savings and often finds herself at the intersection of numerous forces.

“Chateau Chantal is many business types rolled into one: farming, manufacturing, retail, wholesale, hospitality, education and entertainment,” says Berger. “We plant vines, tend them, harvest the grapes and make wine which we share with people who visit our farm. We invite those people to spend the night with us; we offer them breakfast and tours of our wine cellar. We create food and wine combinations which awaken the senses. These vocations are some of the oldest known to humans—what parts may be innovated and what parts are so elemental that it is best to follow nature?”

There is a reason that winemaking is referred to as an art—the right balance in wine is carefully crafted and has many layers. The same is true with innovation and process improvement. Whether looking at the best ways to implement technology or to promote the winery, Berger notes that the first step to innovation in operations is to embrace this layered complexity.

“In farming we returned to an older method which was initially more expensive but eventually better,” says Berger. “We now use fewer chemical fertilizers and rely on compost throughout our 80-plus acres of vineyards. This creates healthier soils and eventually better fruit. We have mechanized many processes once done by hand. Our computerized cash registers allow us to know how often a guest visits, what our most popular wines are and what time of day we are most productive. It all connects.”

Innovation allows the company to react quickly to changes in the environment, notes Berger. For example, in the past, grapes were harvested by hand and no matter how efficient staff members were, there were constraints on how quickly they could harvest. They would begin harvest when the grapes were ripe enough to make wine and hope that the work was done before the weather harmed the fruit. Now with mechanical harvesting, Chateau Chantal has “the luxury of time.” Grapes can be left on the vines for greater ripening, knowing that the mechanized harvest can quickly bring the fruit from vineyard to cellar.

Mechanization of the bottling operation has seen a similar effect on the business. “Our bottling line is 300 times more efficient than the hand bottling line we used for the first 10 years of our enterprise,” says Berger. And the ability to take a systematic look at operations, do careful cost/benefit analysis and make the right choices has allowed Chateau Chantal to offer more benefits to customers, as savings are re-invested in the company.
When your location is part of your brand, as is the case with Chateau Chantal, a significant amount of the marketing budget is devoted to infrastructure. “Our founder once said, a good portion of our marketing budget is sunk into our location, and that still holds true,” says Berger. “Word of mouth about Chateau Chantal as a destination remains incredibly important to us.”

With the rise of the Internet and social media, word-of-mouth advertising has an even greater potential impact.

“Anticipation is emotionally powerful,” says Berger. “The Internet gives people the opportunity to learn about our winery and the Traverse City area before visiting. We have taken advantage of this with our website, mobile website, an active Facebook page and Twitter account, regular emails and a sophisticated web store.” A number of years ago, Berger commissioned a large sign with the winery logo and mounted it in a popular photo location. Each year hundreds of people take photos next to the sign with the vineyards and Grand Traverse Bay in the background and display them on Facebook pages and blogs, with the Chateau Chantal brand prominently displayed.

Drawing tourists to Chateau Chantal is an important piece of overall operations. Berger is a founding member of the Wineries of Old Mission, the Northern Michigan Wineries Association and the Michigan Wine Foundation. She also serves on the West Michigan Tourist Association board. She encourages business professionals to find strength in professional associations for collaboration.

“With any tourism endeavor, the challenge is to get noticed in a cost-effective manner,” says Berger. “By working together, our region can pool resources to create a greater impact. For instance, as part of the West Michigan Tourist Association, I traveled to Chicago last spring for Michigan Day at Union Station. In collaboration with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the Pure Michigan campaign, we distributed tourism materials to commuters. As an individual business, the winery never would have this opportunity, but as a client of MEDC and a member of WMTA, we were able to offer our property information.”

And what did those Chicago residents find when they visited Chateau Chantal? An escape, camaraderie, distinctive wines, a brand promise kept—and a place—where innovation springs from the ground.

“Chateau Chantal is many business types rolled into one: farming, manufacturing, retail, wholesale, hospitality, education and entertainment.”

– Liz Berger
Since the recession that hit in 2008, hiring is a topic that is at the forefront for job seekers, employers and all of us monitoring the health of the U.S. economy. Much has changed in how companies look for full-time employees, but many things have remained the same. Ryan Smith, a human resource consultant with Manpower, identifies the trends and touchstones of today’s job search.

“In a post-recessionary market, organizations are conservative with their hiring needs, and those companies that are adding staff are considerably more selective,” says Smith. He also cites technology, shifting demographics and changing needs of the workforce as key factors impacting how Manpower, the world’s largest recruitment network with nearly 3,600 offices worldwide, searches for talent and meets clients’ needs.

What has changed? “The impact of technology cannot be ignored,” says Smith. “More individuals use Internet job boards, online applications and social media to search for employment; we have kept pace with these trends, building a strong online network. The way Manpower interviews candidates has become more diverse, using web-based services like Montage to conduct face-to-face interviews virtually.”

What has stayed the same? “Relationships are still the foundation of the job search,” says Smith. “In our case, our network allows us to have local expertise and relationships around the globe.” Smith also notes that job seekers should treat each opportunity as a chance to connect with decision makers and further a relationship. “When a permanent position opens up, temporary employees are often targeted first to fill these roles,” he says. “Also, some companies look at temporary positions as a way to have an extended job interview to ensure the right fit before committing to a permanent role.”

For résumés, Smith notes that quality over quantity still applies. Although formats have evolved and sophisticated keyword searches can be applied to today’s résumé, a concise résumé highlighting relevant experiences, tailored for each potential position, is still important.

What is next? “One of the challenges that employers are facing during the economic recovery is talent mismatch,” says Smith. “Many employers have become focused on finding an exact fit for a job opening; this includes matching skill set as well as company culture. With many talented people looking for work, employers can sometimes become too selective. Other times, there truly is a shortage of skilled talent to fill the position.”

Smith identifies two ways to address talent mismatch:

• Employers should consider candidates with a “teachable fit.” A candidate with foundational or transferable skills can often grow nicely into a job with some level of training.

• Developing more partnerships between businesses, educational institutions and government agencies is a must for improving education and training programs that produce work-ready candidates for the positions that employers need.
Joe Fleck, CFO at ViSole Energy, a company specializing in commercial-scale solar products and solutions as well as clean transport infrastructure, has always been attuned to business innovation lessons.

In fact, Fleck’s first position after graduating with his MBA was at the Haworth College of Business teaching in the Department of Accountancy, recruited to the position by Dr. Gale Newell who retired in 2004. “The old saying is true that you really learn something when you try to teach it to others,” says Fleck.

With his father and grandfather making lifetime careers at General Motors, Fleck says it was always in his mind to carry on the tradition. He joined GM in 1977 as a financial analyst in service parts operations and spent the next 32 years of his career in various areas of the company, culminating in senior leadership positions as CFO of the North American car group, CFO of global powertrain operations, CFO of global product development, and CFO of the Latin America, Africa and Middle East regions. While he was carrying on the family tradition at GM, he also carried on the tradition of teaching, serving as dean of GM’s in-house training activities for finance.

Fleck’s career has allowed him to experience a diversity of cultures and markets that have informed his thinking on business and life.

Retiring from GM in 2009, he wanted to develop a portfolio of activities to stay engaged in the business community in and around Detroit. After consulting and working with non-profit groups, in 2012 he turned his attention to the energy sector, an area that attracted him due to its promise and innovation.

ViSole, a small but growing technology company with automotive implications and GM as an investor and significant client, was a perfect fit.

“Clean energy is a rapidly evolving industry,” says Fleck. “Our role at ViSole is to act as a trusted advisor to our client companies, bringing specific industry expertise to a complicated subject. We can evaluate emerging technologies and take the guesswork out of the confusing array of choices that our customers face, thereby reducing risk and allowing them to move faster on their renewable energy priorities.”

As costs decline and efficiency improves, the interest in renewable energy sources—solar, water and wind—will continue to grow, Fleck notes. “Technology developments will keep changing the landscape but also will require companies like ours to ‘pick the winners’ from among the many emerging trends and competing claims.”

He points to some key challenges in terms of renewable energy:

- Evaluating and selecting the best technology path for each customer is a challenge. Quality, cost and performance must all be considered.
- Understanding the range of local, regional and national incentives and government policies is very important and can influence the value of each project to an investor or customer.
- Access to adequate, efficient capital for renewable energy projects with acceptable transaction costs impacts the industry.
- In many markets, the implied cost per unit of energy continues to be higher than traditional sources from the electricity grid—renewable energy provides a hedge against future price increases that should be considered. In addition, there is wide variation in interest and enthusiasm among electric utilities for green projects.

As a case-in-point, Fleck cites an example of the complexity of the clean energy question. “Vehicles that run on electricity are touted as clean technology, but if the energy to power them comes from traditional generation methods like coal, are they really as green as customers would like?”

This type of dilemma is one that ViSole seeks to address. “Our Green Zone electric vehicle solar charging stations use the power of the sun to give consumers the cleanest option,” says Fleck. “As electric vehicles grow in popularity, sources of power and the additional load placed on the electric grid could become a significant issue; solar is well positioned to be part of the solution.”

Beyond environmental responsibility, the trend towards renewable energy is a desire for energy security for today and the future, notes Fleck. “Adequate access to affordable power is an engine for economic vitality and growth for both companies and nations, and we cannot afford to ignore resources, like the sun, that surround us.”
Change is central to any business. And how change is managed can lead to opportunity and success or fear and frustration.

Knowing how to serve as an agent of innovation, organizational re-engineering and change management is something that Kim Dadlani, B.B.A.’77, MBA’90, recently retired vice president of finance and corporate insurance at Pfizer, became known for during his 30-year career in the pharmaceutical industry. Dadlani implemented best-in-class financial processes for planning, forecasting and management reporting and was a key participant in strategic planning throughout his career at Upjohn, Pharmacia and Pfizer. He was also actively engaged in the due diligence and integration of acquisitions, mergers and divestitures.

“Change is natural,” says Dadlani. “It’s the way we resist change that’s unnatural, so how we experience change is up to us. It can feel like an end, but more appropriately, it can feel like a second chance to do something better.” Approaching every business plan, process, procedure and decision, knowing that it will change is “half the battle,” says Dadlani. Embracing change as necessary and even as an adventure set a course for Dadlani where he navigated the complexity of transition, adapted to different corporate cultures and drove new processes that significantly impacted the bottom line.

And the results speak for themselves.

- His work in strategic and financial planning and analysis at Pharmacia enhanced forecasting capacity, enabling the animal health unit to consistently exceed quarterly earnings targets and yield performance that was above industry averages.

- He led the Pfizer working capital team which resulted in annual cash flow improvement of $1 billion. He spearheaded key initiatives in the legal division, resulting in cost reductions of 30 percent or $300 million.

What was the key to implementing changes that worked? “You have to understand who the decision makers are and how to influence the right outcomes,” says Dadlani. “You must first clearly understand the business drivers. Our next step was to ensure we had the right people in the right jobs and with the right mindset. All transformative work begins and ends with people, process and systems.”

Dadlani’s goal at Pfizer was to change the role of the finance team supporting the corporate groups from “report generator” to that of “strategic business partner,” making finance front and center in all core business decisions. Wholesale changes to the finance division were required to ensure that the right talent and champions of change were in place to not only build the processes but also to engender the trust needed within the organization to tackle challenging issues.

“In the past, the pharmaceutical industry enjoyed double digit sales and earnings growth resulting in limited attention to expense management,” states Dadlani. “You can mask the need for restructuring and better processes when your top line is growing double digits. However, over the past 10 years, the industry has gone through a lot of changes, which have put pressure on expense management. One way to focus on cost is to ensure you are measuring the right things. I felt strongly that people pay attention to things you measure.”

The work at Pfizer involved Dadlani and his team developing a “cost road map” based on a thorough understanding of revenue and cost drivers. Dadlani’s team played
Process Improvement

a key role in providing financial support in driving down costs and providing a greater return on investment. The team considered a wide range of integral areas such as:

- Sourcing decisions: Do we make vs. buy?
- Vendor consolidation: Can we leverage scale and size?
- Geographic decisions: Can we move work from high- to low-cost areas?
- Contract changes: Can we modify our contracts, looking at fixed fees vs. time and materials?
- Activity cost analysis: Are there areas where we can stop low value/low ROI work?

Changes that resulted from the team’s work contributed significantly to Pfizer’s bottom line, whether the company was confronting a loss of revenue as a drug was going off patent or weathering the economic downturn.

“Our success was based on many things,” says Dadlani. “Trust and openness in the process were essential. Challenging long-held assumptions and looking at things from different perspectives was central. By looking at everything through a new lens, we reached a point where we had effective financial reporting systems and forecasting processes to provide timely and decision-useful analysis to the business owners. At the end of the day, our role is not to crunch numbers anymore; it is to influence profitable business outcomes.”

Our family has deep roots at Western. My brother and I both attended WMU and so did our spouses. My father worked for WMU as did my in-laws. WMU is home. I have been happy to volunteer throughout the years both on University-wide projects and committees as well as ones specific to the Haworth College of Business. I have a passion for WMU. The college of business laid the foundation for me in how to apply sound business knowledge and execute action using that knowledge, all under the caring leadership of faculty who were expert in their fields as well as expert in connecting with students.”

– Kim Dadlani
Continuous improvement is a best practice thoroughly embedded in the most successful companies. From customer service to reporting to launching a business to leading through a natural disaster, Haworth College of Business alumni pursue process with zeal. Four alumni share their perspectives on their processes, and while process doesn’t truly “make perfect,” the pursuit of goals, efficiencies and adaptable plans through highly skilled teams is its own perfection.

Entrepreneurial Ventures

Thomas Cronkright, II, B.B.A.’97
Starting a company to improve upon existing systems or to capitalize on unmet needs in the market could be considered the ultimate form of process improvement. And it is something that Thomas Cronkright, II, B.B.A.’97, is well versed in doing. Cronkright owns and operates six companies, including Sun Title, Vets Title, Docs on the Fly, CD Holdings, Corporate Advisors PLC and Cronkright Ventures.

What are the keys to successfully using experience to build better business solutions?

“All of our businesses have been started out of market demand and the absence of the desired service level or product mix,” says Cronkright. “Take Sun Title, for example. My best friend and business partner, Lawrence Duthler, and I were frustrated with title services providers in the West Michigan area. After 12 months of receiving poor service, we threw up our hands and said, ‘Let’s start our own title company—how hard can it be?’ As it turns out, it is very hard. But, the foundation blocks of integrity, great communication, professionalism and over-correcting mistakes when they happen allowed us to create our own niche in a very competitive market landscape.”

Cronkright notes that many great business ideas are pieces from one or more existing industries that are repackaged and delivered in a way that creates new opportunity, and he lives by the old adage, “innovate or die.” In a world where consumers demand to be wowed on shorter timeframes each year, companies must innovate to stay current in the minds of customers and prospects. By providing cutting-edge processes and deliverables to clients or leveraging new strategies and capabilities, a company can demonstrate tangible value to its client base and initiate powerful growth.

Launching new products or services into the marketplace is at once terrifying and exhilarating and also quintessential to being an entrepreneur. Cronkright advises that carefully controlled pilot launches are essential for entrepreneurial success. “Pilots allow us to try a new product or service on a pre-defined and trusted group of customers or prospects who are committed to providing honest feedback; this restrained and disciplined approach yields invaluable information,” notes Cronkright.

Cronkright identifies the following additional elements for aspiring and seasoned entrepreneurs to consider:

• No matter how much preparation and thought you put into something, there is always a blind corner that catches you by surprise. The goal is to round as many corners as possible through research and testing before launching anything new.

• All change takes twice as long and costs twice as much as you think going in. Being realistic about business improvement timing and budgets will allow business owners to set realistic expectations on the part of all stakeholders involved in the process.

• Feedback and modeling are your best tools. Obtain as much information as possible from your employees, customers and prospects so that any material change to the operations of your business is in sync with the customers you serve. In addition, try to find companies in your industry or similar industries that have performed changes of similar scope and interview those in charge of implementation of such change. In business, it is imperative that you learn from the triumphs and challenges experienced by others.
“Continuous improvement is a necessity to maintain your competitive edge,” says VanLeeuwen. “I think that the cross-functional expert—the person who has a proven track record of working with units across the business to lead teams and enhance processes—will play a more and more important role in the coming years.”

— Stacey Wilson VanLeeuwen
To improve our customer focus and our process, we needed to more effectively use our sales force. Our goal was to increase sales by establishing key performance measure targets. We started by looking at the specific activities of our teams, followed by assessing the effectiveness of those activities.

— Mike Lewis

Banking

Mike Lewis, B.B.A.’71

Matching the financial needs of customers with the right products and services is the hallmark of retail banking. Improving the overall customer experience is often the centerpiece of process improvement in banking. Mike Lewis, recently retired executive vice president at BMO Harris Bank in Chicago, was on the front lines of driving the bank’s ongoing efforts to take a squarely customer-centric approach to its business.

By aligning the activities of the bank’s sales force with customer needs, BMO Harris Bank created a better business model that allowed for predictable, increased sales of bank products and increased customer satisfaction—a win-win and a recipe for success. “In our retail bank, we focus on delivering a great customer experience, which we know will drive business results,” says Lewis. “To improve our customer focus and our process, we needed to more effectively use our sales force. Our goal was to increase sales by establishing key performance measure targets. We started by looking at the specific activities of our teams, followed by assessing the effectiveness of those activities. Using that data, we then linked team activities to expected outcomes and ultimately to customer satisfaction. We used this information to forecast financial outcomes based on the volume of sales activities.”

What did the BMO Harris Bank team members learn as a result of their research? They discovered that face-to-face interactions between customers and frontline employees had a 10-to-1 ratio of yielding a follow-up conversation. In turn, since they estimated a 50 percent success ratio in those conversations producing a business outcome, they could quantify the potential for production. The clear conclusion was that the bank needed to increase the number and quality of face-to-face meetings the sales teams conducted. “We changed our sales force process by setting clear expectations that included establishing daily and weekly targets for every single member of our sales teams,” says Lewis.

The combination of increased activity and better quality customer conversations was projected to yield better financial results. And it did. The impact was staggering, significantly affecting the bank’s bottom line and customer loyalty.

Of course, there are challenges inherent in any large-scale process shift. “One obstacle we encountered was changing the mindset of the sales team in terms of how they served customers,” Lewis states. “A great deal of customer needs-based training had to be constructed and delivered in order to substitute the previous service-based model. A service-based model is reactive while a customer needs-based model is proactive. Proactively determining customers’ needs based on conversation and analysis was key to increasing productivity during every customer interaction.”

According to Lewis, keeping an open mind as a business leader is also vital. “As leaders, we should never be afraid to try something new. As Wayne Gretzky once said, ‘You miss 100 percent of the shots you never take.’ In our dynamic business environment, customers expect that we are thinking about their needs and finding ways to solve them on an ongoing basis. Product innovation and new idea generation are measures of that. It is also important that managers are not afraid to ask questions. It is amazing what you will learn if you simply engage customers at the beginning of the process, ask them what they expect to receive and then deliver consistently on their needs. It is a simple formula that works every time.”

Customer input at the “ground floor level” is something that Lewis sees playing an important role in the future of banking. “It is a natural extension of the customer-centric model to enlist the help of customers in developing new products. I expect that innovations in technology will continue to change the way customers want to do business as it has with mobile banking and smartphone technology. More and more, I anticipate leveraging strong relationships and using customer feedback to shape products and services.”
When disaster strikes, you learn a lot about your organization and your processes. That is exactly the situation that Joy McClendon, recently retired senior director of information technology at Pfizer, found herself in when the company’s New Jersey headquarters and east coast operations were in the path of Superstorm Sandy.

“Having an agile and flexible disaster management plan was key,” says McClendon. “No plan can completely predict all potential situations, no matter how well thought out it may be. By taking that into account when developing your contingencies and having well-articulated processes to follow, your plan and your approach will be able to flex to each situation.”

McClendon identifies the importance of having a clear disaster management structure in place. “While it ‘takes a village’ to solve the problems that arise in a major disaster, you need to know who the captain is and that person needs to lead decisively.”

In McClendon’s department, the CIO was the leadership voice through all meetings, which occurred every few hours for several days. Given Pfizer’s size, many people are responsible for different components of the IT environment. It was critical that Pfizer’s CIO clearly articulated priorities and assured that staff members were taking the right actions.

“Embrace the chaos,” says McClendon. “A disaster situation is inherently chaotic, but you cannot let that overwhelm you.”

In Pfizer’s case, not only was the primary network provider down, but all of the backup service providers were down as well. “Uncertainty on when the physical environment would be restored forced us to look at alternative approaches; we decided to migrate our applications to another location,” says McClendon. “While this was certainly a contingency in our plan, execution of this option had its own challenges. We had to make many decisions that involved uncertainty and risk and our strategy was to mitigate risks but not wait for primary service restoration in such an uncertain environment.”

What was the most important thing that McClendon did as a manager during the crisis? “Communicate, communicate, communicate,” she says.

“People are amazing and will go well above and beyond what is expected; they just need to know what’s going on,” says McClendon. “Find a way to do that—call, email, text, fax, whatever it takes. We had people dialing into audio meetings from their cars because their homes had no power. We had people riding bikes to the office in Manhattan because public transportation was out. People went without sleep for days, and yet through it all, there was strong leadership and amazing dedication from people whose personal situations were strenuous at best.”

The plan, the process, the people—these are the elements that McClendon identifies as the core of the company’s ability to troubleshoot, improve and revise processes in ever-changing and stressful circumstances and to quite literally avert disaster.

“Having an agile and flexible disaster management plan was key. No plan can completely predict all potential situations, no matter how well thought out it may be. By taking that into account when developing your contingencies and having well-articulated processes to follow, your plan and your approach will be able to flex to each situation.”

– Joy McClendon
Ron Edmonds, B.B.A.’79, vice president and controller at The Dow Chemical Company, has many important goals in his role supervising all internal controls, accounting, and internal and external reporting globally for Dow. Yet, there is another set of goals where he is meeting and exceeding even his own expectations—his fitness goals.

“For more than a decade, I was very sedentary and did not place any priority on my health and wellness,” says Edmonds. “My cholesterol and triglycerides were both quite high, and I was beginning to experience hypertension. My doctor told me that I was at risk for diabetes. I was able to get my blood levels in check with prescriptions, and I thought that is just how life would be for me. However, one day in early 2008 with no specific trigger, I decided I wanted to become fit. I asked a personal trainer at Dow to work with me to develop a program specific to me. She asked me my goals, which were very modest at that time, and she wrote a program that we both believed I could stick to. I also met with a registered dietician who gave me some very specific areas on which to focus.”

Within weeks, Edmonds started to see the results of his healthy eating habits and the four to five weekly trips to the company gym. “I found seeing results very motivating, and it gave me the desire to work harder; over the next five months, I lost more than 40 pounds,” he says.

By the end of 2008, Edmonds had lost more than 55 pounds while his modest goals grew larger. He has now completed two marathons, including the New York City Marathon, and plans to complete two this year.

Though Edmonds’s decision to become fit was personal, the ability to have “ready resources” to support his health and wellness made the decision to get fit that much easier. The Dow Chemical Company offers one of the largest corporate health and wellness programs in the U.S. and makes health consciousness a part of the company culture.

At Dow: The gym is bustling, offering strength and cardio equipment and classes; the cafeteria offers foods that have clear nutrition information listed; and a variety of classes on wellness topics as well as...
Leading by Example

Online and electronic tools are offered to employees.

And all of these resources are just as beneficial to the company as they are to the individual employees. Why?

“Dow works to protect and promote the health of its employees and believes that healthy employees are key to the company’s success,” says Edmonds. “But it goes beyond that. The company views health from economic, corporate social responsibility and environmental standpoints. Health is a key component in Dow’s 2015 sustainability goals, and every leader—in fact, every employee at Dow—has responsibility for achieving those goals.”

In 2004, Dow developed a comprehensive business case for health and a corporate-level health strategy—one that has been studied by companies and business schools alike. The company has helped its employees make considerable progress in improving their health and is saving money on its health care costs through the health strategy.

Part of that strategy is Dow’s Healthy Workplace Index—a tool that helps company sites around the globe create an environment and culture that supports and addresses employee health, productivity and health-related risk of injury or illness. At the end of 2011, 85 percent of targeted sites (those with more than 200 employees) were engaged in recommended practices, and more than 19,000 employees were at sites that achieved health milestones.

Dow estimates that since 2004, the company has saved more than $120 million in U.S. health care costs from the full efforts of its health strategy. The corporate attention to wellness programming also has significant impacts on employee productivity and employee satisfaction and offers a competitive advantage when recruiting new staff.

Edmonds takes his role as someone who has benefited from Dow’s programming seriously. “I try to show employees that life is a balance and that we all need to take care of ourselves in all aspects, including health,” he says. “Senior level executives that can take time out of their day to exercise show all employees that it is not only ok but encouraged for them to make their health a priority. Proper health is key to enabling us to be the most productive we can be, both inside and outside of work. I believe everyone will be happier when they are healthier.”

78—The percentage of Dow employees participating in at least one program or service offered by the company’s health services division

60—The number of health and wellness courses offered annually to Dow employees

Offerings range from nutrition to stress management to tobacco cessation (In addition, more than 50 recurring group fitness classes are offered each week.)

More than 5,100 hours—The number of hours that the company gym is open each year

Red, Gold, Green—The colors used to flag healthy vs. less healthy choices in the Dow cafeteria

Photo: Jeff Glenn
Noting an uptick in convertible bonds deals last fall, CFO magazine sought out an expert to help explain trends in this area and found one of the leading experts on the subject, the college’s own Dr. Devrim Yaman, professor of finance, who has conducted extensive research in debt and equity issues, earnings warnings and corporate takeovers.

“One of the less studied securities in finance is convertible bonds. These securities are a combination of straight bonds and a warrant. The warrant gives the investors the right to convert the bonds into the common stock of the issuing company,” says Yaman.

In other words, companies issue convertible bonds as an alternative way of financing with debt without risking voting control over the company. But, according to Yaman’s research, companies risk an unfavorable share-price reaction. She found that a company’s share price dropped an average of 2 percent in the seven days around the announcement of a convertible. Yaman notes that continuing research will yield an even better understanding of the reaction to issuing convertible bonds. “Convertible bonds will continue to be popular since they allow companies to raise funds while paying lower coupons,” she says.

“Since they are popular in financial markets, they will continue to be an interesting research area. I expect more research on these securities in international markets in the future,” says Yaman.

During her career, Yaman has studied several issues related to convertible bonds, including why firms choose to issue convertible bonds as opposed to other securities; how firms design these securities; how firms issuing convertible bonds perform in the long-run and the factors that affect this performance; and simultaneous offerings of convertible bonds along with other securities.

Yaman, a CFA charter holder, earned her Ph.D. from the University of New Orleans and teaches corporate finance, computer applications in finance and investment courses. Her research has been published in the Journal of Banking and Finance, Financial Management and Financial Review, and she has presented it at national and international conferences.
In-House Experts

Ten Consumer Trends Coming to a Store Near You

Each year, the annual Food Marketing Conference draws more than 500 industry professionals to WMU to address industry trends. This year, an executive panel kicked off the conference with a report and discussion of the top 10 consumer trends as compiled by “Supermarket Guru” Phil Lempert.

Leading the discussion, National Grocers Association President and CEO Peter Larkin shared the report. Below is a glimpse into Larkin’s thoughts about the trends. More information from Larkin is available from The Shelby Report of the Midwest, a food industry news outlet.

No. 1: We need to stop wasting food.
The food waste issue is “about to explode and is going to take center stage for our industry.”

No. 2: Snacking is taking the spotlight.
“If you are thinking about meals in the old fill-up-the-plate, eat three times a day way, you may be missing opportunities,” says Larkin.

No. 3: Baby Boomers.
“We (Baby Boomers) are twice as likely to follow the U.S. dietary guidelines than those outside our group.”

No. 4: The new proteins. “It’s not just the traditional complete proteins but things like peanuts, chickpeas, yogurt and tofu that we need to look at.”

No. 5: Breakfast is not just for breakfast anymore.
“Nutrient-rich breakfast items should be and will be eaten all day.”

No. 6: Frozen foods that evolve into foods that are frozen.
“These aren’t just meals that were frozen but real food that was prepared differently in a way to encourage people to take advantage of this natural way to preserve foods,” says Larkin, noting that while sales in frozen food departments are down, this may be changing.

No. 7: Men in the supermarket and in the kitchen.
“Dads are more likely than moms to plan the meal for a week ahead of time. The reality is that more men are working at home. Some supermarkets are creating man aisles.”

No. 8: Mobile gets more interesting.
“It provides transparency in pricing in terms of the product, the ingredients and where the product came from,” says Larkin.

No. 9: It’s all about the Millennials.
“I think there are many retailers out there who are rethinking the relationship between their company’s needs in the labor force and how they recruit—how they develop jobs.”

No. 10: Transparency about where our food comes from.
“It’s not a trend that is going to stop, so we have to embrace it.”

ICHITA 2013 Focuses on Innovation and Engagement in Health Care Technology

The U.S. deputy national coordinator for healthcare information technology will headline a conference this fall hosted by the WMU Center for Healthcare Information Technology.

“Expediting Health Care Reform through Service Innovation and Stakeholder Engagement” is the focus of the conference, which will be held at the Fetzer Center on WMU’s campus on October 17-18.

Judy Murphy is the deputy national coordinator for programs and policy at the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT, the informatics arm of the Department of Health and Human Services. Murphy has more than 25 years experience in system implementation methodologies, health IT project management, automated clinical documentation and use of technology to support evidence-based practices at Aurora Health Care in Wisconsin, an early adopter of healthcare information technology. Murphy lectures and publishes nationally and internationally. Also a registered nurse, Murphy has been a part of the Health IT Standard Committee since its inception in May 2009 and is a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing, the American College of Medical Informatics and HIMSS. She has received numerous awards and recognitions for her work in the healthcare information technology field.

Registration is open for the conference, dedicated to health professionals, educators, practitioners and students with special interest in healthcare and information technology. To register, visit wmich.edu/chita or contact conference coordinator Cheri Edgar at cheri.edgar@wmich.edu or (269) 387-5411.

ICHITA spearheads research, clinical application development, training and services in healthcare IT and offers an interdisciplinary major in health informatics and information technology through WMU’s Haworth College of Business and the College of Health and Human Services.
WMU has a long history of sales education. In fact, coursework dates back to 1962, and today’s sales and business marketing program, which began in 1999, boasts 1,350 alumni. During the past 10 years, students from the program have competed in 15 national sales competitions and brought home 13 trophies. And WMU is one of fewer than 20 universities offering a sales-focused major to its students. With more than 250 students, the program is one of the largest in the country.

This year, the program hit a new milestone when 90 percent of those graduates surveyed reported full-time employment within six months of graduation. And there is more—a bevy of national accolades that include:

• Sales Education Foundation once again named the WMU program a Top 50 Sales Program, marking the 7th year that the SBM program earned this recognition. For 2012-13, WMU’s Haworth College of Business was one of three schools in Michigan and 48 schools nationally meeting the foundation’s requirements for having a top program for educating undergraduate students in the sales profession.

• More than 100 regional and national employers recruiting SBM students; alumni hold top positions in 500 firms throughout the United States.

• Educational-Portal.com lists the program as #2 on its list of Top U.S. Sales Schools.

• In the 2012 National Sales Challenge, a WMU team placed second overall; junior Greta Lorr won the speed selling portion of the competition.

• Senior Aleks Jogerst earned gold at the 2012 State Farm Marketing and Sales Competition.

So what is it that makes the WMU program so special?

“Our curriculum makes the WMU program unique,” says Dr. Steve Newell, professor of marketing, who along with Dr. Jim Eckert, John Idema and Dr. Kelley O’Reilly form the core of sales faculty. “There is no better sales curriculum in the country,” says Newell, noting that all faculty members who teach in the program have selling and sales management experience, which helps lend real-world credibility to the courses.

The rigorous SBM program requires students to take three selling-focused courses during which they participate in a significant number of video role-plays that are recorded in one of the top sales training...
facilities in the country—the Harold Zeigler Interactive Sales Lab. In addition, students take a sales management course, covering topics vital to understanding what it takes to become an excellent sales force manager.

And to further boost their own education, most sales students participate in the Sales and Business Marketing Association, making it the largest student organization in the college with well over 100 members and one of the most active organizations on campus. The SBMA hosts 25 employers each semester at weekly meetings.

To top it off, sales students are encouraged by faculty to think globally, and they participate in study abroad in large numbers as another way to understand the global perspective of business. In fact, sales majors represent a large portion of business students studying abroad. Both Newell and Eckert have taken students on study abroad trips. Eckert regularly leads one of the most popular short-term study abroad programs to the University of Paderborn, Germany, where WMU students interact with German university students to learn global business negotiating skills.

This combination of excellent students, faculty, curriculum, facilities and extra-curricular opportunities form the strong foundation on which the SBM major has prospered and become one of the premier sales programs in the country.

In the Spotlight

In the Spotlight

This past year, Greta Lorr from Jackson, Mich., and Aleks Jogerst from Vicksburg, Mich., took second place in this year’s National Sales Challenge staged by the Russ Berrie Institute for Professional Sales. Lorr won the speed selling portion of an individual event during the competition.

Hanna Downs of Novi, Mich., was among 10 students from across the country selected to receive a prestigious worldwide business scholarship awarded by the Richter Foundation and the Institute for Supply Management’s Richter Scholarship Fund. The Richter scholarship includes tuition assistance of up to $5,000, pairing with established executives and a former Richter Scholar who will serve as mentors, attendance at a national supply management conference and other benefits.

Now in its tenth year, the Richter Scholarship Program is the largest nationally recognized scholarship program for supply chain management students. Downs is WMU’s sixth scholarship recipient in the past ten years, placing WMU fourth in the nation for the total number of students honored with Richter Scholarships in the past 10 years. The program identifies future supply chain management leaders and helps fast-track these students into the field.

“Winning this scholarship is such a great honor, and I am so grateful for this opportunity,” says Downs. “I’m excited to represent Western Michigan University at the conference. It is going to be a great opportunity for me to expand my professional network and mentor base. My professors here at Western have provided me with the knowledge, skills and training I need to make a good impression at the conference and show why Western is such an outstanding institution.”

Downs is majoring in both integrated supply management and food and consumer package goods marketing and serves as an integrated supply management student mentor where she aids students in applying for the program and developing their portfolio of professional activities and promotes the ISM curriculum and study abroad with the program’s students.

“Hanna blew everybody’s socks off!” says Nancy Richter, president of the Richter Foundation.

Downs spent a semester at Hogeschool Utrecht in the Netherlands, igniting a passion for study abroad and international business. While in the Netherlands, she was selected to be a part of a five-member leadership team that led 45 multicultural students in developing and presenting an export market entry strategic plan for De Wiltfang, an integrated Dutch gardening retailer.

Downs serves as vice president of membership in the student chapter of APICS, the Association for Operations Management and vice president of social events for the Food Marketing Association.

“I’m excited to represent WMU at the conference.”

– Hanna Downs
Here, There, EVRYWHR?

The name says it all—EVRYWHR ELSE. “My name tells you something about my personality. If you catch me in a session, my mind is everywhere. I have songs in my mind for everything. I call that being everywhere,” says M.J. Jefferson, B.B.A.'08, aka EVRYWHR ELSE, part of the songwriting team for the 2013 Grammy-award-winning Best Gospel album, Gravity by Lecrae.

And, this singer-songwriter is definitely EVRYWHR. This year he is working on diverse projects, each with their own style of music. In addition to the gospel stylings from his work on Gravity, Jefferson's new album is a new age, R & B record with influences from both pop and rock titled T.W.O: This Woman's Opposition, This Woman's Opportunity. Also in the works this year, a rock/party album that features EVRYWHR with his band Dent that is set for release later this year.

Of the Grammy win, Jefferson says it has been an exciting experience. “It's been overwhelming and humbling to hear that me following a dream can inspire others. I want people to know that if you work hard at anything, you can achieve it.”

Jefferson always wanted to write, record and perform music, but his first stop was an education. “Even though I wanted to create music for a living, I knew that no matter what I did in life, I would always have to sell something—my songs, my music or something else. I did my research and found that WMU has one of the best sales and business marketing programs in the country, so the decision of where to attend school was made.”

Life is about timing, I will always remain persistent and do what I believe is right.

Lights, Camera, Action!

For every young person who succeeds on the big screen, countless others only dream of becoming stars. But even after his recent successes earned this 24-year-old two Emmy awards, MBA student Kevin Grazioli's dream of Hollywood may be a bit different then what we typically hear.

“It's fascinating to me that motion pictures, many with budgets in the millions of dollars, are produced and shot in a timespan of only a few weeks. Costs are allocated, locations secured and independent crews hired,” says Grazioli. “Someone behind the scenes keeps track of everything, and I'd like that person to be me.”

And Grazioli is on the path to his dream. Not only is he learning about the film industry from the inside out, but he is also tackling the WMU MBA coursework.

“My education here has been tremendous in helping with my long-term plans. It has been an amazing experience. And, being located between Chicago and Detroit allows me to fit freelance work into my busy lifestyle,” says Grazioli.

Grazioli's film, “Seeing Stars in Indiana,” follows professional and amateur astronomers as they travel from Indiana to Arizona exploring the night sky and earned Emmys for the overall prize for health or science program or special and one for Grazioli, director—post production. The film was nominated by PBS station WIPB in Indiana, which funded the work.
A team of five WMU students earned the Overall Champion award and won the Best Project award at the 2nd Annual Midwest Student Information Systems Project and Case Competition hosted by Ball State University.

Nine teams from five universities vied for top honors in three categories—project, project presentation and case competition. The WMU team earned the top spot for its project and second place for its presentation, beating out the Purdue University team, which placed second.

“During the three-day competition, teams presented their projects, participated in the case competition and attended networking events. The WMU team developed a management dashboard with an expert system component that included business, global and sustainability intelligence subsystems as part of the computer information systems capstone course.

“The project that we brought to the competition had vastly more finesse and sophistication than those of other teams, which makes me really proud to be a student of WMU,” says student Charles Blaine.

The team also responded to a case study that asked students to make recommendations to an investment firm about loaning $750,000 to a daycare that wanted to expand to a fourth location.

“Included in the case were several ‘mines’ as they called them ... laptops had been stolen from the daycare; they didn’t have reliable Internet; and they were experiencing high turnover of employees,” says student Michelle Swadling. “We gave recommendations for improving the business as well as the financial ‘ok’ to invest in the daycare.”

According to Dr. Andrew Targowski, faculty advisor for the group, the students used their time effectively, testing the dashboard repeatedly and practicing their presentation multiple times.

“We spent a lot of time perfecting the project. There was a lot of time discussing how something should work, look and behave which made the final result that much more rewarding,” says student Samuel Fox. “The project has a piece of everyone in it.”

The WMU team included:
- Charles Blaine, a computer information systems major from Richland, Mich.
- Samuel Fox, a computer information systems major from Okemos, Mich.
- Joseph Hawkins, a computer information systems major from Jackson, Mich.
- Eric Potts, an integrated supply management major from Dewitt, Mich.
- Michelle Swadling, an electronic business design major from Onondaga, Mich.

In addition to the WMU team, eight other teams competed, representing Ball State University, Purdue University, University of Toledo and Ohio University.

“Life is about timing, I will always remain persistent and do what I believe is right.”

— JoAnn Atkin

Advertising and Promotion Students Place First in National Competition

A team of advertising and promotion students placed first in this year’s EdVenture Partners’ Jobs for America’s Graduates Scholastic Achievement Award Challenge in Washington, D.C. Students were tasked with answering analytical questions from high-level executives regarding JAG’s brand positioning, communication strategies and other marketing tactics. JAG is a state-based national non-profit organization dedicated to preventing dropouts and advocating for post-secondary education among at-risk youth.

“Their hard work and dedication all semester long was rewarded by overwhelming positive feedback from the judges,” says Dr. JoAnn Atkin, associate professor of marketing and faculty advisor to the team.

Team members included the following fall graduates:
- Jon Burns
- Ashleigh Cipta
- Aaron Coney
- Rachel Dudley
- Jenna Grodecki
- Paige Moyer
- Kristin Robarge
- Joe Taylor
- Becca Wilson

WMU Students Earn Top Honors

“Overwhelming positive feedback from the judges,” says student Charles Blaine.

“The WMU team created a bold, integrated marketing campaign that will be used by JAG to generate additional awareness and support for its nationally based at-risk youth campaign,” says Tony Sgro, founder and CEO of EdVenture Partners, a consultancy that develops industry-education partnerships on campuses in North America.

WMU has participated in the EdVenture Partners National Case Study Competition since 2005, placing in the top 10 nationally each year.

In addition to the WMU team, eight other teams competed, representing Ball State University, Purdue University, University of Toledo and Ohio University.

“In the Spotlight”

“Life is about timing, I will always remain persistent and do what I believe is right.”

— JoAnn Atkin
In 2008, students got their first glimpse of the Haworth College of Business Career Center. The center, which was funded by the generous support of several donors and organizations, sought to elevate career development education for business students and strengthen hiring and professional recruitment efforts.

Five years later, the center is a critical part of the student experience and a welcoming space for students and employers. Now, some of the first students to work with the career center to achieve their professional goals are returning as recruiters to hire Broncos.

David Ludeke, B.B.A.’10, established a relationship with the career center as a student. After landing a job with All Phase Electrical Supply in sales, Ludeke switched to the other side of the equation, taking on a recruiting role and working with the career center in a different way.

“In my recruiting role, I have the opportunity to work in career centers across the state,” Ludeke says. “The vested interest that the career center takes in students differentiates it from the other centers I have worked with. The personal attention and knowledge that the staff members at the career center bring to each student pays off. It shows in the quality of the résumés we see and the quality of the interviews we have. As an employer, it is amazing to see how the center helps WMU business students gain a competitive edge.”

Ludeke recalls his own student experience when Career Center Director Geralyn Heystek helped him communicate his transferable skills on his first résumé. When Ludeke had the opportunity to impact collegiate recruiting at his organization, the right avenue was obvious—forge a strong partnership with the Haworth College of Business career center.

It is an avenue that many employers have traveled as the career center has seen increasing contacts with students and employers throughout the past five years. During the fall 2012 semester alone, 2,447 students took part in career development events and 704 interviews took place—all coordinated through the career center. "Working with employers on their recruitment needs and strategies to bring them the best talent is exciting,” says Employer Relations Coordinator Caroline
The career center receives support through its premier partners, businesses sponsoring a variety of career education programs in the career center.

Career Specialist Jessie Wagner. “As students progress through the curriculum, internships and other experiences, we aid them in representing their experiences to employers. We have outstanding faculty and a curriculum that prepares students to be work-ready upon graduation. We have a passion for helping our students show employers their skills through their résumés, interviews and a variety of other methods.”

From practice interview days with onsite feedback from volunteer companies to etiquette events to one-on-one professional coaching, the career center offers a range of services and resources for students and alumni seeking their first professional job. The center’s programming is possible because of the quality employers who come to the center, sponsor events, participate in the externship program and volunteer for enrichment events with business students.

None of this would be possible without donor support. The families and organizations that came together to fund the establishment of the career center knew the potential added value it could bring to students, academic programs and the University in general.

Philanthropy and Loyalty

Throughout the year, numerous alumni and friends of the Haworth College of Business make gifts to a variety of programs and funds. Many of these donors make gifts on an annual basis and have done so for years.

The Murthas: 9 years of giving

Patrick Murtha, B.B.A.’01, and Julie White Murtha, B.B.A.’01, gave their first gift out of appreciation and gratitude. “During our time at WMU, we both received academic scholarships, which helped ease some of the burden with funding our college educations,” Julie says.

“The Murthas both feel the college played a significant role in jumpstarting their careers and adult lives. “We hope by giving to WMU that the Department of Accountancy can meet its mission, allowing current and future Broncos to realize their dreams,” Julie says.

They believe giving back is important simply because it is the right thing to do, notes Julie. “We choose to donate to organizations where we have personal ties or which have missions that tug on our heartstrings. Western has played a huge role in where we are today, and for that reason, we want to give back.”

The Walshes: 36 years of giving

George Walsh, B.S.’52, and Patricia Walsh gave their first gift to WMU in 1976 because of their commitment to education and their desire to lessen the financial burden for students.

“Dr. Arnold Schneider, the first dean of the college, introduced George to the stock market and the investment program. As a result of Schneider’s exceptional teaching and George’s natural talent for investment, the Walshes invested in the stock market—and continued to invest. That initial lesson in the stock market and investment strategy led to the Walshes’ ability to give back to educational institutions and George’s ability to retire in 1988.

George and Patricia Walsh give to the Haworth College of Business unrestricted fund so that the college can decide how to best meet the needs of students with their gifts; unrestricted gifts fund items such as student travel for participation in national competitions, guest speakers that enrich the curriculum, upgrades to computer and learning laboratories and many others. “We want to help students gain their objectives and goals,” says Walsh.

Interested in giving to WMU’s Haworth College of Business? Use the envelope enclosed in this magazine or call the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at (269) 387-8700.
When students entered Dr. Ann Veeck’s marketing research class spring semester, they could probably name the favorite food trends of typical American students. But by mid-semester, they also knew the favorite foods and food habits of students in China. Veeck, whose research focuses on food trends in China, teamed up with a professor there to have the students collect and examine statistical information about each other and report the results.

“It is important for students to realize that the consumers that they will deal with in the future might be from anywhere in the world,” says Veeck, who has been studying food trends in China since 1986.

Through her innovative teaching style, Veeck uses her research specialty, academic knowledge, skilled social media data analysis techniques and collaborative outlook to bring new ideas and new methods to WMU students. This year, her efforts in social media curriculum were heralded nationally when she received the AxcessCapon Teaching Innovation award of the Marketing Management Association, which recognizes innovative approaches to classroom instruction.

Veeck received her award for developing techniques for incorporating social media analysis into undergraduate market research classes. Veeck says that, while students are expert at using social media for their personal use, they need to develop professional skills to effectively analyze consumer feedback via social websites.

Advancing students’ ability to use social media in marketing research with the goal of teaching them to develop strategic solutions based on empirical data drove Veeck to add social-media-based projects to her courses. In an individual assignment, students explore the types of consumer-generated feedback found on three social media sites. In a team project, groups use social media analytical tools to analyze product performance.

“Ann’s teaching skills in marketing research and the innovations she brings to class are legendary.”

– Mushtaq Luqmani
“The biggest thing that I learned is that most sites rate their success on the amount of hits they get, but it is important to also pay attention to the retention rate of these hits,” says senior Jesse Wilkerson from Battle Creek, Mich. “Getting many new customers is good for a growing company, but you should also be retaining these people, or there is a problem within your social media campaign.”

Veeck says inspiration for her teaching comes from her students, faculty colleagues and research and that staying on top of trends is an important step in creating effective classroom challenges.

“Social media is a relatively new way to reach customers, and being able to use it will help make me more attractive to potential employers,” adds Wilkerson.

“One of the most enjoyable aspects of teaching marketing research is that the industry is constantly changing. Some of the new trends include ‘big data,’ creating online community forums to provide ongoing feedback, new forms of qualitative data and the analysis of consumer-generated social media data,” says Veeck.

“I expect my students to learn definitions and concepts outside of class, so we can reserve class time for activities in which students actively apply the concepts we are learning. I constantly seek out methods to actively engage students in the course materials.”

Veeck meets weekly to discuss teaching methods and ideas with Dr. Beth Hoger, professor of business information systems, and Dr. Ola Smith, associate professor of accountancy. She also collaborates on teaching ideas with her husband, Dr. Gregory Veeck, professor of geography.

“The university is full of inspiring and caring teachers from whom I can get ideas. I constantly discuss innovative teaching approaches and ideas with my peers in the marketing department,” says Veeck.

Research keeps her knowledge of the field current and her teaching strategies evolving. “I believe that my programmatic research in the world’s largest market provides great contemporary examples for the classroom,” says Veeck. “Active involvement in research strengthens professors’ ability to positively influence students, since dynamic research requires constant exposure to new methodologies, theories, philosophies and contexts. All of my trips to China really help inform my lectures and the material I select to teach.”

And the reason it is all so important to Veeck:

“Being a marketing professor at WMU is my dream job. WMU students are an enormous pleasure to teach. They have great attitudes and are very supportive of each other,” says Veeck.

“Active involvement in research strengthens professors’ ability to positively influence students.”

– Ann Veeck
Business professionals and students alike are inundated with technology innovations designed to increase productivity. People can go a whole day without face-to-face interaction while still staying perfectly up-to-date. With technology right at our fingertips, communication skills should be at an all-time high, yet employers say that while interactions are increasing, professionalism is declining.

"In today’s job market, discipline-specific knowledge is not enough," says Dr. Kay Palan, dean of the Haworth College of Business. “Students who have mastered the ability to effectively communicate, interact with others, convey the strategic vision of a company and provide relevant information to decision makers in a concise and clear manner will excel. The college is committed to teaching both strong, functional business knowledge and exemplary communication skills so that our students can add immediate value to an organization.”

Recognizing this need, the college’s business communication faculty was tasked with developing a unique communication center designed to augment business curricula, which often requires students to develop multimodal communication responses, such as a video podcast, a print advertisement, a written piece and a face-to-face presentation, mirroring modes of communication they will encounter in the workplace. The communication center provides students a venue for receiving feedback from other students and faculty.

"By the time our students are juniors and seniors, most of them are fairly comfortable speaking in front of a group and developing their written work, yet many need to work on their professionalism while presenting," says Jo Wiley, director of the communication center and coordinator of the business communication program, noting that the communication center staff is comprised of business faculty members that understand the entire curriculum.

Students have responded positively to the services and resources the center has available. “One of the biggest struggles that I had before visiting the communication center was understanding my audience. Clarifying who I would be speaking to or writing to helped me eliminate unnecessary information and made my communication more effective,” says management major Matt Rumora.

This approach of providing feedback on assignments outside class has been welcomed by faculty members.

“The communication center helps faculty members introduce students to critical communication techniques without having to sacrifice valuable class time,” says Dr. Bret Wagner, professor of management.

“While the center has top-of-the-line technology and presentation equipment available to students, it also offers resources focusing on business writing. Faculty at the center work with other faculty members across the college to facilitate the level of assistance students need and professors desire. With knowledge of the business courses and majors, communication center faculty can help students more effectively.

“Students often have ideas in their head that they struggle to translate into written form,” says Dr. Nancy Schullery, professor of business information systems. “When they visit the communication center, we can help them determine how to arrange their thoughts and bring out the message more clearly, which benefits students in the classroom and in the workplace, building the college’s reputation as a leading resource for business professionals with excellent communication skills.”
Teaching Students to Conserve—and Boosting Employability—by Learning to Work Paperlessly

While companies continue to adapt work environments to ensure sustainability and conservation, often working toward a paperless office, students are preparing to step into these environments by participating in classes that are completely (or nearly!) paperless, learning techniques they can transfer to the workplace.

"More and more, accounting firms are moving toward paperless or near-paperless offices. Preparing our students to be work-ready involves ensuring they adapt quickly to these evolving environments," says Dr. Donald Gribbin, chair of the Department of Accountancy.

So in addition to teaching accountancy, Dr. Paul San Miguel, assistant professor of accountancy, runs paperless classrooms, helping students become adept at changing work environments.

"Learning sustainable techniques takes on new urgency when you are a college student looking for that first professional job. And it takes on a new look," says San Miguel. "While students quickly adapt to expectations to recycle and use sustainable products, it can be difficult to adapt to working in a paperless office if they are not prepared. It is a common expectation in today’s job market."

Getting students used to not printing is not always easy. "Students still learn in school environments with pencil and paper," says San Miguel. "When students arrive at college, they still expect paper. They come to the first day of class expecting to be handed a syllabus. But that doesn’t happen as often as it used to."

Having established a paperless office in a company he worked for helped San Miguel hone the skills he now imparts to students. "In my work group, we reduced our office costs by 30 percent in the first year."

Accountants and other financial professionals are often expected to perform calculations in Excel, summarize the data in a Word document and stay up-to-date with email—tasks made more efficient through the use of multiple monitors.

"The hardest part of learning the multiple monitors is that printing is tempting (and free for most students), and it is a comfort to many students who relied on paper to stay organized when they were younger," says San Miguel.

San Miguel is committed to ensuring WMU students continue to look for opportunities to create more sustainable work environments and develop paperless skills. "Learning paperless techniques helps them get prepared for industry, simplifies their transition from student to professional and instills in them the idea of affecting sustainable environments in all areas."

Sharing workplace insights is just part of San Miguel’s approach. He encourages students to change their expectations and leads by example. He communicates electronically with students; uses a digital tablet that allows him to grade with a stylus and share documents with students; uses the share monitor features in the WMU computing labs to “show” students how to complete spreadsheets or accurately calculate data rather than handing out examples—and he posts these examples in e-learning so students have the reference; teaches students how to effectively manage their displays so that multiple open windows are visible; and he encourages them not to print.

In addition, he talks to them about file management because even without the clutter of paper, San Miguel realizes that space can still be a problem. His 5 TB home network allows his family to share movies and store work. While huge in terms of home networks, it is still not limitless and conserving space is still key. "File management will always be important," he notes.
Alumni and friends were honored throughout the year and at the annual Haworth College of Business Awards Ceremony, held during Homecoming week. Recognized for their outstanding contributions in business and service, these alumni and friends of the College are affectionately dubbed our “rockstars of business” by students. Visit wmich.edu/business/alumni/recipients to read full biographies about each recipient.

College Awards

Haworth College of Business Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award
Kim G. Dadlani, B.B.A.’77, MBA’90
Vice President of Finance and Corporate Insurance, Pfizer (Retired)
An experienced finance professional and expert in the pharmaceutical industry, Dadlani spent more than 30 years meeting and exceeding financial goals and overseeing change management as he held progressively more responsible roles.

“Kim and I worked together for several years. His ability to lead a large group effectively, produce terrific results and be a role model and team player are only a few examples of his many skills. He is an outstanding executive who contributed significantly to Pfizer’s results.”
– Frank D’Amelio, CFO, Pfizer

Haworth College of Business Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award
Birgit M. Klohs, B.B.A.’83
President and Chief Executive Officer, The Right Place Inc.
Leading The Right Place, the regional economic development organization for the retention, expansion and attraction of businesses in West Michigan, Klohs has been recognized as one of the country’s foremost experts on economic development.

“Birgit is one of Michigan’s and our nation’s top economic developers. I’ve had the privilege of working with her for the past twenty years and have tremendous respect for both her achievements and the way she approaches her work.”
– Doug Rothwell, CEO, Business Leaders for Michigan
Celebrating Alumni and Friends

College Awards

Haworth College of Business Outstanding Service Award
Willard A. Brown, Jr., B.S.'53
Chair, Rubloff Inc. (Retired)
Chair, Barrington Venture

Rising in the ranks at Rubloff Inc. during a more than 40-year career, Brown assumed the helm as president and chief executive officer and eventually chair. His devoted service to both his community and WMU are significant.

“Bill has been an instrumental part of the alumni leadership in the college for many years and is the definition of leading by example. He has generously offered his time, leadership and philanthropy. I offer my heartfelt thanks to Bill.”

– Dr. Kay M. Palan, Dean, Haworth College of Business

Haworth College of Business Outstanding Young Alumni Award
Joel A. Mueller, B.B.A.'02
Founder, MacUpdate and Mueller Enterprises

Named an Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist in 2011, Mueller leads MacUpdate, a firm he founded in high school, which is now ranked the second most popular Mac-only software community on the Internet.

“Aaron is the epitome of the entrepreneurial spirit. We need leaders like Aaron to take their dreams and talents to the marketplace. Rapid Repair is a great example of solving a human problem through meeting a need in the community.”

– Tim Terrentine, Vice President, Southwest Michigan First; President Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce

Haworth College of Business Outstanding Young Alumni Award
Benjamin M. Levy, B.B.A.'04
Co-Founder, Rapid Repair

The co-founder of Rapid Repair, Levy and business partner Aaron Vronko established a business while still WMU students. The company, Rapid Repair, has been recognized as a top independent iPod and device repair facility in the U.S.

“The Rapid Repair story of creativity, business savvy and capturing a niche is impressive. I am proud to honor Ben’s accomplishments and to hold him up as an example to our current students of all that is possible and open to them.”

– Dr. Kay M. Palan, Dean, Haworth College of Business

Haworth College of Business Outstanding Young Alumni Award
Aaron J. Vronko, B.B.A.'06
Co-Founder, Rapid Repair

Honored by Corp! Magazine as an Entrepreneur of Distinction, Vronko and business partner Ben Levy built a business while still WMU students. The company, Rapid Repair, has been recognized as a top independent iPod and device repair facility in the U.S.

“I have been honored to have the chance to engage with Joel on the opportunities for entrepreneurship in Kalamazoo. Joel is an astounding leader and has built one of the nation’s fastest growing companies.”

– Bobby Hopewell, Mayor, City of Kalamazoo
Department of Accountancy

Outstanding Alumni Award

Gregory T. Durant, B.B.A.’80
Vice Chairman and Managing Partner of Clients and Industries, Deloitte

A consummate business leader, Durant has served a variety of public companies and multinational corporations engaged in consumer business, financial services, and the travel and leisure industry.

“Greg was selected for this honor due to his extraordinary level of accomplishment and leadership in the accounting profession. He is the Vice Chairman of Deloitte LLP which is one of the world’s largest accounting firms, and we are proud to include him as a WMU alumnus.”

– Dr. Donald Gribbin, Chair, Department of Accountancy

Department of Business Information Systems

Outstanding Alumni Award

Paul A. Bertoldi, B.B.A.’84, MBA’92
Director of Technical Architecture, Thomson Reuters

A Presidential Scholar at WMU, Bertoldi has been a pioneer in software development at a number of top tier technology firms during his career, holding progressively responsible positions.

“Paul was our first BIS alumnus who helped to sponsor the IT Forum. His positive attitude and confidence in us supported us through our first few IT Forums. After many years, Paul is as enthusiastic as ever. We are extremely grateful for all he does and celebrate his career success.”

– Dr. Mike Tarn, Chair, Department of Business Information Systems

Department of Finance and Commercial Law

Outstanding Alumni Award

Richard M. Fosmoen, B.B.A.’91
Financial Advisor, Self-Employed

A financial services professional, Fosmoen specializes in institutional investment advisory and asset management, trading, hedge funds, global financial markets and financial planning. He has more than 20 years of experience across back, middle and front office operations.

“Richard is an expert in his field who has excelled in all of his professional endeavors. He has the ability to recognize business opportunities and both the skill and the initiative to take advantage of those opportunities.”

– Dr. Judith Swisher, Chair, Department of Finance and Commercial Law

Department of Management

Outstanding Alumni Award

Keith C. Valentine, B.B.A.’90
President and Chief Operating Officer, NuVasive Inc.

A keen strategist and experienced leader, Valentine oversees company operations of NuVasive Inc., which manufactures surgical implants for minimally disruptive spinal surgery.

“Perhaps Keith’s greatest strength is his ability to develop meaningful relationships at all levels of the company. It transcends business, as he has a genuine interest in all people with whom he comes into contact. Individuals who work with Keith know that he has a strong desire for them to be fulfilled.”

– Tyler Lipschultz, Executive Vice President, Global Operations, NuVasive, Inc.
Department and Program Awards

Marketing Hall of Fame Award
Greg T. Gerfen, B.B.A.’83
Executive Vice President, Brand Leadership, Doner
In more than 30 years in advertising, Gerfen has worked at four agencies and helped shape the advertising strategies for brands such as The UPS Store, Red Roof Inns, Kraft Foods and others.

“Greg combines strong strategic insights with a keen understanding of his clients’ businesses. There is no better combination for success. Greg has helped steward The UPS Store brand from a rebranding to a current position of marketplace strength and unprecedented growth.”
– Jimmy Kollin, Creative Director, Doner

Marketing Hall of Fame Award
Michael J. Gerfen, B.B.A.’87
President, Biggs|Gilmore
Gerfen has worked in concert with his colleagues at Biggs|Gilmore to distinguish the agency as one of the best in the country; the firm has been recognized by some of the industry’s leading organizations, including Advertising Age.

“Mike is a role model for anyone with a desire to lead effectively. He possesses both the hard and soft skills required to manage a business, inspire employees, and gain and maintain trust among clients.”
– Jane Tamraz, Chief Executive Officer, Biggs|Gilmore

Food and Consumer Package Goods Marketing
Adrian Trimpe Distinguished Service Award
Stephen Holdiman
Customer Vice President, Kraft Foods
Active on the WMU Food and Consumer Package Goods Marketing Advisory Board for more than 10 years, Holdiman has led the Food Marketing Conference Committee as chair for the past five years, growing attendance and sponsorships.

“Steve has added great value to our Food and Consumer Package Goods Marketing Board through his service. His leadership as chair of the Food Marketing Conference Committee has led us to record attendance, corporate sponsorships and revenues, catapulting us forward.”
– Dr. Frank Gambino, Program Director, Food and Consumer Package Goods Marketing

WMU ROTC Wall of Fame
Colonel Lewis E. Burchard, B.B.A.’65, M.A.’70 (Retired)
Superintendent of Schools, Lake City, Mich. (Retired)
A consummate leader, Colonel Burchard has had a wide-ranging career in the military and in education that is a study in skilled leadership and community engagement. Colonel Burchard has had a distinguished career in both the Army and Michigan National Guard.

“Lew is a great leader and a great addition to our Wall of Fame. We are proud to number him among our elite and accomplished alumni.”
– Lieutenant Colonel Decker Hains, Chair, Department of Military Science and Leadership
Coyote Logistics—A Company to Watch

Every product has been on a truck or train at some point—your computer, your phone, the bed you sleep in, the food you eat. Coyote Logistics specializes in how those products get to where they need to be. A third-party logistics company, Coyote coordinates the movement of massive amounts of freight. The company’s promise to get the job done with “No Excuses” has made it the fastest-growing logistics company in the U.S.

- In 2012, Coyote was #1 on Crain’s Chicago Fast Fifty List of the fastest growing companies.
- The firm was voted the #1 Top Workplace in the midsize category by the Chicago Tribune for the second year in a row.
- Coyote was awarded a Chicago Innovation Award for its private fleet service.
- In 2013, Coyote was ranked #8 on the National Top Workplaces list and #26 on the Forbes list of America’s Most Promising Companies.

When Coyote needs talent and is looking for graduates who can get the job done right with “No Excuses,” one of its core recruiting schools is WMU’s Haworth College of Business. “Western Michigan University students have an incredible drive that is obvious when they walk through the door at Coyote,” says chief people officer and co-founder Marianne Silver. “They take pride in their work and in their team’s success. They are self-starters who want the best for everyone around them, which is what makes them flourish at Coyote.”

WMU graduates hold positions in operations, sales, management, HR, pricing and analytics, and IT. “The quality of students at WMU is exceptional,” says Colleen Brenner, manager of recruiting. “The students’ real-life business experience leads to strong skill sets, helping graduates to be immediately successful at Coyote. We are lucky to have established a mutually beneficial relationship with both the career center and college of business professors, allowing us to find the best and the brightest.”

Coyote employee Rodney Gravitter, B.B.A. ’10, was recruited through WMU’s Career Fair. Starting as a national account manager, he was among the first 10 reps on a new refrigerated team, working solely on temperature-controlled freight. He worked hard and quickly made a name for himself, mastering the refrigerated market and contributing his skills to benefit all customer teams, not just refrigerated-specific teams.

After 14 months, Gravitter became a carrier capacity manager, working as a liaison between the customer and carrier sides of the business. His role helps provide solutions and works to help both parties see eye-to-eye on different situations. His expertise in sales and the capacity

The Three Facets of John Roa, B.B.A.’07

For John Roa, whose life as a serial entrepreneur started at age 15, success comes in many forms—and failure helps him get there.

“It sounds cliché, but I don’t let non-success be an option. This doesn’t mean I don’t fail, quite the opposite. But I never stop when I fail. If you have the mentality that failure is acceptable until you succeed, you will succeed,” says Roa, whose Chicago-based ÄKTA Web Studio LLC was named to Crain’s Tech 50.

Roa says his company, ÄKTA, the innovation and design studio he launched in 2010, focuses on innovation and technology and the realities of today’s multi-platform world. In addition to the Crain’s recognition, ÄKTA has been referred to as an industry leader for product innovation, user experience and interface design.

But the UX company represents just one facet of Roa’s personality, which he says includes social good, entrepreneurship and angel investing.

“The three traits come full circle. I am a serial entrepreneur with a focus on social good who seeks to invest in other entrepreneurs. Each facet gives me unique opportunities and challenges and a sense of completeness when it comes to my professional life,” explains the Crains 40 Under 40 recipient, who says he has experienced some tough lessons over the years but attributes his success to an entrepreneurial spirit and intense stubbornness.

But those traits are not enough. According to Roa, world experiences are essential for today’s entrepreneurs. “There is no asset quite as powerful as having a defined worldview. I have learned more being in the jungles of Peru, the wilderness of Iceland or the deserts of Morocco than I ever could in a boardroom in Chicago,” says Roa, who lived for a time in Venezuela and has traveled extensively throughout his life.

Experiences coupled with what Roa calls his “core advice” will move entrepreneurs forward.

Find what drives you: “Everyone is different. What drives you could be working for the good of the world, becoming wealthy, continuing to learn, being your own boss—all are doable and acceptable. You have to invest the time and energy to know yourself.”

Move the finish line, not the starting line: Many people want to start businesses and even make plans, “but the number of people who actually take the leap and risk to do this is very low,” says Roa. “My advice is to just start. Let go of the excuses. If you fail, do it again. If you quit trying, you probably weren’t built to be an entrepreneur.”
Interviewing for your first post-graduation job can be time consuming and nerve-wracking. In the best case scenario, you walk out of the interview feeling confident that you and the employer met each other’s expectations and that there is genuine potential for a future working together to meet common goals. In the worst case scenario, both you and the employer walk away confused and feeling a mismatch between the position and your skill set.

Chase Bonhag, B.B.A.’12, and Tyler Bailey, B.A.’13, wanted to maximize best case scenarios for new graduates and employers seeking talent. Their company HireStarts does just that by connecting college students and prospective employers, using technology such as video résumés, video interviews already available on the HireStarts network and mobile applications. “We are working to ensure students in our talent pool have the skills demanded by the employers we assist,” says Bonhag.

The genesis of HireStarts came from Bonhag’s own “aha moment” during his job search. “As I was interviewing with potential employers, I realized that I did not want to be a sales representative for a meat company, sell third-party payroll or work for an insurance company, not that those are bad things, but they weren’t me,” says Bonhag. “I was not being honest in my interviews thereby creating an artificial persona as a means to get a job. I thought to myself: there must be a better way to match the right people with the right positions.”

Bonhag started thinking about what he wanted to do—what he really wanted to do. His first thought was that he wanted to work with up and coming companies in Silicon Valley. “But moving to California didn’t seem quite right,” says Bonhag. “Instead of moving to Silicon Valley and building someone else’s dream, I figured that I could build my own dream right here in the Kalamazoo Valley. I could work with the up and coming companies that I wanted to work with and offer a valuable service.”

Bonhag and business partner Bailey have been successfully building their business since April 2012, focusing on several important areas.

The Niche
HireStarts caters primarily to startups and small businesses looking for talent and students looking for their first career opportunity. “Our goal is to provide the tools these companies need to grow rapidly,” says Bonhag. “The jobs we are posting on our network won’t be found on other job boards. After speaking with many Fortune
1,000 companies, we realized that they really want entrepreneurial-minded students who can ‘do something.’"

The Business Model
HireStarts is founded on a membership-based model with rates for student job seekers and rates for employers. Looking closely at sites like TheLadders.com, Bonhag and Bailey realized that monthly memberships can accumulate quickly. “Once I started doing the math on the student and employer minimums needed to generate revenue in the millions, I was hooked,” says Bonhag. “With 19,000,000 college students in America, even a very small market share can yield huge returns. The possibilities are endless for us.”

The Clients
One of the first things that Bonhag did was approach some of the firms he interviewed with on his own job search, converting contacts into clients. Being close to the student experience themselves, Bonhag and Bailey were poised to tap into the student base at WMU and other area colleges and universities to attract talented candidates for the positions on their site. Today, the company’s client roster includes firms such as Unitask, CloudAccess, ChowNow, Pencraft Books, New York Life, Prudential and Quicken Loans.

The Marketing
In addition to word of mouth advertising, HireStarts has marketing plans that involve business plan competitions, highlighting the business’s unique approach. The company won Boost! Detroit—a shark-tank-style competition and was a semi-finalist in the $1,000,000 Accelerate Michigan business competition.

Additionally, strategic use of events to cross pollinate their client base is part of their strategy and has included attending WMU Career Day and Bronco Bash, participating in the Heading to the Big Leagues business showcase in Midland, Mich., co-sponsoring Social Media Day in Detroit and helping with TEDxKalamazoo.

This year, the company’s new network will be released, and Bonhag will undertake a road trip to visit colleges, universities, startups and business accelerators across the U.S.

The Ride
At the end of the day, Bonhag and Bailey embrace a passion for being entrepreneurs. “Each day is new—our own invention,” says Bonhag. “It can be crazy, like jumping off a cliff and building your own parachute while you dive, but that is what makes it fun, and I can’t imagine it any other way.”

Learn more at HireStarts.com

Representing the Consumer:
Racquel Ankney, B.B.A.’07
Within a month of graduating from Western, Racquel Ankney landed a great job at McCann Erickson. A manager had seen her résumé in the WMU Ad Club résumé book, and Ankney quickly became a part of the company in the traffic department. A year later, she became a strategic planner at the company, a position she has held for more than five years.

Success to Ankney means being able to think outside the box while using and analyzing data. During data collection, she often has the opportunity to engage with and represent consumers and identify opportunities and insights through research. “Representing the consumer is my favorite part of my job, and lucky for me, it is what my job is all about,” she says.

At McCann Erickson, an agency focused on innovation to help brands compete in a global economy, Ankney must stay up-to-date on the latest in consumer behavior. She shares some current trends in consumer engagement and how brands can use these trends to stay connected to their audiences:

- Consumers love to discuss what they are passionate about and look to communities to feed the need to share that passion. Whether it is in-person or through an online community, brands can capitalize on advocacy and loyalty by being a part of those conversations rather than broadcasting from a soapbox.
- Facebook likes don’t equal engagement. The real challenge and effort comes once you have built your community. Are you are actively connecting your followers with the relevant content they want to see, hear and read? You have to ask yourself … Does my audience care about this?
- Mindset Matters. For instance, when planning a trip—whether it is a family vacation or a couples or friends getaway—travelers want to know how your destination can connect to their mindset and not just their party composition. Whether they are seeking adventure, a history lesson or just looking to unplug—showcase your unique qualities and make it impossible for them to go elsewhere.
- Healthier food options are in more than just one aisle at the supermarket, and they are here to stay. Consumers are looking to live longer and stay well by adjusting their grocery lists to include more fiber and fresher foods. Retailers and brands are adjusting their shelf space and product lines to compete or capitalize on these healthy food trends. These food options represent more than nutrition facts; they represent a way of life.
1966

Heraclio E. Atencio-Bello, B.B.A.’66, resides in Venezuela where he is a practicing international attorney and writer and editor of essays and more than 20 books on economics.

1971

Thomas R. Eurich, MBA’71, has a new novel in his Dalton Crusoe series available from Amazon and Barnes and Noble in paperback, hard cover and eBook formats. The books are published under the pen name Richard Trevae.

1979

Paul J. Kelemen, B.B.A.’79, passed away from cancer in Warren, Mich., on April 23, 2012. “He was such an inspiration through all of this—never showing self pity,” says his sister Donna Betancourt.

1980

Michael E. Debs, B.B.A.’80, was selected by ExecRank as top chief accounting officer for 2012, a rank determined by more than two years of research on candidates. Debs is currently the controller and chief accounting officer at Kelly Services.

Robert J. Sasena, B.B.A.’80, will be receiving the Lifetime Achievement Master Award for his work as an independent sales representative for Jostens Memory Books. Sasena has also owned gradad.com since 2004. The site allows parents of high school seniors to design and order congratulatory yearbook announcements for their students.

1981

David C. Tomko, B.B.A.’81, MBA’87, accepted a position at Flagstar Bank as senior vice president of business banking.

Randy L. Utting, B.B.A.’81, accepted a position as CEO of Fleetwood Group in Holland, Mich.

1982

Linda Bar Rowell, B.B.A.’82, was elected trustee of Genoa Township, Mich., in November 2012.

1984

Daniel C. Copeland, B.B.A.’84, celebrated his 25th year in business. He started his publishing business in 1987 in Fort Wayne, Ind. The company publishes business and lifestyle magazines and handles airport advertising. His company’s publications include the Business People magazine, serving northeast Ind.

Darren M. Timmeney, B.B.A.’84, is celebrating his 25-year anniversary with CHASE, a division of JP Morgan Chase N.A. Based in Kalamazoo, he is the community president and senior vice president for Southwest Michigan. Timmeney is active in the Kalamazoo community as a soccer coach and serves on local boards such as the Kalamazoo Symphony, WMU Soccer Club, Kalamazoo Communities in Schools and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

The college’s employer partners are critical to the success of our Business Bronco alumni. This year, we were able to document some of our many Broncos in their workplaces. As you read our class notes, we hope you will enjoy seeing alumni on the job. Interested in sending us a photo of your proud Broncos? Interested in connecting with our career center to learn more about hiring Haworth College of Business interns or graduates to strengthen your organization? Email hcob-communications@wmich.edu.
1985

Alan D. Nelson, B.B.A.’85, was recently hired at the Texas forensics accounting firm, Hartman Leito and Bold to lead the practice as the director of litigation support and forensic services.

Chris Nylen, B.B.A.’85, married Doenie Stearns, B.B.A.’85, in 1989 and after working in banking for 13 years, along with Doenie, started a storage and organization company in 1997 called Organize-It. The retail company is located in Rochester Hills and Shelby Twp., Mich., and sells nearly ten thousand items to help store and organize items in home or office environments. Organize-It has one local retail store and a website, www.organizeit.com, which provides its products worldwide. Keeping up the WMU tradition are Brad and Kylie Nylen, the son and daughter of Chris and Doenie. Brad, a sophomore, plays on the WMU club lacrosse team and is studying business. Kylie, a first-year student, plays on the WMU women’s varsity soccer team and is currently undecided in her studies.

1986

Christopher J. Flum, B.B.A.’86, has joined Stryker Corporation as director of supplier management. He assists in providing leadership and direction in developing a “best in class” supply base for Stryker’s implant operations unit within the global quality and operations organization.

1990

Kathleen Breyfogle Crepas, MBA’90, has joined Residential Opportunities Inc. as its chief financial officer.

1991

Brett W. Nesbit, B.A.’89, MBA’91, M.S.A.’92, a CPA with Rehmann, was named regional managing principal of the company’s Florida region in August 2012.

John R. Waldron, B.B.A.’91, has been promoted to senior vice president-senior loan officer at County National Bank. Waldron has been with the bank since 2002.

Lanita R. Winata, MBA’91, is a lecturer at AFE, Griffith University in Australia in the accounting, finance and economics department. In 2010, during her sabbatical leave, she visited WMU to give a seminar in the Department of Business Information Systems.

Chong Boon Woon, B.B.A.’91, MBA’92, is the chief operating officer and head of corporate strategy and finance of OSK Investment Bank Berhad in Malaysia. He originally joined the company in 2002 as general manager of corporate and strategic planning.

1995

Edward J. Ponagai, B.B.A.’95, moved his family from Chicago to Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, as a result of his promotion to partner in charge of the New York finance consulting practice at PricewaterhouseCoopers.

1996

Yan Pik Leng (Becky), B.B.A.’96, MBA’98, has been promoted to chief marketing officer of iProperty Group Ltd., a division of Asia’s number one network of property portal sites under the iProperty brand.

Mark your Calendar for Homecoming 2013

October 11, 4 p.m.
Haworth College of Business Awards Ceremony
Dean’s Conference Room
Schneider Hall
Join us as we honor our outstanding alumni and friends!

October 12, 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.
Haworth College of Business Homecoming Pancake Breakfast
You are invited to join us for a complimentary pancake breakfast served by World Record Pancake Flippers, Chris Cakes. Then, cheer on the Broncos as they take on the Buffalo Bulls at 2 p.m.

For more on Homecoming and other college and University events, visit MyWMU.com.
1998

Rebecca Secco Turner, B.B.A.'98, from Southfield-Michigan-based Maddin, Hauser, Wartell, Roth & Heller P.C., has been honored by DBusiness magazine as the 2013 top lawyer in the franchise law category.

1999

Dr. Gene S. Booker was hired as an assistant professor by the Department of Management in the College of Business at WMU in September 1960. He had previously taught two years as an assistant professor at Washington and Jefferson College in Washington, Pa. He was promoted to associate professor of management in 1962, and to full professor in 1965. He was awarded the Alumni Award for Teaching Excellence in 1972. He served as chair of the Department of Management in 1972-73. He retired in June 1990 as emeritus professor of management.

His most well-known service was as a member of the State of Michigan Investment Advisory Committee for state pension funds beginning in the mid-1970s. He was chair of the committee during the “Chrysler loan controversy” in 1980 when the committee denied the request to loan pension funds to Chrysler. He served on that committee for several more years and was also appointed to serve on the South African Investment Divestiture by the Michigan Dept. of Treasury.

In Memory

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1999

Eric J. Abrams, B.B.A.'99, and his wife, Andrea Kwasky Abrams, B.S.'99, welcomed their daughter Parker Elliott in July 2011 and are enjoying the curiosity and wonderment of a toddler. Abrams joined the new digital marketing firm, AppSmyth, as the vice president of sales and marketing in December 2012. AppSmyth specializes in developing customized loyalty and customer engagement smartphone apps for global restaurant and retail chains.

Heather Chapman Noble, B.B.A.'99, works in the Kalamazoo area and is excited to come back to WMU to further her education.

2000

Jake Moreland, B.B.A.'00, has been named the new tight ends coach at the U.S. Air Force Academy. He previously was a student athlete and coach at WMU.

Dominic Riggio, B.B.A.'00, is the founder and owner of Mess Bucket Comics. He also writes graphic novels, including The Arcane Awakening.

2001

Corey W. Adams Kennedy, B.B.A.'01, is actively employed at his family business, which operates eight supermarkets in south central Michigan. He would “love to hear from some food marketing alums.”

Donald Klacking, B.B.A.'01, has been promoted to vice president of finance for Great Expressions Dental Centers, based in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. Klacking oversees the finance and treasury areas and the claim processing and cash posting area for the Great Expressions Practice Support Centers.

Donald S. Patterson, B.B.A.'01, completed his MBA in management at the University of Mary Washington in December 2012.

2002

Ryan T. Cook, B.B.A.'02, M.S.A.'04, has joined Brink, Key and Chiudzinski PC, a CPA firm in Portage, Mich., as a tax manager.

Perry L. Truitt, B.S.'95, MBA'02, has been named Corporate Black Belt, Lean Sigma, for the continuous improvement program office at Perrigo. In this role, he will work with Perrigo’s global organization to provide training and coaching to teams in application of Lean Sigma to further the company's continuous improvement culture. Truitt has been with Perrigo since 1991.

2003

Jamar A. Cobb-Dennard, B.B.A.'03, has been named one of the Indianapolis Business Journal's 40 Under 40. He is the owner of Outsourced Sales Force, a company that helps small business owners build their first sales team. Cobb-Dennard is active in Rainmakers, where he was named Rookie of the Year in 2009, and the Little Red Door Cancer Agency, where he is on the board of directors.

2004

Nicole L. Finkbeiner, B.B.A.'04, began a new role as the executive director of college relations for Lone Star College-Tomball, near Houston, Texas, in April 2012. Finkbeiner was previously the director of public information and marketing for Kellogg Community College in Battle Creek, Mich.

2005

Christine Gilboe Walsh, B.B.A.'05, recently joined American Express as a director of human resources. Walsh is responsible for the human resources of the company’s U.S. credit operations and global fraud organizations. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her husband, Michael.

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Alumni and business students at Haworth Inc. making the Western “W.”

2017

Justin W. Voit, B.B.A.'04, and his wife Kelly Shingledecker Voit, B.A.'04, welcomed Claire May Voit on November 17, 2012. Along with a new “Baby Bronco” in the family, they are also happy to announce that they are both employed at Whirlpool Corp.
2006
Roxanne A. Buhl, MBA’06, director of the MBA program for the Grand Rapids WMU regional location has earned certification as a certified manager from the Institute of Certified Professional Managers.

Carmen McParland McAlister, B.B.A.’06, and her husband Will welcomed their daughter Eliana Faith on May 22, 2012.

2007
Paula Wasserniller Johnson, MBA’07, was promoted to business manager at Comstock Public Schools.

2008
Megan E. Collins, B.B.A.’08, won the 2012 NFL Fan Flag Challenge for the Detroit Lions. She was presented her flag at a ceremony along with fans from all NFL teams during the kickoff game in New York City. Collins’ flag was used at all Detroit Lions home games during the pre-game and in the end zone celebration after a score.

Kevin M. Tenant, B.B.A.’08, has joined Huntington Bank’s West Michigan Business Banking Treasury Management sales team. Tenant has more than six years of treasury management experience in the West Michigan market.

2009
Kelly R. Curtis, B.B.A.’09, joined the Professional Golfers Association of America as an office manager right after graduation. She has since assumed the position of membership director within the association.

2012
After graduating in December 2012, Brenda J. Melville, B.B.A.’12, accepted a position at Siegfried Crandall as a full-time staff accountant.

LVM Capital loves Business Broncos! 12 employees, 11 WMU degrees and 25 years in business!

Janine do Prado Grochoski Holmes, MBA ’02, shares this photo of her little ones sporting their Baby Bronco bibs. Are you welcoming a Baby Bronco into your family? Email hcob-communications@wmich.edu for a bib.
The Gr-r-reat Broncos of the Kellogg Company Financial Service Center

The Broncos of Kellogg Company’s Financial Service Center (and two honorary Broncos in Tony the Tiger and Ernie the Elf!) are proud to highlight their relationship with WMU’s Haworth College of Business. The FSC is led by John Gayda, senior director, who earned both his B.B.A.’81 and MBA’83 from WMU. His role at Kellogg is to manage the 150-person department, supporting a $10-billion business for the following areas: accounts payable, billing, cash application, collections, composite costing, credit risk, deduction management, financial reporting, fixed assets, intercompany accounting, payroll, purchasing cards, and travel and expense reporting. There are more than 25 WMU alumni in the FSC group who apply Bronco problem-solving in their jobs every day. “It’s a Gr-r-reat Day to Be a Bronco” at the Kellogg FSC!