A naming gift from Todd Sanford, CEO and founder of Sanford Financial Services of Portage, Michigan will establish a new center focusing on personal finance. The Sanford Center for Financial Planning and Wellness will provide a variety of services and impactful programs for members of both the greater Kalamazoo community and the campus community.
THE BOTTOM LINE ON VENTURE CAPITAL

Busy with his duties as principal at Renaissance Venture Capital Fund, member of the Michigan Venture Capital Association, and chair of the WMU Board of Trustees, Jeff Rinvelt, B.B.A.‘91, took time to provide a primer in venture capital and private equity, with a dose of straight talk about the industry, for business students.

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Business college receives naming gift for financial wellness center
contact: Stacey Markin
January 16, 2018 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Western Michigan University's Haworth College of Business has received a major naming gift from alumnus Todd Sanford, CEO and founder of Sanford Financial Services of Portage, Michigan. The gift establishes a new center focusing on personal finance.

The Sanford Center for Financial Planning and Wellness will provide a variety of services and impactful programs for members of both the greater Kalamazoo community and the campus community.

"It has long been my opinion that though we live in the most prosperous country on the planet, we as a society lack financial acumen," says Sanford. "The statistics prove this theory, as less than one-third of the population is financially prepared for a successful retirement. We have long needed programs focused on teaching financial skill sets at all levels of the educational spectrum in order to improve the financial wellness in Southwest Michigan and beyond."

The center's activities will include:

- Fostering and enhancing the financial literacy of area high school students, college students and southwest Michigan communities.
- Building a network of planners and financial services professionals who give of their expertise.
- Providing financial counseling services to students and community members.
Conducting and publishing research related to the impact of financial literacy.
Hosting speaker series, seminars, workshops and conferences.
Developing personal finance certificate programs.
Leveraging the Department of Finance and Commercial Law's Cash and Careers tool to assist young people in making wise human capital investments.
Offering the Dollars and Sense Summer Camp for area middle and high school students.
Supporting personal finance course offerings at WMU as well as internship opportunities.

Dr. Jim DeMello, chair of WMU's Department of Finance and Commercial Law, and Dr. Onur Arugaslan, director of the personal financial planning program, will serve as co-directors, while Dr. Matthew Ross, assistant professor of finance, will serve as associate director. The faculty team will work in conjunction with an external advisory board made up of finance professionals, collaborating on center strategic planning and success measures.

"It is thanks to the generosity, altruism and vision of Todd Sanford that this center will be in a position to address and enhance the financial wellness of both our campus community and the greater Kalamazoo community," says DeMello. "The center will serve as an excellent resource for scholarships, internships and networking opportunities for our personal financial planning majors."

Why a center dedicated to financial wellness?

Most Americans, by their own admission, are not financially literate, note DeMello and Sanford, which creates numerous challenges that become compounded as increasing financial demands are placed on individuals and households throughout a lifetime. High schools and families were the primary financial educators in the past, but as that has changed, there are few places where community members may obtain financial education.

The report "Financial Capability in the United States 2016" illustrates the need for greater financial literacy:

- Fewer than 50 percent of individuals have set aside three months of living expenses in case of emergency.
- More than 50 percent of Americans worry about running out of money in retirement.
- 37 percent of student loan holders will be late with at least one monthly payment.
- More than 50 percent of people find it difficult to cover monthly expenses and 44 percent have no household budget.
- Fewer than 14 percent of individuals can answer five foundational financial literacy questions correctly.

In addition to this need for greater financial literacy, there is also an escalating need for financial planners—an increase of 32 percent in consumer demand over the next decade.

"At the center, trained students will engage in peer-to-peer mentoring, offering financial guidance," says Sanford. "It is our expectation that the Sanford Center for Financial Planning and Wellness will provide experience for those interested in the financial planning field and serve as a catalyst for undecided business majors looking at career opportunities. Student volunteers and
industry professionals will also work collaboratively to deliver pro bono services to underserved members of our community."

The center seeks to become a national model for how universities can serve the critical role of convening resources for education in financial planning and wellness.

"We are grateful for Todd Sanford's leadership in this project, which will have a ripple effect throughout our community and with future generations of WMU students," says Dr. Satish Deshpande, dean of the Haworth College of Business.

For more information on the Sanford Center for Financial Planning and Wellness, visit wmich.edu/financialplanning.

About Todd Sanford

Sanford is the CEO and chief strategist at Sanford Financial Services, a full-service wealth management practice with a holistic approach to managing clients' finances. The firm focuses on family financial planning, corporate employee benefits and asset management. Sanford, with his team, sets the course for the firm, from management to investment philosophy. As a veteran financial planner who has participated in the best and worst that the economy can offer, he has the knowledge, skill and experience to lead with vision and clarity.

Sanford has been honored on Barron's Top Advisor List on multiple occasions, the Financial Times 400 List as a Top Advisor, and Forbes Magazine's State-by-State List of Top Advisors. He has also been recognized as a Top 10 Financial Advisor at Raymond James for the past 12 years, out of more than 6,000 advisors. A WMU Bronco at heart, he bleeds brown and gold. He has had a 35-year affiliation with WMU, including his time as a finance student in the '80s, a stint as an adjunct professor in finance, and now as an advisor to a variety of campus programs, as well as the new center.

For more WMU news, arts and events, visit wmich.edu/news.
Students in Dr. Matt Ross’s undergraduate and MBA finance courses had the opportunity to learn about venture capital from an expert, Jeff Rinvelt, B.B.A.’91, principal at Renaissance Venture Capital Fund, member of the Michigan Venture Capital Association, and chair of the WMU Board of Trustees.

Rinvelt has a diverse background in venture capital and technology, along with experience working in various startup ventures. He is active in the Michigan startup community, volunteering his time to mentor young entrepreneurs, judge pitch competitions and guest lecture in classes. Rinvelt carves time out of a busy schedule to share his passion with WMU students.

The lessons that Rinvelt imparted were an excellent primer in venture capital and private equity, with a dose of straight talk about the industry.

10 key takeaways

1. Venture capitalists look for the best fit for their fund. Most businesses are not suitable for VC investment so it means saying no 99 percent of the time.
2. Venture capital plays a role in the expanding economy, but its role is to make good investments with good exit strategies for investors (typically within 4-7 years). They are a partner for a time, not forever.
3. When is the right time to seek funding from a venture capitalist? After you have significantly grown your business and are ready to take the company to a growth stage where outside investment makes sense. The sweet spot for venture capital investment is companies with more
than $1 billion in total addressable market size. Many company founders seek funding from personal savings, family and friends, banks and other lenders, crowdfunding, angel investors and others before they are ready to meet with a venture capitalist. The stage that the business is in is very important to a venture capitalist, as is the potential market.

4. A sound business plan and personal credibility are crucial when seeking venture capital funding.

5. While traditional lenders may look unfavorably on a business that is funded by your own capital, a venture capitalist may have a different take on this. Investing in yourself means that you are passionate, committed and not relying solely on others to take you to the next stage.

6. As an entrepreneur, seek out venture capitalists that are a fit for you. If you are in the life sciences, do not pursue a fund that avoids investing in that sector. You will get an automatic no.

7. Do not come in cold unless you have to—referrals are a good thing.

8. Remember, a venture capitalist’s job is to ask questions and be very skeptical, seeking a few optimal businesses for their firm to invest in, so keep that in mind no matter which side of the table you are on—entrepreneur or potential funder.

9. If you are a company founder, you do not have to know all the answers to the questions you will be asked by potential investors, but you need to know your industry better than anyone else in the room and be willing to find the answers to the questions asked of you.

10. The first step is getting a meeting with potential investors. The discovery and relationship-building stage can take many months.

Rinvelt’s talk helped WMU students contextualize what they would be learning over the next several weeks in their courses.

“Jeff Rinvelt is an influential expert who gave realistic expectations on how to be successful when starting or expanding your business,” says Kara Weberg, a junior majoring in finance. “He emphasized the importance of understanding the market, giving practical financial projections, and preparing a professional marketing plan. He also gave insight on what venture capitalists search for when choosing investments. I recommend business students interested in this field engage in future presentations.”

Sahana Madhanagopal, an MBA candidate, states, “The guest lecture on venture capital by Jeff Rinvelt is a must-attend session for all those with entrepreneurial aspirations. It was simple, lucid and very interactive, with students asking interesting questions and Jeff responding by quoting his own experiences on his journey as a venture capitalist. By the end of the presentation, we all had a good understanding of the opportunities and risks of being a venture capitalist as well as the milestones that must be achieved by a business entity so that it is attractive enough to get funded.”

As a member of the WMU Board of Trustees, Rinvelt is often on campus and gives back by coaching student entrepreneurs, interacting with business students, and attending events held at both the college- and University-level.

“We hope to make Jeff Rinvelt’s talks a regular offering for business students,” says Ross, assistant professor of finance. “Venture capital is an extremely important aspect of finance that often seems very exciting but rather foreign. Jeff cuts through the mystery of the venture capital process and really connects with students. Our students are fortunate to have an alumnus like Jeff making time to give back.”