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Dear Alumni and Friends:

Each day I observe the relationships that make our college so special—the faculty-student relationships that result in rich learning experiences, the collegial relationships that contribute to our understanding of business and higher education as we collaborate on research and learning projects, the many ways that our alumni shape the business community and then give back to our students through their expertise, and the vital partnerships we have with employers and the business community.

These relationships grow in an environment of respect, ethical leadership and friendship where the personal and professional intersect. That personal connection is something that has distinguished the college of business since day one and something that I am proud to say is still one of our defining characteristics.

In this issue of the college magazine, you will find stories that illustrate the importance of relationships in a variety of contexts. Whether you are reading the cover story about alumnus Tom Sweet and his leadership at Dell as the company went private, the vital relationships that our faculty and staff forge in their quest to always represent the forefront of business thinking and understanding, or one of the many stories highlighting the excellent work of our students, you will see that relationships and connections are central to everything we do in business.

Here are just a few of the many initiatives where relationships with industry and community are enriching our curriculum:

• The college has launched a dedicated supply management center, enhancing our ability to deliver leading-edge instruction and enhancing connections with industry.

• Starting Gate, a new mentor-based student business accelerator, allows students from across WMU to access valuable resources in developing their startup companies.

• New faculty-student consultancies in marketing and supply chain provide students with critical experience and companies with professional-level services.

• Many students have participated in national case competitions, learning the many factors in the business environment that affect decision-making, while developing relationships with their teammates, peers and industry professionals.

• The college will open the Greenleaf Trust Trading Room to students in fall 2014, offering a state-of-the-art learning environment for investment analysis.

• The college’s first-year experience courses participated in a common service learning project, adding to the many service learning and social entrepreneurship activities for students.

This is an exciting time at the Haworth College of Business! And we are very fortunate to have alumni and members of the business community support us in everything from providing business cases for our courses to hiring our students. Relationships matter. I hope this magazine will provide a conversation starter between us. I value your perspective and expertise and invite you to contact my office at any time to discuss how we can work together to innovate and improve our delivery of business education so that a Haworth College of Business degree grows in value each and every day.

Regards,

Kay M. Palan, Ph.D.
Dean, Haworth College of Business
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"The power to do more." It’s a promise that Dell has been delivering on for nearly 30 years with its customers. And now, the company is keeping that promise to itself by taking the corporation private through a leveraged buyout, which was completed in fall 2013, and is the third largest LBO in history.

Tom Sweet, B.B.A.’81, was promoted to senior vice president and chief financial officer at the beginning of 2014 and is leading the finance organization of Dell into this new era. He is excited by the possibilities that the company’s privatization opens up—the ability for the company to be more nimble, the ability to grow innovation and entrepreneurial solutions, and the ability to make long-term investments in the future.

Changing Models—Dell 3.0

With the privatization of Dell comes a major shift in the business model for the company. “Historically, we were primarily a PC company focused on hardware,” says Sweet. “We are rapidly becoming an end-to-end IT solutions provider with offerings far beyond PCs. We now offer significant consulting, business process outsourcing, application development and modernization services, enterprise data center hardware and software solutions, and a growing software application business.”

This change poses a challenge for Sweet as a senior leader. “These businesses require different skills and support levels. Transforming the global finance team’s capabilities is an area of constant focus. I have a great team of leaders that I work with daily, and while the prospect is challenging, it is also fun.”

At the core of this transformation is a continuation of the Dell business philosophy of solution personalization that was a market differentiator when the company began in the 80s. “The power of customization, scalability and simple solutions to complex needs applies as much, if not more, to our new business,” says Sweet.

And though Dell is moving to a model where hardware is less central to its business model, the end-user’s relationship to technology is something that the company always has at the forefront of its planning. “I think one of the important
Relationships Matter

“I am a big believer that leadership is all about providing vision and goals to the team and then enabling the organization to achieve the goals.”

— Tom Sweet

trends that has developed in the last four to five years is the emergence of anytime and anywhere connectivity and the desire for communication that has evolved with technology users,” notes Sweet. “This is clearly shaping how devices are interacting with users and how users are interacting with the Internet. In many respects, these dynamics have driven the advent of cloud computing—the idea that content and data are delivered by the Internet to a variety of devices that consume the content but generally do not store and manipulate the data.”

Another important trend that Sweet identifies is the desire of commercial and institutional customers to purchase preconfigured or bundled technology such that they are buying a solution that is plug and play. “This is driving the growth of converged solutions—particularly in the data center,” says Sweet. “Developing great, end-user computing devices—notebooks, tablets and convertible devices as well as converged solutions and other technology solutions based on open standards designed to solve customers’ business problems—this has become a critical part of our strategy and an extraordinary potential growth area for Dell.”

How does the go-private strategy support the transformation of the company?

“I think the opportunity to accelerate the transformation of the company and make the necessary long-term investment and business decisions is very exciting and key to Dell’s future success,” says Sweet. “Having owners in Michael Dell and Silver Lake that have patient capital and are willing to look at a decision and investment strategy over, say, a five-year period and not being tied to a quarterly earnings reporting cycle, gives us great flexibility to drive the company’s transformation. It will be exciting to be a part of this as we build out our solution capabilities throughout the next few years. In a company the size of Dell, the transformation process will challenge all of us and will also help us grow into the future.”

Leadership, Mentorship and Communication

Critically important to any organization, leadership and the ability to communicate with people are never more important than when managing change.

“I am a big believer that leadership is all about providing vision and goals to the team and then enabling the organization to achieve the goals,” says Sweet. “Many times that is about determining the type and quantity of resources that are needed. Leadership is also about development of the organization and helping team members build skills and experiences. At the most fundamental level, leadership is about building and developing relationships—both at an individual level and at the team level. You have to be able to connect to the team and understand what motivates team members and build a common understanding of expectations that they have and that you have for them.”

As a manager, Sweet values mentorship in developing people and believes in investing in their success. “The manager is foundational in the development of the team. There is the old cliché that you hear, ‘People do not leave companies, they leave their manager.’ While not 100 percent true, it is clear that if the manager is not working to develop team members, then you are not going to be successful. Placing a strong focus on people development and holding managers accountable, along with the individuals, in building development plans and measuring progress has been the key to success at Dell.”

Sweet Success

On mentors: “I have been fortunate to work with outstanding professionals who have proven to be great mentors and coaches. They have served as sounding boards and have also, at times, been very blunt about areas I needed to work on to improve as a professional. Most importantly, I have valued their career advice, which pushed me in some directions that I would never have thought about. I had the opportunity to lead a sales organization because one of my mentors wanted me to develop broader business acumen and customer skills. That experience was one of my defining career moments.”

On WMU: “Western helped me build strong foundational skills in accounting, finance and economics that I have leveraged throughout my career. In a broader sense, WMU also built problem-solving capabilities and taught me how to be an effective team member. The hands-on style of the business faculty members and their genuine caring for each student’s success made a lasting impression on me. Western was also where I met my wife Kathy, and we have now been married for 29 years.”
Leading a global CFO organization that includes more than 6,000 team members in finance, including Dell financial services, corporate development and corporate strategy, in 38 countries provides many challenges in becoming a better leader. What Sweet finds is that a deep understanding of goals and expectations is critical, stating that “It is not as easy as it sounds.” Constant communication, particularly on progress toward goals, through a variety of mediums—group meetings, email, conference calls and other means—is Sweet’s recipe for success. He notes that these communications help the team to stay connected, feel ownership and share in the success of the company.

Communicating with team members throughout the LBO and as the company has evolved its business model has been vitally important for Sweet and others at Dell. “So often successful change management starts with making sure the organization understands why we are changing and what the vision for success looks like,” says Sweet. “Once you have established that for the organization, it is then about empowering the team to help guide and shape the change that needs to happen. Trust is fundamental. Ensuring team members understand how they can be successful and encouraging them to continue to develop the skills needed in the new environment is very important.”

And as Dell expands its enterprise solutions and services, growth is necessary. The corporation has acquired 15 companies within the last five years. And leading an organization through mergers is a delicate process.

“It’s a careful balance,” says Sweet. “These companies bring unique cultures that, at times, are different from the culture at Dell. The balance is to bring the company into Dell and expose it to the Dell culture without damaging the culture that made the acquired company successful. Our playbook is generally to bring the acquired companies into company practices and policies where they can benefit or leverage the broader Dell resources while protecting the intellectual property and team members critical to success. That may mean that we wall off the development and sales teams and keep their separate identity while merging administrative and support functions. There are times when the acquired company has better capabilities, and we merge Dell functions into that company’s leadership teams. It’s all about doing no harm and enabling success.”

Emerging Markets and Calculated Risk

“One of the best parts of any job and any company is exploring what’s possible, both for the organization and the individual,” says Sweet, noting that calculated risk (with an emphasis on calculated), is essential to driving an organization forward.

“You want people to take appropriate risks; it’s part of building and expanding a business,” says Sweet. “Developing new products and solutions, entering new markets and building new go-to-market strategies all entail taking risks. Not all products and solutions will be successful and not all markets will behave as you may have anticipated. What is important is that you make fact-based decisions, encourage the team members to do their homework and provide them support for both their successes and near-successes.”

On the individual level, Sweet has the same philosophy when working with people.

“Great companies recognize that it is people that are the key drivers of growth and success. That’s why at Dell, we have a strong belief in making investments in and taking chances on our people. Putting a person in a stretch assignment, knowing that he or she has the necessary skill set to be successful but may struggle a little while growing into the position, that is a calculated risk. Putting a person in a stretch assignment without the right skill set and experience is not a ‘calculated risk’ decision but is instead a poorly-thought-through decision. You have to give the organization the room to create and build and provide an environment that encourages this with appropriate safeguards.”

What’s Next for Dell?

Building upon the Dell brand and strength in emerging markets. Partnering with Dell employees on their entrepreneurial ventures. Hosting think tanks on pressing issues that are technology-driven or can be aided by technology solutions. Yes, to all of the above. Yet, at the end of the day, every decision is held under the lens of whether it builds the organization in a way that gives the Dell customer “the power to do more.” While many things have changed at Dell, that one important thing remains the same.

Editor’s Note: This article was composed on a Dell computer.
Looking for a way to unite the business students from the first-year experience course sections in the college of business in a common service project, instructors designed a project with Fort Custer National Cemetery in Augusta, Mich., where students would clean headstones in preparation for Veterans Day 2013. The goals of the project were to give back to the community in a meaningful way, build relationships between fellow first-year students and provide a viewpoint on the significance of military service and its relationship to our country’s history.

On Nov. 2, more than 300 first-year business students participated in the project. The group hoped to clean 2,000 headstones, but staff at the cemetery estimate that the students cleaned close to 5,000. And though the weather was cold and dreary as it often can be in a Michigan November, warmth, sincerity and respect emanated from the group of students.

“The idea for a common service-learning project came about as enrollments in our first-year experience courses grew,” says Dr. Christina Stamper, associate dean of undergraduate programs for the Haworth College of Business. “Service-learning has always been a part of our first-year experience sections, but we began thinking about how we could structure the experience so that we could have a greater impact and also allow more bonding among first-year students.”

Students began the day with learning the history of the cemetery and its purpose before they proceeded with cleaning headstones. “Finding the right service project for more than 300 people to work on was a challenge,” says first-year experience instructor and project co-leader Paul Hildenbrand. “This is an idea that has been growing for the past few years, and I think this was the right project for our students because it was very meaningful. Not only did students learn about the value of community service, but they also had an opportunity to learn more about those who have served our country.”

The history involved in this project appealed to fellow first-year experience instructor and project co-leader Tomika Griffin-Brown. “This project helped students to gain a deeper appreciation for the price our veterans have paid and to become more informed about the diverse groups who have served throughout multiple generations,” says Griffin-Brown.

The role of corporate partners in communities was also illustrated during this project as the Kellogg Company donated snacks for the hard-working students. “As soon as Shaughn Coyer, university relations manager at Kellogg, heard about the project and our needs, she jumped right on board and offered up all the snacks they had on hand for our students,” says Caroline Ray, career specialist in the Haworth College of Business Career Center and first-year experience instructor.

The learning experience of the service project is one that will stay with students long past their first year.

**Student Reflections**

“I thought that this was such a good project. It helped me to learn about the history of this area, and I enjoyed being with the other first-year sections. Service in honor of veterans is very meaningful to me, as my family is full of veterans, so I really know how much it means to the families.”

– Savanna Everett

“I really enjoyed being in the cemetery and learning more about the history. The atmosphere is special. It is hard to describe.”

– William Knickerbocker

“It was very meaningful to work in the cemetery and to do it as a team. I feel like I got to know more about my fellow students while also giving back to the community in an important way.”

– Emily Gulanczyk
Hanna Downs
Global citizen, national scholarship recipient, double major, strategist, intern, young professional. Hanna Downs, integrated supply management and food and consumer package goods marketing major, has her eye on the horizon of her own personal frontier.

Receiving multiple scholarships from WMU in both majors, Downs was just one of 10 students to win a nationwide business scholarship awarded by the Richter Foundation and the Institute for Supply Management’s Richter Scholarship Fund. The award provides $5,000 in tuition assistance and also gives the winning students the opportunity to attend the ISM Annual International Supply Management Conference.

“I was so flattered to receive the scholarship,” says Downs. “To compete against individuals from top supply chain programs in the country and be selected was such a huge honor. Our program at Western is of great quality and has a very rigorous and diverse curriculum. I was thrilled that I could represent the ISM program, which has given me so much.”

Downs numbers the conference as one of the best professional development opportunities of her academic career. From hearing keynote speaker Condoleezza Rice to attending relevant supply chain seminars, she found the experience a valuable one, especially in terms of industry connections.

And the cross-functional dimension of supply chain is one of the aspects of the field that most appeals to Downs. “ISM professionals truly do interact with every function of an organization. For example, last summer, I interned as a buyer at General Motors and had to have strong relationships with suppliers, engineering, supplier quality and logistics. During my fall internship with Eaton in materials management, I interacted with purchasing, operations and manufacturing and the supply base. Relationships are key in this industry; you are always relying on others to help in the completion of your day-to-day tasks.”

The most life-changing experience for Downs as a student and professional has been her six months of study abroad at Hogeschool Utrecht in the Netherlands. She describes the experience as an eye-opening one that forced her to get outside her comfort zone. As the only student from WMU studying there during those six months, she truly had a chance to connect with the culture and develop a love for being independent. And the study abroad experience helped open doors with employers as well. “My experience in the Netherlands became a great talking point for me when I was applying for internships and interviewing. I was able to sell my experiences from overseas in a way that displayed my skills of adaptability, maturity, openness to change and an international understanding—all of which are things that employers value in potential candidates.”

Securing a full-time job before graduating was a goal from day one for Downs and one she accomplished this year, accepting a position in indirect purchasing at General Motors.

Success Snapshot
Downs is WMU’s sixth Richter Scholarship recipient, placing WMU fourth in the nation for the total number of students honored with Richter Scholarships in the past 10 years. Former Richter scholars serve as mentors for future recipients, so WMU is well-represented in the student and professional mentor sides of the program.

Integrated supply management majors have one of the highest average starting salaries of all business undergraduates at $62,892.
Greta Lorr

From the moment Greta Lorr stepped through the doors of the Haworth College of Business as a transfer student from Jackson Community College, she felt at home. “I didn’t always know I would come to Western,” says Lorr. “I looked at other options, and when it came down to it, the Haworth College of Business provided me with the opportunity to start my business classes right away, and I also realized that I wanted a more intimate learning environment. I knew WMU would be able to provide me with both the opportunities to advance my career and the personal attention and connections with professors that I desired.”

Hitting the ground running and forging deep relationships—these values have served Lorr extremely well as a sales and business marketing student.

From internships to a study abroad immersion course in negotiation to being a student leader in the Sales and Business Marketing Association and Student Leadership Advisory Board to serving as a college admissions ambassador, Lorr’s passion for her field and her program are electric. And that passion has set her apart on the national stage.

One of the most decorated WMU sales students of all time, Lorr is a seasoned competitor in national sales competitions, helping secure second place finishes for WMU in both the 2012 Russ Berrie Institute National Sales Challenge and the 2013 State Farm Marketing and Sales Competition. Individually, she also was named the National Collegiate Speed Selling Champion at the Russ Berrie Challenge and placed second in the role-play category for the State Farm Challenge.

“Competing in these events has been an amazing experience,” says Lorr. “Some of the most talented students from the most successful programs across the country come together with the common goal of taking home first place. Knowing that I can succeed and that all the hard work I put into my sales education pays off is a fantastic feeling.”

The competitions have been a great asset to Lorr in growing her professional network. “I have developed many relationships from the competitions, particularly with the employer representatives who serve as judges,” says Lorr. “I remember getting handwritten letters in the mail from managers at different companies who wanted to recruit me when I graduated.”

And Lorr accepted a position with MSDonline, an inside sales company based in Chicago, Ill., which she started upon graduation.

Quick to point out that her successes as a rising sales professional are due to the faculty-student relationships she has developed in the college, she notes, “The professors in the sales and business marketing program are who I have to thank the most for my achievements in the past two years. The dedication they have not only to my success but to the success of all the sales students is undeniable. My classes were always challenging, yet I have never been so eager to learn; and their doors were always open.”

Getting ready to embark on her future, Lorr reflects that the relationship that matters most at the end of the day is the one you have with yourself. “Staying true to yourself is important. If you like the person and the professional you are, others can sense that and will gravitate toward you, and you can work on mutually beneficial solutions to your common goals.”
Aspiring student entrepreneurs have a new resource dedicated to their ventures at Starting Gate, a business accelerator open to all WMU students and operated by the Haworth College of Business Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in partnership with the WMU Office of Community Outreach. The accelerator tests students’ business ideas, provides mentorship from faculty and members of the business community, and helps participants build a network of contacts to support their growing businesses.

To be accepted into the accelerator, students participate in a competitive application process where they must demonstrate a promising idea for a product or service that can be launched within a short period of time.

“Limitless possibility,” is what Dr. Kay Palan, dean of the Haworth College of Business, sees in the 12 companies that have already taken part in Starting Gate. “This is a valuable opportunity for students interested in starting their own companies,” she says. “Research shows that companies that start their ventures with resources, mentors and support are much more likely to succeed. And Western students are very entrepreneurial in nature. We are excited to provide another avenue to nourish our students’ passion for entrepreneurship.”

Starting Gate is founded on the principle of mentorship, and the students have access to an array of resources, including faculty members from across campus, successful entrepreneurs from the local community, experts in areas such as manufacturing, commercial law and venture capital as well as organizations like the Small Business Development Center and WMU Business Connection. Writing business plans, adjusting business models, considering potential markets, and research and development are just some of the areas where Starting Gate mentors offer their expertise.

Celebrating the entrepreneurial spirit and the relationship between business and community

Brian Thomas, B.B.A.’96, CEO of OtterBox, who was featured on the cover of last year’s college of business magazine, recently made a generous gift that will fund monetary awards to students in Starting Gate. The individuals or student teams who receive The Brian Patrick Thomas Entrepreneurial Spirit Award will look beyond themselves to motivate and move teams of people to a common cause with a higher social purpose. The award recognizes that enterprise can operate harmoniously and in balance with employees, communities and non-profit organizations, creating a strong synergistic benefit for all stakeholders.
The student teams themselves offer another valuable resource. With students from a variety of disciplines, the makeup of individual teams and the entire accelerator is cross-disciplinary. Since Starting Gate is designed to be collaborative in terms of programming and physical space, students have the benefit of diverse approaches to problem solving and creative thinking.

And creativity abounds in the accelerator. From the development of technologies that can provide everything from remote aquarium maintenance to assistance for adults and children with speech disorders to connections among motorcycle enthusiasts, the companies in Starting Gate are as varied as the students working in it. Five companies that have graduated from the accelerator have patents pending.

“When we heard about Starting Gate, we thought it was a great opportunity for students and would provide great resources for our company, Xcheapskate, such as media exposure, guidance from a mentor and interaction with potential investors,” says Daniel May, a senior majoring in finance and management.

MBA student Stacy Burdette echoes May’s perspective, citing the regular update nights and events as key. “The accelerator has helped me to keep up my momentum by making me accountable to everyone involved, whether it is one of my mentors, others in the cohort or the administrative staff,” she says. “They all expect that I will have new information to share at each meeting. Without Starting Gate, it would have been easy to push aside working on my business idea, even though I wanted to, for homework deadlines or social activities. As a result, I have been able to refine the structure of my business idea and make significant progress.”

The hope is that some of these young companies will choose to remain in Michigan and contribute to both the local economy and the local entrepreneurial community. “If we can help students test their business ideas so they are more successful, that is the goal, and if they choose to remain a local business that can help the economy, it’s a win-win,” says Dr. Robert Landeros, interim director of the Haworth College of Business Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

Accelerator Alumni

And they’re off—the first year of Starting Gate’s operation has yielded many innovative and evolving businesses.

AM Andrew Z, LLC has developed an antimicrobial film containing graphics to advertise products and brands on high-traffic equipment, such as carts in stores. The product provides a unique, point-of-purchase advertising opportunity while protecting consumers’ health.

Fish Ninja Labs builds innovative products using technology to enhance the aquarium experience. The company’s first product is a total aquarium management system that provides the ability to greatly reduce tank maintenance, worry and guesswork through automation.

Kitty Ninja is a unique toy that amuses and captivates even the most fickle cats, letting them play on their own schedule. It includes a soft, freely spinning roller with dangling ribbons that cats endlessly chase and attack—modeled after that forbidden roll of toilet paper cats love to unravel.

SpeechMasterPro helps adults and children with speech disorders. The company’s first device is designed to improve enunciation skills, slow down speaking pace, and strengthen facial muscles and can be used while practicing speaking.

EZ Bagger is designed to convert plastic shopping bags into functional waste containers. Customers secure a bag onto the unit by looping the handles over the top hangers of the unit. EZ Bagger is great for use under sinks, around the yard, for diaper disposal, for recycling and more.

SupplierRateMate is a rating website that allows buyers to view supplier ratings on key metrics, ranging from product quality to shipping performance. The service is targeted toward new, young and small businesses that do not have the resources necessary to perform extensive supplier evaluations.

Hacker Gals is a community that fosters a healthy lifestyle through activities, services and events. The center offers a common place for women to meet, socialize and learn from each other through experiences, activities and discussions.

E-Z Bind addresses the safety issues facing truck drivers locking down heavy loads. The company’s first product is a replacement to existing chain binders. The product uses incremental locking with an extendable handle to easily and safely secure heavy loads on flatbed trucks and trailers.

Several smartphone applications have been developed at Starting Gate. Read about more accelerator alumni and their application-based businesses in The Revolution of Mobile Technology on pg. 33.
“If a task is once begun, never leave it till it’s done. Be the labor big or small, do it well or not at all.” This adage was something that Rhonda Davenport Johnson, B.B.A.’84, MBA’93, senior vice president and director of the loan center at Comerica Bank, heard many times during her childhood from her mother. The strong work ethic and commitment to excellence that she learned from her family are values that she carried with her into a successful career. Though she didn’t know it at the time, the foundation for being a respected business professional started with her family relationships. And by applying a “people first” principle in business as well as in life, Davenport Johnson has achieved success in the most organic ways possible—through sincerity, integrity and teamwork.

Relationship Banking
“The business of banking is primarily about relationships,” says Davenport Johnson. “People trust the bank to provide advice to help them be successful.” Comerica’s core business focus is relationship banking—a holistic approach to banking and financial services that matches customer needs with the right services. “Our banking experts work together with corporate and individual clients, building successful financial plans that deliver exceptional results,” says Davenport Johnson. She is also quick to point out that relationship banking not only applies to customers but also to the communities that Comerica serves as well as the bank’s employees and business partners.

How did Davenport Johnson refine her skills in relationship building? She credits the Haworth College of Business as a key contributor to her ability to connect with people and leverage strategic partnerships. A marketing major and then an MBA student, she has consistently applied the concepts that she learned in her courses to the field of banking. “My success in banking can be directly linked to what I learned in my marketing courses, including the importance of relationships,” she says.

Personal reputation is something that Davenport Johnson emphasizes as critically important in any organization, particularly when change is being considered. “My approach to initiating change is to fully understand the situation requiring change by observing the applicable metrics and process as well as discussing the issue with colleagues,” she states. “As part of these discussions, I will inquire as to potential alternatives to the current process. When I have formulated the proposed change, I will discuss it with appropriate employees to test its feasibility. Finally, I will prepare a business case outlining the change. I find that following this type of deliberate change management process removes emotion from the process and builds consensus.” And during her 26-year tenure at Comerica, Davenport Johnson has gained respect from her colleagues for this comprehensive approach.

“Trust within the organization is largely based on integrity,” notes Davenport Johnson. “With those reporting to me, my reputation will also depend on how I have handled changes and other leadership challenges in the past.”

Diversity and Inclusion
Relationship banking is not just a core business focus for Comerica, Davenport

My College of Business Mentors

“During my MBA program and thereafter, Dr. Ali Metwalli provided mentoring support and continues to make himself available as a mentor. Dr. Jay Lindquist invested in me personally and cared about my success.”

– Rhonda Davenport Johnson
My success in banking can be directly linked to what I learned in my marketing courses, including the importance of relationships.

– Rhonda Davenport Johnson

Johnson notes, but is about being a part of the community and understanding community needs. As outreach efforts in the community grew, Comerica realized a need to formalize and add to existing programs with a marketing initiative focused on African American customers. Instrumental in leading Comerica’s inaugural African American Initiative, Davenport Johnson worked with colleagues to increase customer access to experienced colleagues who understand the unique needs, perspectives and opportunities of individuals and businesses in this market segment.

The bank now has marketing initiatives for Hispanic, Asian American, Middle Eastern, LGBT, women’s, and veterans’ and military markets.

“Diversity is one of the company’s core values, demonstrated by Comerica’s commitment to ensuring a diverse workforce,” says Davenport Johnson. “Our workforce is inclusive of those who possess different ancestries, races, colors, religions, national origins, ages, physical and mental abilities, medical conditions, veteran status, marital status, heights, weights, sexual orientations and gender identities.”

The company supports diversity and inclusion through the activities of its employee resource network groups, diversity roundtables and market segmentation initiative teams. These teams support diversity learning, professional development, and outreach with employees, customers and the community, focusing on the specific interests of the diverse population segments they represent.

“I am the immediate past chair of the employee resource network group for African American employees, the Comerica African American Network,” notes Davenport Johnson. “Leading both the African American Initiative and this resource group gave me an opportunity to give back. Ongoing participation in these initiatives is an important part of my role, and it is also very rewarding from a personal perspective in making a difference in the lives of others.”

Service

Community service is a passion for Davenport Johnson. Whether she is serving on the Foundation Board of Hospice of Michigan or working as a volunteer, alongside her husband, with the American Cancer Association, American Heart Association, United Way, United Negro College Fund, or in church ministries, she finds service both personally fulfilling and a great way to lead by example.

“Demonstrating the commitment to serve in our community is important,” she says. “I hope to encourage our employees to do so, either as part of the initiatives Comerica supports or otherwise. I have also used service opportunities as leadership training ground for individuals I am mentoring at Comerica. Providing emerging leaders the opportunities to lead company-wide community service initiatives helps build leadership competencies and also gives the nonprofit organization being served a new set of strategies and fresh ideas to accomplish its mission. I was so proud recently when one of the employees I mentored was honored by an organization as their volunteer of the year.”

In 2011, on a mission trip to India, Davenport Johnson and her husband, Christopher, were confronted with the brutal tragedy of human trafficking. The experience of seeing the impact of human trafficking firsthand prompted Chris to make addressing the issue his life’s work, and Davenport Johnson works with him in the community talking with many groups about the issue.

“This too presents many opportunities for relationship building with our family, business colleagues, church members and others in the community because many do not understand the extent to which human trafficking exists in the world and in our own neighborhoods,” says Davenport Johnson. “Once they do, people want to be involved in doing something about this problem.”

Relationships, 360 Degrees

“Whether you are leading a retail bank, baseball team or manufacturing company, you must build relationships both externally and internally,” says Davenport Johnson. “Relationships facilitate effective and engaged leadership. Building relationships with employees helps to keep a loyal workforce. Building relationships with the community and demonstrating integrity helps to ensure that the company is respected as a good corporate citizen. This, in turn, will help attract talented and diverse employees. Opportunities for employees to make a difference through employee resource groups, philanthropic activities and other initiatives will lead to a more satisfied and productive workforce. This, in turn, should lead to better business results. Better business results increase revenue and hence stock price thereby increasing the value of the company to its shareholders.”
Sustainability and corporate citizenship are central to the strategies of today’s multinational corporations. Stakeholders place a priority on responsible management of resources, safety of employees and community members, and a firm’s commitment to having a positive impact in its own backyard and in the world at large.

Bo Miller serves as global director for corporate citizenship at The Dow Chemical Company, placing him in the role of evaluating and implementing the company’s citizenship strategy. “Much of my role involves looking at the expectations that stakeholders have and then focusing internally to see if our processes, procedures and business practices perform against those expectations,” says Miller.

Performance against high standards is what Dow is committed to, embedding sustainability throughout the company. “Sustainability must be authentic and an integral part of company values and strategy, providing a corporate-wide context for the relative importance of sustainability alongside financial discipline, people-centric performance culture and value growth, as the key drivers of success,” says Miller. “Embedding sustainability provides a governance structure that ensures we are actively addressing sustainability every day, in every decision we make.”

Accountability is a core part of Dow’s success equation as well. “It is often said ‘what gets measured, gets managed,’ and that is certainly true with our efforts,” Miller notes. “And while we are driving an overall integration of sustainability into the culture of the company, having specific stretch goals that the organization is measuring and publicly reporting ensures that progress continues.”

Dow’s current set of sustainability goals, spanning 2005 to 2015, differs from its initial set of goals, which were in place from 1995 to 2005. The first set of goals had greater emphasis on the internal environmental health and safety aspects of sustainability. The current goals were crafted to capture those gains and build on them but also to have an increased external focus on contributions that Dow products can make on the significant challenges the world faces in terms of food, water supply and climate change.

And it’s not just goals and metrics that keep the company accountable. Underlying all of Dow’s strategies are people. From
Dow employees to the company’s global Sustainability External Advisory Council to its local Community Advisory Panels, which are in place at a number of manufacturing locations, people drive progress. “The insight of people is our most powerful tool in reaching our goals,” says Miller.

Recognized by a number of organizations for excellence in sustainability and green chemistry, Dow looks at not only its footprint—the business practices that have an impact on the planet—but also its handprint—the ways that Dow can build a better world through technology and service. One such way Dow extends its handprint is through its more-than-30-year partnership with Habitat for Humanity, lending support through house sponsorship, product donation and employee volunteer work crews. What began as an employee-led grassroots effort has grown into one of Dow’s most significant service initiatives and one of Habitat’s largest corporate relationships, impacting tens of thousands of families. Dow is the official supplier of STYROFOAM™ Brand Insulation for all builds in North America. Donation of products such as STYROFOAM™ and WEATHERMATE™ house wraps gives new homeowners the opportunity to be more energy efficient and reduce their overall natural gas and electricity consumption.

The CEOs
Bud Brian, B.A.’66, Budco Financial
Carrie Jones-Barber, B.B.A.’82, Dawn Food Products
Dan Iott, B.S.’77, Kermer-Iott Agency Group
Gordie Kosch, B.B.A.’80, Kosch Catering
Bruce Larson, B.B.A.’71, Oscar W. Larson Company
Frank Rewold, B.S.’80, Frank Rewold and Son Inc.
Randy Wright, B.S.’68, Berry Moorman P.C.

Collaboration
A sounding board—sometimes a group of trusted colleagues and friends are the best people to help you focus on a problem, celebrate a success or simply take stock of a situation.

The WMU Bronco CEO Forum is just such a group. Born of a desire to engage successful alumni in the business community in an inventive way, the forum unites WMU CEOs in southeast Michigan, who are leading companies with sales of more than $10 million, in conversation and collaboration. Several of the members had participated in similar executive roundtables in the past and walked away with great ideas and stronger networks. The idea of applying that model to a group of CEOs who all graduated from WMU was very appealing.

“From the first meeting I attended, I liked the common denominator of WMU and success,” says Randy Wright. “The expertise and experience in the group is very beneficial. I value the insights and recommendations of the members and feel very comfortable with the confidentiality and civility of our conversations. I have aggressively been working my network to refer business to forum members because I really like their values and their articulated priorities.”

Though the specifics of the forum’s conversations are confidential, the general topics they discuss center on the professional: mergers and acquisitions, succession planning, organizational chart analysis, business plans, identifying key objectives and debating strategies, corporate governance issues, regulatory compliance and dispute resolution; and the personal: aging parents, health, work-life balance, family values and the challenge of raising children in a manner that instills those values.

Though many of the forum members have known each other previously, the freshness of bringing together the group in this format has benefited all the members.

“The members are true professionals and provide challenging yet highly insightful advice,” says Carrie Jones-Barber. “There are no politics—no agendas—just a group of people wanting to offer the benefit of their experiences to a fellow CEO.”

The diversity of background is something that Dan Iott finds valuable, “We have a wide range of professional experience in this group, which provides an enjoyable learning experience for me.”

Gordie Kosch, the first CEO to work with the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at WMU in testing the concept for this group, and his wife Julie, B.S.’82, have only missed one WMU Homecoming in 34 years. And while not all of the forum members can match that record, they all agree that Bronco pride is something they all feel deeply and want to share.

To learn more about future WMU Bronco CEO initiatives or to start a conversation about alumni engagement activities, contact the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at (269) 387-8700.
Paul Boyer, MBA’71

After completing his MBA at WMU, Paul Boyer embarked on a career at Meijer that spanned more than 35 years. Starting as a training director, he quickly advanced to senior leadership in the company, holding three different vice presidential roles, and eventually was named president and chief operating officer in 2002 and co-chief executive officer and vice chairman in 2004. As vice chair emeritus of Meijer, Boyer has a unique perspective on the evolving culture of the company that pioneered the concept of one-stop shopping.

“Corporate culture is first established by a company’s founders based upon their values and behaviors,” says Boyer. “Strong corporate cultures are often described as those that adapt to stay relevant without abandoning the initial market and core values of the company.”

He notes that Meijer is a strong case-in-point. “Meijer was established 80 years ago by the Meijer family, and the current culture includes elements of the family’s initial values such as a focus on the customer, low prices, and treating all people with dignity and respect.”

In 1934, when the company was founded, there were just four family members as employees. Today, with more than 60,000 employees, Meijer’s culture has evolved. The balance between core values and the cultural changes needed in light of societal and competitive factors that impact the organization is a delicate one that Meijer works diligently at each day.

Boyer sees a strong, authentic culture as more important than ever before to employees. “Potential employees are still interested in compensation, benefits and location, but many are also likely to ask probing questions about corporate culture to see if the organization is a fit.” And he notes that culture is on display now with direct communication through social media and other new media, so people can easily find out information about a corporation’s culture and how behavior evidences that culture.

Actions, not words, speak the real language of corporate culture, according to Boyer. “The actual displayed values and practices of all individuals within the organization are what comprise culture. Leaders have a responsibility to model the desired behavior. If they do, others will also. If they do not, others will not. It’s that simple.”

Boyer recalls forming many of his core ideas about business during his MBA program—values that have served him throughout his career:

• Business is always a “people business” first, no matter the industry.
• Businesses that do not change disappear.
• Don’t confuse activity with accomplishment.
• What you do and how you do it are equally important.

“Corporate culture is a company’s identity, the core essence of its existence,” Boyer says. “Meijer’s strong corporate culture represents a balance between the initial core values of the Meijer family and the cultural changes that have evolved over time.”

“I’m continually impressed by how the Meijer family lives up to its values and how those values carry over to our employees. It’s quite an honor to work with such dedicated and loyal people.”

— Paul Boyer

“Corporate culture is what differentiates a company from another.”

— Paul Boyer

Perspectives
Linda Brunzell, B.B.A.’93
Having the world at your feet is not just a saying for Wolverine Worldwide, a global designer, manufacturer and marketer of branded footwear, as well as apparel and accessories. Yet the figurative meaning is as true for the company as the literal one, as the organization steps into the future of its industry.

Leading the efforts in business development internationally for the company’s 16 brands, including Merrell, Sperry Top Siders, Keds and Saucony (just to name a few!), is Linda Brunzell, vice president of international strategy and business development.

Brunzell notes that Wolverine Worldwide was among the first in the industry to leverage the global potential of its brands, beginning with Hush Puppies in 1959. Operating a diverse business model that spans 200 countries and various categories, the company has more than 50 years of experience in international markets.

Brunzell shares her perspective on business relationships, branding, and growth and evolution:

Peer Relationships: “My most important business relationships have been the strong relationships that I have developed with my peers,” notes Brunzell. Robust peer relationships are helpful when working together within an organization and ultimately create invaluable networks across organizations, industries and geographies.

Brand Loyalty: “Brand loyalty is achieved through strong connections with consumers; Wolverine Worldwide is fortunate to be in high-involvement categories, which become a part of a consumer’s lifestyle, and to have fantastic brands,” says Brunzell. To earn consumer loyalty, a company must exceed consumer expectations every day through great products and great experiences. Trust comes from repeated positive experiences.

Business Models: Having a strong business model that includes strategic partnerships is central to success in today’s business environment. This is especially important in developing emerging brands and markets. “We have an incredibly strong business model comprised of subsidiaries, joint ventures and third-party partners,” says Brunzell.

Evolution: “Don’t shy away from evolution; embrace it,” says Brunzell. “We have several brands, including Merrell, Chaco and Patagonia Footwear, which are geared to the outdoor niche. While our company believes that the outdoors will continue to be a place for inspiration and recreation, we know that the definition of the outdoors and outdoor activities will evolve and change as our consumers change. Our brands will need to stay close to this evolution and ensure that our products support the activities that define the new outdoors and the modern consumer.”

Linda Brunzell is a second generation Bronco. Her father, Ray Brunzell, B.S.’64, earned a degree in food distribution.
Seventy-five percent of companies experienced at least one costly supply chain disruption in the past year, according to the Business Continuity Institute, a membership and certifying organization for business continuity professionals worldwide. Minimizing costly disruption and maximizing operational efficiency is the goal behind IndustryStar Solutions, a turnkey supply chain services company, founded by alumnus Bill Crane. The company is designed to serve growing companies and level the supply chain playing field, allowing these firms to better compete in the global economy.

"Commercializing a product—brining it from idea to store shelf—is challenging whether you are an established company or a startup," says Crane. "The accelerating speed of product innovation required in the consumer electronics, automotive and medical device industries is staggering. And, the pressure to spend more and more time with customers in order to better identify what they want and then bring this "voice of the customer" to market is leaving many growing companies at a significant disadvantage to their larger Fortune 500 competitors due to sheer resources alone."

After working at Chrysler as well as being involved with 11 startups across various manufacturing sectors, Crane identified a market for supply chain as a service, enabling companies to partner with one service partner for all supply chain needs, including manufacturing, procurement, logistics, quality and warehousing.

"Our solutions allow companies to focus on their core strengths, freeing them up to work on growth strategy and customer experience," says Crane. "Our firm offers a new flexible service model to attain a world-class supply chain without the upfront investment in people, processes and assets."

What was a guiding principle in establishing IndustryStar? "In our view, business boils down to one word—relationships," says Crane. "We leverage the deep, mutually beneficial relationships we have built throughout years of running supply chain organizations at startups and established companies globally and help companies commercialize exciting, world-changing products."

And the power of relationships extends to WMU as well. Serving on the college’s Integrated Supply Management Executive Advisory Council for more than five years, Crane has developed key relationships with industry contacts. He and his fellow council members have also had the opportunity to advise the faculty on continuing to keep the curriculum relevant, and he has volunteered many times to provide industry projects for ISM courses and hired interns from the program. "I continue to be impressed by the intelligence, hard work and real-world industry experience WMU ISM students bring. They are ready to contribute day one," says Crane.

What keeps Crane up at night? The most exciting aspect of launching his new venture is at the same time the most challenging. "The endless opportunities that constantly present themselves are a real challenge," says Crane. "We are fortunate to work with a range of innovative companies, and we are approached by potential clients with partnership opportunities frequently. It is a constant challenge for a growing business like ours to stay focused, especially in the early stages. Our leadership team of supply chain industry veterans constantly must evaluate opportunities to ensure we are staying focused on growing our core supply chain as a service business, and, most importantly, exceeding our clients’ expectations. We realize that we are only as good as our last engagement, so every project must be executed to the highest standard."
Exceeding clients’ expectations and achieving work-life balance. Conflicting priorities? No, according to Lisa VanDam Hunt, partner, assurance services, Ernst & Young, LLP, who finds client service and personal balance can be mutually supportive of each other.

“The key elements for exceptional client service include being connected, insightful and responsive to your clients,” says Hunt. “In order to be connected, you need to understand your client’s business and develop a trusted working relationship with client executives to ensure you understand their expectations as well as the challenges they face.”

Proactive communication and collaboration are also core components of Hunt’s client service standard. “My clients expect technical competence, but the key to exceeding their expectations is to anticipate their needs to avoid last-minute surprises. Scheduling regular monthly meetings with key client executives is one practice I utilize to stay connected with my clients.”

Delivering exceptional client service does not mean that personal priorities must suffer. Hunt has seen a paradigm shift throughout her career in terms of how CPA firms regard work-life balance. “When I began my career, it was with one of the Big Eight firms, Arthur Andersen,” she says. “One of the biggest changes I see in public accounting today is that firms now recognize resources are not unlimited, and there is focus on work-life balance and retaining employees for as long as possible. When I was a staff accountant, the prevailing mentality was to work the staff hard and if staff quit because they could not handle the hours or responsibilities, the firm would simply hire someone else. With the increased complexity in today’s business environment, employee retention is critical to our success in serving clients. This focus on work-life balance has also helped to retain more women in the profession, particularly at the executive level.”

The increased focus on work-life balance is just one of many changes that Hunt has seen throughout her tenure. A significant change, and a challenge facing both clients and firms today, is the increasing complexity of business in the global environment. “The challenges clients face are growing more complex, so there is a need for high-performing teams that can work seamlessly across geographic boundaries,” says Hunt.

When reflecting on pivotal professional relationships, Hunt can identify one that had great impact for her. “When I was early in my career, I worked with a partner who took an interest in my career success,” she says. “I loved what I was doing but never thought I would stay in public accounting long-term. I did not think it would be possible to have a career and a family at the senior manager or partner level. However, this partner taught me not to give up something I love doing without trying to make it work for my personal situation, even though I did not see many examples of other women achieving their professional and personal goals.”

Hunt notes that at the time she did not think of this partner as a sponsor of her success but now sees how instrumental his support was to her professional success while also putting her family first. And in 2000, she became the first female audit partner in the Detroit office of Arthur Andersen. Today, Hunt is a trusted advisor for Ernst & Young, providing the gold standard of service to her clients and modeling the leadership principles she values to her employees.

“With the increased complexity in today’s business environment, employee retention is critical to our success in serving clients. This focus on work-life balance has also helped to retain more women in the profession, particularly at the executive level.”

– Lisa Hunt
In the Spotlight

Students, Faculty and Industry Leaders Forge Relationships that Lead to Success for the Food Marketing Program

When a team of four students snagged top honors at a national case competition, a wave of excitement rippled through the college. Having just earned certification in category management from a national association for its coursework, the food and consumer package goods marketing program is riding high. In addition to the students and coursework, faculty members have been actively researching topics that will provide impact to the food and CPG industries. And, with efforts underway to establish a ranking for CPG programs, the faculty and students are anticipating continued success for the program that many students feel is like a family.

Case Competition Success

A team of WMU students won the 2014 National Grocers Association University Case Competition, earning the top spot for creating a locally focused marketing strategy for an independent grocer in Ohio.

The competition, designed to further the professional development of students, brought together food and retail marketing students from 10 universities during an annual industry conference in Las Vegas. Fourteen students represented WMU, with a team of four seniors presenting the case and taking home the top prize of $8,000, which will support scholarships and programming.

While the four students represented WMU at the competition, it took a collaborative effort to prepare for the event.

"Unlike previous years where we had up to six teams from our program compete against each other to decide who would go to the case competition, this year we decided to assemble a team of 14 students from our program and have them all work together instead of against each other," says Dr. Frank Gambino, director of the food and consumer package goods marketing program. "The students were broken into content areas and worked on a specific area necessary to answer the case problem. As we got closer to the actual case competition, faculty selected a presentation team from the larger group of students." That presentation team included:

- Daniel Tyranski of West Bloomfield, Mich., integrated supply management and food and consumer package goods marketing major
- Jessica Roerig of Caledonia, Mich., food and consumer package goods marketing major
- Hanna Downs of Novi, Mich., food and consumer package goods marketing and integrated supply management major
- Douglas Wheelright of Comstock, Mich., food and consumer package goods marketing major

Certified Curriculum

In 2014, the food and consumer package goods marketing program earned certification for its category management.
coursework from the national Category Management Association, becoming one of just two university programs to have achieved CMA curriculum certification.

The certification signifies that the program offers coursework that meets stringent standards for preparing students for certification as category analysts. In some cases, students with applicable work experience may also apply for certification at the category manager level.

“This certification provides employers assurance that the students they hire from our program have met the industry standards set for an analyst position in category management. Our students will be in a position to make an immediate impact in industry upon graduation,” says Gambino.

The program is also working to establish WMU’s ranking among the 14 universities that are part of a coalition associated with the NGA. Dr. Marcel Zondag, assistant professor of marketing, and Gambino are conducting research to measure all 14 programs for ranking purposes. Zondag says that in addition to understanding where the WMU program ranks, the entire coalition of universities will better understand students’ perceptions of the industry and how to attract them to the field.

Research

Zondag is spearheading research that addresses an important issue in the industry—channel relationships within independent retailers. Independent grocers, mostly privately owned companies that operate anywhere from a single store up to local chains of 150 locations, compete with national chains such as Kroger and WalMart. Because of their smaller size these grocery stores have unique supply chain and marketing issues that impact their bottom lines.

Based on interviews conducted this past year, Zondag says the independent grocers “are not so much concerned with selecting the products they will sell in their stores but are more worried about regulations, interactions with brokers and merchandisers who deliver the products to their stores, and determining the opportunities for differentiating themselves from their larger competitors.”

Independent grocers do not have direct relationships with manufacturers; large chains can negotiate with manufacturers while independents don’t have the same clout. Zondag’s research is looking at ways in which independents can overcome these difficulties while at the same time differentiating themselves to attract shoppers to their stores.

“Because the independents have more flexibility, they can respond more quickly,” says Zondag. “While a larger chain must plan up to six or seven months ahead what products will be sold in its stores and how these will be promoted, the independent grocers have the opportunity to develop winning strategies in a much shorter time frame.”

Zondag notes that the consolidation in the grocery industry leaves an opening for independents to focus on selling local products, become actively engaged in the community and offer shoppers a “home town shopping experience” that clearly sets them apart from large retailers.

Zondag says that WMU’s food and CPG marketing program, working with the NGA and its member companies, is developing a program for continued research of the unique issues and opportunities of the independent grocery channel and finding pragmatic solutions to the issues independent retailers face.

The executive panel at this year’s Food Marketing Conference. In 2015, the program will celebrate its 50th conference on March 16-17.

The food marketing program is our home away from home. The faculty and staff could not be better! They mentor us and help us to be organized and focused on our goals. Dr. Gambino is an invaluable asset to the program and is commonly referred to as the ‘proud dad.’”

– Anica Zadrzynski, a junior from Dexter, Mich.
DESIGNEDtoLEAD

One of the best parts of the college experience is the time spent in conversation with fellow students, discussing how what you are learning applies outside the classroom and planning for the future. It was just such a conversation among four ambitious business students, Giovanni Roberto, Daniel Jimenez, Daniel Lizzio and Daniel Mullan, which sparked the idea to create a day-long conference to provide an intensive professional development opportunity in leadership for students.

Designed by students and open to all WMU students, the DESIGNEDtoLEAD conference brought national experts to Kalamazoo to assist students in honing their leadership skills, developing philosophies of leadership and identifying ways to distinguish themselves as leaders within organizations. More than 250 students attended the inaugural conference, which is slated to be an annual event hosted by the college of business.

“DESIGNEDtoLEAD was created to pack an entire year’s worth of inspiration into one day,” says Roberto, co-founder of the conference. “Learning leadership from CEOs, entrepreneurs and vice presidents of global companies was amazing. And students did not just get to hear them speak but were able to have lunch with them, sit and talk with them, and truly interact. To see DESIGNEDtoLEAD come to life is an unbelievable feeling—knowing that something that I helped create will stick with WMU and impact students every year leaves me speechless. I am so thankful to have been given the opportunity to create something that can positively motivate students for years to come.”

Finance Curriculum Endorsed by Globally Recognized Program

Western Michigan University's finance program has been accepted into the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute's University Recognition Program, a globally recognized curriculum that emphasizes the highest ethical and professional standards. The recognition includes five annual student scholarships for WMU students.

“CFA Institute’s endorsement of our finance major attests to the relevance of our program to today’s investment careers,” says Dr. Devrim Yaman, professor of finance and commercial law. “The CFA designation is the gold standard in finance, and this prestigious designation is widely recognized around the world. Our acceptance shows that our curriculum is closely aligned with the CFA program and positions our students well for the CFA exams.”

WMU’s finance program was recognized by the institute for integrating the core knowledge, skills and abilities that are generally accepted and applied by investment professionals, including the CFA Institute’s Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct, within the curriculum. Through this program, students will gain access to CFA Institute textbooks, journals, webcasts and other educational resources.
A team of computer information systems students earned the Runner-up Award for their business case analysis at the third Midwest Student Information Systems Project and Case Competition. Shaun Chu, Nicholas Kreider, Brittany Maffesoli, Patrick McCombs, Norman Morris and Ashlea Rowlson analyzed a case about streamlining the information systems of a company that produces trade show booths, with the aim of impacting the company in terms of its economic sustainability. The students’ recommendations included optimizing data security and implementing an enterprise-wide solution that would allow for seamless data management and communication.

“Online staff members are using a new software to help with production logistics for the company, which will help with the sales cycle of the product,” Patrick McCombs said. “We also recommended that the company create a website to help with the online sales cycle, which is in line with the current trend of online shopping.”

Business Connection office, hiring business students that match the needs of the client’s project. Students are paid for their work and provide all the services typically expected from a marketing agency, including primary and secondary market research, competitive analyses, visual identity updates and strategic marketing recommendations.

Bronco Force Solutions Team: This initiative offers expertise to address supply chain challenges for companies. There are no upfront costs, and customers help fund the ISM center and merit-based scholarships based on the value of project results. Customers work with Ken Jones, director of executive education for the ISM program and instructor of integrated supply management, and student solutions teams to develop the scope of the project. An ISM faculty member who has expertise in typical project areas—lean manufacturing systems, purchasing, logistics and enterprise data systems—supervises the students as they complete the project.
The Harrisons are a Business Bronco family, but their network with other Broncos, especially those connected to the Haworth College of Business, certainly doesn’t end there. Len Harrison, B.B.A.’76, MBA’86, decided to attend WMU because his brother Tim Harrison, B.B.A.’73, was a business student, and he knew several friends who would be attending.

Little did anyone know that this would spark a network of Broncos that would grow to include family, friends of more than 30 years, and colleagues—Len is a principal at LVM Capital, an independent financial management firm in Kalamazoo with many Business Bronco connections. The firm has eight employees who hold 10 WMU degrees—nine of them in business.

“Having so many good friends that resulted from my undergraduate years at WMU is a blessing,” says Len. The friendships have resulted in yearly get-togethers, including an annual Homecoming tailgate.

Many of the children from this group of friends have continued the Bronco tradition by becoming students and alumni of WMU including Len’s children, Lisa, B.B.A.’05, and Matt, B.B.A.’09.

“My dad really encouraged a business degree because it could be used in so many ways, so I chose marketing,” says Lisa, who currently works with Vanguard Protex Global. Her brother Matt enrolled at WMU to study finance a few years later. While a student, Matt met his future wife, Medallion Scholar and 2009 Homecoming Queen, Amanda (Jandahl) Harrison, B.A.’10.

“My father introduced me to finance,” says Matt. “My godfather, also a WMU alumnus, introduced me to the vice president for business and finance at Western, who helped cultivate my curiosity.” That relationship helped Matt secure an internship at WMU in investments and endowment management. “Connections with Broncos are what led me to meet my wife and started me on a path for career success,” he says.

Matt also worked with LVM Capital in an internship program instituted by LVM’s co-founder Craig VanderMolen, MBA’79, and Charles Prudhomme, MBA’11. That internship eventually turned into a full-time job after Matt graduated. To date, four WMU business students have held this internship.

“Broncos are always eager to help other Broncos,” says Matt, who currently works as a treasury analyst at Kellogg Company. And that desire to help fellow Broncos is evident in alumni giving in terms of service and philanthropy.

The employees of LVM Capital have been strong supporters of WMU, specifically the college of business. Since LVM matches its employees’ charitable giving, the impact has been doubled. Additionally, LVM sponsored DESIGNEDtoLEAD, a student conference that provides foundational knowledge for becoming an extraordinary leader.

Len’s 24-year career at LVM has given him many opportunities to support the college of business and WMU. He has taught as an adjunct professor in the Department of Finance and Commercial Law. In addition, he has served as a member of the WMU Board of Visitors.
This fall, a new facility will open to students in the Haworth College of Business. In the Greenleaf Trust Trading Room, students will experience stock prices scrolling across an electronic ticker, Bloomberg terminals providing real-time data on market movements and world news updates on large screens in the front of the room. The atmosphere of the trading room will enable Haworth College of Business students to experience the fast pace of Wall Street while in Kalamazoo.

Using the hardware and software commonly used by finance professionals, students will analyze the latest stock quotes, build and test investment portfolios, compare currency exchange rates, and scrutinize company fundamentals.


Preparing students for these careers is what Dr. Kay Palan, dean of the Haworth College of Business, envisioned when the trading room was in the planning stages. “We were in need of a facility where our students could gain even better hands-on experience in investments and analysis right within the college,” says Palan. “The technology available in this room, paired with the excellent teaching of our finance faculty, makes for a powerful learning environment where students can really get a taste of trading and the financial markets.”

The idea of the trading room became a reality for students due to philanthropy. “We are fortunate to have received a generous gift to open and operate this new learning space,” says Palan. “The donors to this project have given our students and our college an incredible gift, and I am deeply grateful for their generosity and their vision in making this project a reality.”
When preparation meets opportunity, amazing things can happen.

Nate Norman, a recent graduate in sales and business marketing, is a case-in-point. When he signed up for PITCH, WMU’s student business pitch competition, he prepared to sell his business idea, Fish Ninja, to a panel of judges, but he did more than that. He also prepared to establish relationships with the judges from the business community and retain them as mentors.

What Norman did not expect was that his passion and preparation would also lead to a job.

When she volunteered as a judge for PITCH, Jen Randall, president and co-founder of Kalamazoo-based Maestro, a company specializing in building business tools delivered through online, mobile and blended-learning technologies, expected to make connections. She did not expect to find the employee she had been seeking for more than two years. But she did.

The rest is history. Norman has been working as a strategist at Maestro, providing technology solutions for clients such as Facebook, Twitter, Stryker, Zimmer and many others.

“PITCH was a great platform to take my idea forward and elicit feedback,” says Norman. “Even better, though, was the opportunity to meet some amazing community leaders. As any good PITCH participant should, I researched the judges ahead of time. When I came across Jen Randall, I knew she was special. I made an extra point to connect with her during the competition and then followed up with a lunch request. Thankfully, she accepted.”

“I was generally very impressed with the caliber of ideas and individuals at PITCH,” says Randall. “Giving back to student entrepreneurs through service is an opportunity that I welcome. Nate took the initiative to ask for a meeting to share some ideas that he had for Maestro—not to get a job, but to be a helpful observer. I love initiative, so we scheduled the meeting. After two hours of talking about the company, my impression of Nate when he won PITCH was further confirmed. He is innovative yet humble—a great leader yet highly coachable.”

Norman assumed a critical role within Maestro in customer service and client relations—one that Randall had been looking to fill for two years. “We had been interviewing and working with contractors, searching out the right person for this position,” says Randall. “To find talent in our own backyard and because of WMU was wonderful.”

And Norman couldn’t be happier. Between what he describes as an “incredibly healthy culture” at Maestro and the ability to apply his entrepreneurial mindset to his work, the position is a perfect fit.

“These organic connections build trust,” says Randall. “The college of business knows that its interns and graduates will find fulfilling work at Maestro, and we know that we can find not just the talent but also the kind of individual that our company needs.”
Alumnus Volunteers with Flash Agency to Improve Detroit’s Small Businesses, One Client at a Time

As a young professional with his degree in hand, Joe Hustek, B.B.A.’05, left WMU and launched his advertising career in Detroit prior to moving to California. In 2013, an opportunity with an entertainment company brought him back to Michigan, where he immersed himself in his work—and also volunteered his expertise to support Detroit’s economic development.

“As a city, Detroit is hurting. Unemployment seems to be inversely related to the rest of the country. If we can even slightly impact that by providing some additional jobs for the people who need jobs or boost a small business, then we’ve won,” says Hustek.

“Now that I’m back in Michigan and tied to Detroit, the success of the city is very important to me.”

To advance his goal of helping the Detroit economy, Hustek connected with the local chapter of the professional organization, Adcraft Club of Detroit, and participated in the group’s first “flash agency” project, Hello:Detroit, which provides agency-type services to businesses that typically cannot afford consulting services.

That initial project involved 12 Adcraft members working together for just one weekend, improving the business of one company—Detroit Maid. Hustek was selected to be a team leader and help determine how best to approach the Detroit market in a time-effective and financially efficient way.

Danielle Smith, who heard about the flash agency during a local business development program, became Hello:Detroit’s first client. As the owner of Detroit Maid, a residential cleaning service that caters to busy families in Detroit, Smith says she got more than she expected from the weekend.

“I was so excited to be selected and had no idea what to expect! I was simply expecting a bunch of ‘creatives’ to come together and brainstorm new and exciting ways to message and brand the Detroit Maid concept,” says Smith, who ended up with much more than brainstorming ideas.

So what exactly can a team get done in one weekend?

The team’s leaders, including Hustek, spent the first hour of the weekend determining which items would have the most immediate and effective impact, including a new logo, which Smith and Hustek agreed was a highly notable outcome and something that is drawing in new customers.

“Many clients have said that the logo was the first thing that attracted them to the business,” says Smith.

Hustek notes that the Adcraft team also provided a branding plan with items to be implemented immediately—online scheduling and tips for cleaning via social media. And, “a syllabus of sorts with information and ideas that Detroit Maid can pursue as it continues to grow,” says Hustek.

The long-term goal of Hello:Detroit is still being determined, but with round two of the flash agency scheduled for summer 2014, the group intends to continue its efforts, one small business at a time.

“Imagine if we did this two or three times a year, with separate teams donating a single weekend each year. That’s several businesses getting assistance with everything from creative plans and logos to optimization of their websites to direction on how to reach out to people,” says Hustek.

Imagine. 48 hours, 12 Adcraft professionals, 1 weekend—lots of commitment.
Focus on Faculty and Staff

Nationally, only four percent of family owned businesses survive to the fourth generation. Understanding the challenges and the economic impact of family businesses in West Michigan is the focus of a joint study by Western Michigan University and Grand Valley State University. Researchers partnered to learn more about family owned businesses through a survey. Because family businesses are not often studied in a comprehensive and coordinated way, the researchers sought to gather useful demographic data and also to ascertain the needs of these businesses.

“In family business, it’s not just about the bottom line,” says Dr. Laurel Ofstein, assistant professor of management at the Haworth College of Business and the lead researcher for WMU. “The leadership is also focused on the longevity of the organization. Maintaining the jobs the business has created, and that local families depend on, is as important as preserving the family’s business legacy.”

The researchers had an intuitive sense that the economic impact of family owned businesses in West Michigan was significant but might be undervalued. Further, given the reputation of West Michigan as a place rich in family firms, the researchers were curious to see if the area provided a particularly fertile environment for family owned businesses.
What are the initial takeaways from the research?

- 15 percent of the businesses surveyed were in the third generation of ownership, and 11 percent were in the fourth. These higher-than-average numbers suggest a strong commitment to maintaining the legacy of family owned businesses in West Michigan.
- These businesses are committed to doing business in Michigan. More than 90 percent of those surveyed produce their products and services within the state.
- Only 20 percent of the businesses have formal, written succession plans in place.

“The lack of formal succession planning is not unusual among family owned businesses, or even small businesses in general, but it is concerning” says Ofstein. “The highest priorities of survey respondents in terms of succession planning were ‘stability of the firm’ and ‘presence of a competent successor,’ but without a formal plan in place, competent successors are often not incentivized to wait for the mere possibility of future ownership.”

Ofstein sees this very issue play out in her classroom. “I teach a family business course, and many of my students are at a crossroads in terms of deciding whether or not to return to the family business after graduation. Having a formal, written succession plan, or even just the discussions involved in preparing such a plan, can give the next generation of business leaders a clear picture of the vision for the business and their role in its future.”

The research team plans to use the information from the survey to offer services to aid family owned businesses, designing workshops on succession planning and other topics of interest in the future. “With the resources and expertise of both universities, as well as the Family Business Alliance and community economic development organizations, we are uniquely positioned to assist these firms, which are such a vital part of our economy and community,” says Ofstein.

Faculty Take the Lead

Dr. Ola Smith

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder has named Dr. Ola Smith, associate professor of accountancy, to the State Board of Accountancy. The nine-member board oversees licensure and certification requirements for certified public accountants and public accounting firms. She will represent certified public accountants and educators on the board.

Smith has been on the WMU faculty for 13 years. Her research and teaching focuses on managerial accounting, performance measurement and accounting for government and nonprofit organizations. Smith is also the 2013 recipient of a service award from the Diversity Section of the American Accounting Association. She has previously been honored with the Platinum Award from the Division of Multicultural Affairs and the WMU Research Development Award.

Dr. Karen Lancendorfer

Dr. Karen Lancendorfer, associate professor of marketing, has been elected president of the American Academy of Advertising. Lancendorfer will serve a three-year term, moving from president-elect in 2014 to president in 2015 and past president for 2016.

Lancendorfer, director of WMU's advertising and promotion program, is the recipient of the 2011–12 WMU Distinguished Teaching Award and the 2012 Haworth College of Business Service Award. She is faculty advisor for the WMU AdClub as well as chapter advisor to the Gamma Tau chapter of Alpha Kappa Psi professional business fraternity.

Lancendorfer has served as associate editor for the Journal of Interactive Advertising and now sits on its editorial board. Her research interests focus on political advertising and corporate image.
Big data is transforming the healthcare sector, offering greater insight into how providers are managing patient care, cost and outcomes. Large amounts of data are being leveraged by healthcare organizations during medical visits, procedures and when analyzing test results to capture a more complete view of patient health, helping to build more sustainable healthcare systems.

With the future of healthcare rapidly evolving, WMU’s Haworth College of Business and College of Health and Human Services examined big data and the evolving roles of researchers, practitioners and consumers in electronic health records at the 2013 International Conference on Healthcare Information Technology Advancement. Co-chairing the second annual conference, Dr. Bernard Han, professor of business information systems and director of the WMU Center for Health Information Technology Advancement, helped bring together leading healthcare service professionals, healthcare IT solution providers, and health informatics and information technology experts to share research findings critical to the expedition of healthcare reform.

"Since 2010, WMU has taken quick action to respond to the community call of improving healthcare services and administration," says Han. "Holding ICHITA gives a chance for WMU students to mingle with leading healthcare IT experts. In fact, WMU has turned out to be one of the first in the state of Michigan to promote a Health Informatics and Information Management major, which positions us as a leader in this field on a national level."

With the focus of “Expediting Healthcare Reform through Service Innovation and Stakeholder Engagement,” the two-day conference offered multi-track sessions, with topics ranging from the latest developments of electronic medical records to trends in healthcare IT and big data.

“The idea of big data—digital data that is accessible over the Internet—is important to the healthcare sector since many service providers and related industries own data that may help to improve the healthcare administration and patient care,” says Han. “As most theorists argue, there is no limit to the impacts of healthcare IT on the industry. If there is, then the sky is the limit!”

John Halamka, former CIO of Harvard’s medical school and chairman of the Healthcare Information Technology Standards Panel, also discussed the U.S. healthcare IT plan and was joined by many other influential keynote speakers from members of state and local governments, along with healthcare professionals from three countries and eight states.

CHITA aims to integrate faculty and students with community, state and national stakeholders in conducting synergistic research, clinical application development, training and services in healthcare IT. “The University is poised to become the regional leader in health informatics and information management with leading edge instruction and experiential learning opportunities like the ICHITA conference,” says Dr. Kay Palan, dean of the Haworth College of Business.

Did you know? In the next five to seven years, it is projected that more than 50,000 workers in the area of health informatics and information management will be needed.
Each year, universities put time and money into recruiting outstanding students; for most, it is a top priority. One way the Haworth College of Business is finding success is through efforts at building relationships with community colleges, which has paid off in increased transfer enrollments.

Historically competitors for first-year students, the college of business and many Michigan community colleges are now working together to simplify transfer enrollment and encourage dual-enrollment, making the transition from a community college to WMU’s Haworth College of Business seamless.

“Transfer articulation agreements between institutions are the most prevalent form of cooperation,” says Dr. Christina Stamper, associate dean of undergraduate programs in the college of business. “The university and community college agree about which courses—usually freshmen- and sophomore-level courses—are equivalent and can transfer from the community college to the university, to help the student earn a four-year degree.”

Stamper notes that articulation agreements are just one way to strengthen relations with community colleges. Recognizing a need for building deeper relationships, the college appointed a community college recruiter. That recruiter, Paul Hildenbrand, earned a Make-a-Difference award from the University for his success with increasing transfer enrollment and developing relationships with community colleges during his first year in the position. In the fall, the college enrolled 350 transfer business students, an increase of 5.2 percent. Noting a decline in enrollment at Michigan community colleges and a continuing decline in the number of high school graduates in Michigan, Stamper says a dedicated advisor for this area was needed to remain competitive.

“Relationships with the community colleges extend to potential transfer students,” says Hildenbrand. “I provide on-site advising at numerous colleges and help ensure a smooth transition. Educating potential students on the transfer process helps alleviate many concerns.”

Hildenbrand has received positive feedback from his efforts, which include meeting with hundreds of students around the state. He contacts each admitted student prior to visiting a community college, offering advising and providing transfer guides. “The community college administrators are glad that they have one person who they know students can contact any time,” says Hildenbrand.

Dr. Kay Palan, dean of the Haworth College of Business, notes that the college of business is also working outside Michigan. “We have dedicated more resources not only to recruiting transfer students but also to recruiting first-year students and international students,” says Palan. “For the college, it is important that we have a talented and diverse student body. We must be attuned to changing demographics and innovative ways to connect with talented students, and we must consistently evaluate our efforts. Taking a strategic and future-oriented approach to recruitment ensures the vibrancy and health of the college, not just in this recruitment year but for years to come.”

By the numbers

Of the 1,730 transfer students that enrolled at WMU, 70 percent are from Michigan community colleges with an average transfer GPA of 3.0.
Close the garage door … check. Lock the front door … check. Shut off the television and turn down the thermostat … check, check. With just a smartphone, a quick download and a tap of a finger, all of these things can now be done remotely. It’s the beauty of technology. And Haworth College of Business alumni, faculty and students are using these digital tools to change the landscape of the University … and beyond.

The creation of mobile applications has morphed our phones into gaming centers, coupon clippers, restaurant finders and photo editors. With more than 7 billion mobile phones, tablets and portable computers lighting up the world, wireless technology has become a crucial component to business models, helping companies better engage with consumers by promoting products or services that suit individual needs.

One mobile app creator captured this ever-evolving, engagement-driven revolution with an app that helps connect individuals to their communities. John Almeida, B.B.A.’07, MBA’08, found it challenging to find information about upcoming activities happening around his new city. Seeing a gap between community events and promotion, Almeida developed NABR, a mobile app offering individuals a way to discover and share neighborhood events. Pronounced “neighbor,” the app utilizes the practice of crowdsourcing to connect people with community-enhancing events at a hyper-local, real-time level.

It was after graduating from WMU and moving to St. Louis that Almeida began work at Express Scripts, the largest pharmacy benefits manager in the world. Tasked with managing software development for the company, Almeida honed his aptitude for technology development. “During this process, I really learned to enjoy working with technology in addition to using all the managerial skills I learned at the college of business,” says Almeida. With an interest in software development and project management, Almeida began developing NABR and now leads product development and supervises different aspects of the business. “I am constantly thinking of the user experience,” he shares. “I think about our clients and what they will
want from the product. Whether it is ease of use or reporting, I take the time to think it through in our development process.”

Understanding the key components behind creating a successful app is also a critical focus for Dr. Alan Rea, professor of business information systems. As the instructor for business mobile programming and mobile commerce development courses, Rea focuses on fundamental concepts and implementation of mobile programming while looking at designs, methods and techniques to improve application and web interfaces. “There is a huge surge in people wanting to start their own businesses and develop their own apps. Students see the success of apps like Instagram and Skype and think, ‘I want to do that,’” Rea remarks.

With students now saturated in technology, Rea has integrated the digital world with his curriculum, offering new—and often virtual—avenues of learning. Availability through email, social media and text messaging; a personal website with access to class information, video guides and office hours; and utilizing the mobile accessible eLearning site are just some of the ways Rea has woven mobile technology into his classroom. “And I make sure the textbooks I require for my courses are available to download as an eBook. Cheaper and convenient, it just makes sense,” says Rea.

With the continued popularity of app development, extra-curricular opportunities to pursue such work are flourishing at WMU. Starting Gate, WMU’s student business accelerator, provides resources, work space and mentors to students with a desire to create successful businesses. Four apps have already been established by students in the program, including:

- **HogSpots**: A website and smartphone application lets motorcycle enthusiasts find and share popular routes and biker-friendly establishments by using geo-location technology.

- **Personofy**: Personofy uses personality data to place travelers into four categories: Adventurer, Thinker, Partier and Conservative, and identifies places and events that pertain to the user’s interests.

- **RGroup**: Perfect for music festivals, theme parks or any large event, RGroup turns your phone into a device that pinpoints location, providing an arrow on the screen to point your friends to where you are.

- **Xcheapskate**: A custom food and drink price tracker, the phone app takes the stress out of bargain hunting, saving individuals time and money.

So what’s next for mobile technology? “An ecosystem that is Google. An Internet of Things,” shares Rea. “Soon, your refrigerator will be texting you when it’s out of milk or showing recipes you can make with the ingredients inside.” And although we’ve seen a shift from handshakes to Facebook pokes in the last decade, one thing is certain—mobile technology has drastically impacted every aspect of our lives. From an alumnus using his business education to help others feel at home in a new city to professors and programs using technology to better serve future professionals, mobile devices have created a cultural shift, truly revolutionizing the business world.

Rea Predicts: Three Mobile Trends for 2014 and Beyond

- **Internet of Things**: Not just phones and tablets anymore, mobile technology is expanding to home entertainment systems, automobiles and more. These objects will be embedded with sensors, resulting in improved business processes and reduced costs.

- **Mobile Analytics**: Improved performance and costs are allowing businesses to perform analytics more quickly and easily to enhance mobile marketing strategy, enabling optimization and simulation anywhere and for every action.

- **Wearables**: Wearable devices such as Google Glass and smart watches are here to stay and incorporate advanced electronic technologies into accessories for ultimate—and stylish—mobility.
Honored for their outstanding professional and service accomplishments, an elite group of alumni and friends of the college were honored at the annual Haworth College of Business Awards Ceremony, held during Homecoming week. These individuals embody the values of the Haworth College of Business and provide an example for our students to aspire to in their own lives and careers. To read full biographies about each recipient, visit wmich.edu/business/awards.

College Awards

**Haworth College of Business Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award**
Laura C. Kendall, B.B.A.’73
President, Tanner Companies (Retired)

“Simply stated, Laura is an outstanding, versatile business leader who has consistently delivered business successes throughout her career. She is not only a prescient thinker but is always a willing, very capable ‘doer,’ continually motivating and developing others.”
– George Cattermole, Director and Chairman of the Board, Charles and Colvard

**Haworth College of Business Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award**
Brian P. Thomas, B.B.A.’96
Chief Executive Officer, OtterBox

“Owing to not only his depth and breadth of education, but also to the people he has surrounded himself with, Brian is one of those rare visionaries that is both brilliant and an excellent communicator.”
– Curt Richardson, Founder and Chairman, OtterBox
College Awards

Haworth College of Business
Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award
John C. Valluzzo, B.B.A.’82
Owner and President, Valluzzo Companies

“John’s support for the local community, contributions to our great company and passion for delivering a great experience for our customers are just a few of his many attributes. It is John’s passion for his team that is most notable.”
– Jeff Stratton, President, McDonald’s USA

Haworth College of Business
Outstanding Young Alumni Award
Kristina L. Sabatos, B.B.A.’00
Program Manager, John Deere

“Kristy provides a depth of insight and leadership that exceeds her years of experience. We all depend upon and benefit from her talents and energy.”
– Byron Taylor, General Manager, John Deere Dubuque Works

Haworth College of Business
Outstanding Young Alumni Award
Antonio B. Neves, B.B.A.’99
Founder, THINQACTION

“Antonio has been a friend, a coach and a fellow dreamer. He reminds me that it’s all possible and that we all hold the key to our own destinies.”
– Jason White, Managing Director, Wieden and Kennedy Shanghai

Haworth College of Business
Outstanding Service Award
The Zeigler Family
Owners, Zeigler Automotive Group
Pictured, Aaron Zeigler, President, Zeigler Automotive Group

“The Zeiglers are unparalleled in their leadership as business owners, community volunteers and philanthropic leaders.”
– Dr. Kay Palan, Dean, Haworth College of Business

Haworth College of Business
Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award
Owner and President, Valluzzo Companies

Celebrating Alumni and Friends
Department and Program Awards

Department of Accountancy
Outstanding Alumni Award
Eric Lum, B.B.A.’80
Vice President of Tax, Stryker (Retired)

“What I admire most about Eric is his integrity, hard work and the care he showed for each member of his team. I am proud to say that I am a product of Eric Lum.”
  – David Furgason, Vice President of Tax, Stryker

Department of Business Information Systems
Outstanding Alumni Award
Joy R. McClendon, B.B.A.’78, MBA'94
Senior Director of Business Technology, Pfizer, Inc. (Retired)

“I will be eternally thankful for Joy's help and for her positive influence, which I know has made me both the person and professional I am today.”
  – Sergio Mastrogiovanni, Senior Manager, Serialization Support Architect, Pfizer, Inc.

Department of Finance and Commercial Law
Outstanding Alumni Award
Darren M. Timmeney, B.B.A.’84
Senior Corporate Banker, Community President and Market Manager, Chase

“Having worked with Darren as a colleague and also faced him as a competitor, he has earned my respect for his tremendous work ethic, lead-by-example style and his steadfast commitment to always do the right thing.”
  – Robert Carpenter, Senior Vice President of Middle Market Commercial Banking, Chase

Department of Management
Outstanding Alumni Award
Colonel Rodney L. Faulk, B.B.A.’87
Chief of Staff, 103rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command

“As a Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves, Rod demonstrated that he is ‘the total package’ both as a leader and a manager. Rod is a ‘Soldier’s Soldier’ and a true example of what it means when we say we are ‘Twice-the-Citizen, Army-Strong!’”
  – Major General Peter Lennon, U.S. Army

Department of Marketing
Marketing Hall of Fame Award
Rhonda Davenport Johnson, B.B.A.’84, MBA’93
Senior Vice President and Director of the Loan Center, Comerica Bank

“Rhonda’s commitment to business is matched only by her passion and dedication to making a personal difference through leadership in community service.”
  – Michael Aust, Executive Vice President and Executive Director of Retail Banking, Comerica Bank

Celebrating Alumni and Friends
Department of Marketing
Marketing Hall of Fame Award
Bo Miller, B.B.A.’78
Global Director for Corporate Citizenship, The Dow Chemical Company

“Bo is an inspiring leader and expert in the areas of corporate citizenry, responsible business and sustainability.”
– Dr. Mushtaq Luqmani, Chair, Department of Marketing

Food and Consumer Package Goods Marketing
Outstanding Alumni Award
Michael Ross, B.S.’88
Vice President of Marketing, Pricing and Consumer Insights, Meijer

“Michael is an outstanding and very successful alumnus of our program. He has risen through the ranks of Meijer to his present responsibilities as vice president of marketing and continues to support our students and our program.”
– Phil Straniero, Executive-in-Residence, Food and Consumer Package Goods Marketing

Food and Consumer Package Goods Marketing
Adrian Trimpe Distinguished Service Award
Steve Sholtes
U.S. Country Manager, Advantage International

“Steve has been instrumental in the growth and success of our annual food marketing conference as well as a strong supporter of a wide variety of activities designed to provide unique educational experiences for our students.”
– Phil Straniero, Executive-in-Residence, Food and Consumer Package Goods Marketing

WMU ROTC Wall of Fame
Colonel John E. Erickson, B.S.’71
Battalion Commander and Director of Personnel (Retired)

“I had the pleasure of working with John at CSC Consulting and then again at i2. I attribute much of my success at CSC and throughout the rest of my career to what I learned from John.”
– Paul Manikas, Industry Market Development Manager, Microsoft

Our award recipients represent a true master class in business leadership, achievement and service. They provide examples for our students to aspire to in their own lives and careers.

– Dr. Kay Palan, Dean, Haworth College of Business
Behind any hip replacement, spinal surgery or medical procedure of any kind is a team of healthcare providers. Standing beside that team are those who developed the technologies and products used in the procedure—elements vital to patient prognosis and recovery.

Stryker is one of the world’s leading medical technology companies, specializing in innovative technologies, including reconstructive, medical and surgical, and neurotechnology and spine products to help people lead more active, satisfying lives.

Underlying the important mission of the company—making healthcare better—is a business model that has resulted in 34 consecutive years of growth for the Fortune 500 company. Stryker has increased its sales from $17 million in 1976 to more than $9 billion in 2013. Recognized as a leader in a number of areas, the firm has received several awards that speak to the strength of its teams and its reputation.

- Named one of the “World’s Most Admired Companies” by FORTUNE for the thirteenth consecutive year. Stryker is No. 4 in the medical equipment and products industry for 2014.
- The United Kingdom team was named one of the Sunday Times “Best Companies to Work For” for the seventh consecutive year.
- Stryker received the Gallup Great Workplace Award for the sixth time in the last seven years.
- For the fourth consecutive year, Stryker was named to FORTUNE Magazine’s “100 Best Companies to Work For,” placing No. 42 on the list, in the U.S., for 2014.

Two important factors in Stryker’s success are its culture and its people. “The hallmarks of Stryker’s culture are integrity, accountability, people and performance,” says Steven Benscoter, vice president of human resources. “Our employees are key to strengthening and advancing our culture as our success hinges on our ability to attract and grow great talent.”

And Benscoter notes, “Building world-class teams requires world-class talent.” One of the places Stryker recruits its world-class talent is the Haworth College of Business.

With many WMU alumni already among the Stryker executives in hiring roles, the company formalized a recruiting relationship with the Department of Accountancy in 2004, and in 2011 became a Premier Partner of the college’s Career Center.

“Kameron Kampen was one of my first WMU hires,” says Jason Wender, senior marketing manager, EMS marketing. “He exhibited a firm understanding of business principles, and it was clear that his coursework and professors prepared him to hit the ground running as a professional with a minimal learning curve. He had an immediate impact on our marketing team during his time as an intern and continues to do so now as a product associate.”
Working to develop employees by matching them with the best roles for personal and organizational growth is central to Stryker’s strategy. “As great talent joins our organization, managers partner with team members to determine how to best leverage each person’s talents,” says Benscoter. “Our best managers establish the overall mission for their team, clarify roles and responsibilities, provide team members with the equipment required to do their jobs, and then coach and support their teams to ensure success.”

As a Stryker intern and now full-time employee, Kampen has experienced just what Benscoter describes. “From my initial internship application to my onboarding as a full-time employee, my recruitment team walked me step-by-step through the process and was a support system for me. It is clear that the Stryker recruiting staff has developed a very strategic partnership with the Broncos of WMU.”

Kampen was appreciative of the flexibility in his internship as he finished his courses and his ability to advance from the internship opportunity to his current position—a testament to the company’s investment in employee growth. “The people are what set Stryker apart,” says Kampen. “Not only am I challenged to become better on a regular basis, but everyone collaborates to become better as a team every day.”

Jillian Gralewski, B.B.A.’13

Waking up in the morning and going into work with a big smile on her face is an everyday routine for Jillian Gralewski. As a national account manager for Coyote Logistics, one of the fastest-growing transportation and logistics service providers in North America, Gralewski works with trucking companies to match their trucks with shippers’ freights. Making more than 200 calls per day while negotiating and constantly looking for the perfect match for driver and load is all part of a day’s work.

Graduating with a degree in sales and business marketing, Gralewski attributes her success at Coyote Logistics to the sales background she received from the college of business. “The major prepared me entirely for my interview for the position,” says Gralewski. “The classes prepared me for life after college and to be the best salesperson I could be.”

Securing an internship at Coyote Logistics during her junior year helped her to see that this was her dream job. She fell in love with the company, worked hard, finished out her senior year and accepted a full-time position with Coyote.

Gralewski learned plenty of important lessons through the college of business and many of those lessons she applies to her job every day. Discovering how to build professional relationships was fundamental to her success at Coyote. “Many of my classes emphasized the importance of building strong relationships with my customers, and this is something I have done since day one at Coyote,” says Gralewski.

One of Gralewski’s favorite professors at the college of business was Dr. Jim Eckert, associate professor of marketing. She walked into his office her sophomore year of college unsure of what major would be the best fit for her. Eckert guided Gralewski through beneficial classes to take and encouraged her to take a trip to Germany where she was able to practice negotiation and international business skills. “He knew I could be the salesperson I always wanted to be; he helped me get to where I am today,” says Gralewski.

The advice Gralewski received during her early years in college pointed her in the right direction for a successful career. Her advice for future students entering college is simple: pick a major that makes you happy.
Ryan Preisner, B.B.A.’08

Some people say that shoes are the essential item that completes an outfit. Ryan Preisner would disagree. In January of 2013, Preisner left the corporate world to open his own sock business and for the past three years he has served as the CEO of boldSOCKS.com.

When Preisner was hired as a category analyst for Gordon Food Service in his final semester at WMU, he found his niche in the operational side of the marketing world. Eventually he was promoted to product data supervisor within the marketing department.

While working at GFS, Preisner, and the co-founder of boldSOCKS.com Adam Whitmore, started wearing fun socks to work, which morphed into a competition of who could find the craziest socks to wear. The only problem was they had a hard time finding a good place to buy creative, fun socks. The competition sparked the idea to start boldSOCKS.com.

BoldSOCKS.com is a one-stop-shop for “all things socks.” The lack of creativity in most stores’ sock collections inspired Preisner and Whitmore to create a website where shoppers can peruse a colorful and bold-patterned collection of men’s, women’s and children’s socks.

After much deliberation and two years of working full-time while running boldSOCKS.com, Preisner made the decision to quit his job at GFS to devote his time to running boldSOCKS.com full time.

“As an entrepreneur and the only full-time employee of boldSOCKS.com, I wear a lot of hats,” jokes Preisner. “My day-to-day role encompasses everything from customer service to accounting to web development to working with our manufacturing partner overseas and more,” he says.

As an entrepreneur, Preisner faces many challenges. One of the biggest challenges for him is the emotional aspect of the job. “When you work in a large corporate environment, you can be somewhat insulated from the day-to-day ups and downs of the business’s performance,” he says. “As an entrepreneur, it is difficult not to feel the day-to-day sales impacting you.”

The college of business helped him face these challenges by learning through hands-on, real-world activities. The projects that Preisner completed during his years at the college gave him the skills he needed to enter the workforce and now to start his business.

“I learned the importance of data in decision making; I am constantly digging through data from advertising to product sales to web analytics so I can see what is working and what is not for the business, and I am living my dream which is incredible,” says Preisner.
Alumni and Businesses to Watch

Flexing Your Trust Muscle

Joel Mueller, B.B.A.’02

Technology has changed drastically over the past 30 years. From toddlers navigating an iPad to teenagers tweeting their latest life events, technology has been a driving force of social change. And at the forefront of it all is “J” Mueller, a self-proclaimed “dabbler” who began developing and growing companies into some of the most popular and well-respected businesses in their niches while still roaming the halls of Suttons Bay High School.

One of Mueller’s many high school entrepreneurial endeavors happened to be MacUpdate, a centralized website where users can find and download software, reviews, demos and more for Mac interfaces. Now the second most popular Mac-only app community on the Internet, MacUpdate has been recognized as one of the fastest growing companies in the country by Inc. Magazine … three times. But Mueller’s rise to success happened only through constant learning, correcting and fine-tuning. Through his experiences abroad and right in Schneider Hall, Mueller and his transparent business model prove just how difficult—and rewarding—entrepreneurship really is.

Great Expectations

“Being your own boss.” The phrase sounds exhilarating and freeing. But the reality of that aspiration is met with financial struggles, competitors, unpredictable business conditions and a range of other challenges; challenges that Mueller knows all too well. “I’m finding that a lot of people who take the plunge into entrepreneurship often don’t last because their expectations are different from reality,” says Mueller. “I hope that MacUpdate can be a real-life example of something that happened to grow but wasn’t always what other people deemed ‘successful.’ If entrepreneurs put pressure on themselves to have big growth, it can often lead to people giving up early.”

Enjoying the View

Although keeping realistic expectations has always been a priority for Mueller, another vital component to his entrepreneurial success is his deep appreciation and understanding for other cultures. From wandering the streets of Osaka to backpacking through Japan to motorcycling around Thailand with his wife, Mueller has used these experiences to not only become more self-reflective but also to recognize commonalities in people from all over the world, which translates into being a better business leader at home. “Traveling removes fear as a foundation of thought. It makes you flex your ‘trust muscle,’” remarks Mueller. “And you get to meet a lot of incredible people doing great things in their communities in ways that you may not have thought would work. When you appreciate unique ways of doing something, it allows you to be more versatile, especially when building a team of people who are different than you.”

The Bronco Way

While his journey thus far has been filled with twists of frustrations and turns of accomplishments, Mueller credits WMU and the Haworth College of Business for helping him build the confidence he needed to run MacUpdate. “I met my first mentor walking in front of the rec center; I had the opportunity to study abroad in South Africa; I was a part of Western’s boxing team.

Mueller shares his advice for those ready to jump into the world of entrepreneurship.

• Recognize the language you use—both outwardly and in your head. Asking yourself questions that bypass self-limitation such as “what can I do” helps you recognize your own language patterns. The way you think is going to be the biggest thing that differentiates whether you do things or not.

• Become a seeker. Go out and find a mentor who is an entrepreneur—someone who is willing to meet with you on a regular basis. By meeting people willing to share insights into their successes and failures, you learn to challenge how you think.

• Put your thoughts into actions. Recognize processes of companies you admire and apply them to how you want to do things when on your own.
Many people flip to the back of the college magazine first. Why? To see what friends and classmates are up to both professionally and personally.

The relationships formed at the college of business have been a defining trait since Western formed the first business department in 1949. The relationships between faculty, students and staff are central to the learning experience. Throughout this section, you will see the reflections of some of our outstanding faculty and staff members on what they value about the college and its students. As we know, the relationships among students, faculty and staff last long after graduation.

1966
Richard R. Current, B.B.A.’66, MBA’67, was appointed to a two-year term on the board of directors for the ASU Group, an employee-owned corporation that provides services to the insurance industry and self-insured organizations.

1969
James C. McLin, B.B.A.’69, has been elected as the board president of the Palatine Chamber of Commerce for two years. Since June 2013, McLin has also been the president of the Palatine-Inverness CrimeStoppers organization.

1970
James M. Johnson, B.B.A.’70, MBA’71, has been named Presidential Teaching Professor at Northern Illinois University where he is a professor of finance.

1971
Michael W. Lewis, B.B.A.’71, has been named to the 16-member board of the Regional Transportation Authority, the financial oversight body for the three transit agencies in northeastern Illinois: The Chicago Transit Authority, Metra and Pace.

1973
Thomas G. VanBelkum, B.B.A.’73, has joined McKeen & Associates. VanBelkum has been practicing law for more than 30 years. In addition to medical malpractice, VanBelkum, a Martindale-Hubbel AV-rated attorney, has trial and litigation experience in product liability, construction litigation, premises liability, first and third party auto, and general defense litigation.

1976
John M. Dankovich, B.B.A.’76, was a collaborative author on a book titled “The Future of You: Providing Clarity Where Life Intersects Wealth.”

Jean Straayer Vollink, B.B.A.’76, was honored for 15 years of service at the Kalamazoo office of Yeo & Yeo CPAs. Vollink is a senior manager at the firm, and her areas of expertise include estate planning, business consulting, and tax planning and preparation. She is a certified specialist in estate planning.

1977
William T. Luley, B.B.A.’77, is the rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Manchester, Mo. Luley has been at St. Luke’s for 17 years and in the ministry for 30 years.

1978
Barbara Elmore James, B.B.A.’78, was reappointed to a five-year term on the Kalamazoo Community Foundation Board of Trustees. James is the immediate past chairperson of the board.

Debra Edwards Gambino, B.B.A.’78, has assumed the responsibilities of academic advisor for the theatre and dance departments at WMU.

“I love teaching because I love sharing what I know with my students. Working with students energizes me every day.”

– Dr. Onur Arugaslan, Finance and Commercial Law
1982

Marc S. Wise, B.B.A.’82, from Southfield-Michigan-based Maddin, Hauser, Wartell, Roth & Heller P.C., has been named one of America’s Leading Lawyers for Business by Chambers USA. Wise was honored in the Employee Benefits and Executive Compensation practice area.

1983

Nasim U. Ansari, MBA’83, was among three people reappointed by Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder to the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission.

Birgit M. Klohs, B.B.A.’83, was named one of the 50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan by the Grand Rapids Business Journal. Klohs is the president and CEO of The Right Place Inc., a regional economic development organization located in Grand Rapids, Mich.

1984


Cindy C. Locklin, B.B.A.’84, M.S.A.’87, was named one of the 50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan by the Grand Rapids Business Journal. She is the president and CEO of Busy Bea’s Services Inc., a commercial cleaning company.

1986

Sharon A. Conran-Cramer, B.B.A.’86, has joined Greenleaf Trust as a trust relationship officer.

Jeffrey F. Cunningham, B.B.A.’86, was hired as a partner in RubinBrown’s Real Estate Services and Assurance Services Group. Cunningham’s expertise lies in working with clients who develop and rehabilitate multi-family housing using traditional financing, low-income housing and historic tax credits, and federal- and state-backed loans.

1987

Robert J. Hickman, B.B.A.’87, MBA’93, was promoted to executive vice president/ head of commercial banking at Community First Bank of Indiana.

1989

Steven D. Bush, B.B.A.’89, MBA’08, was appointed to the finance committee for The Right Place Inc., a regional economic development organization located in Grand Rapids, Mich.

1990

Cheryl Mead Beard, B.B.A.’90, was appointed director of commercial development for Battle Creek Unlimited.

1991

Mary C. Zoeller, B.B.A.’91, has joined the Fetzer Center at WMU. With more than 10 years of sales experience, Zoeller’s responsibilities include promoting conference facilities and catering services.

1992

Jeanne Foley Bolhuis, B.B.A.’92, M.P.A.’99, has been promoted from director of practice operations to administrator at Bronson Healthcare Midwest.

Debra Houthoofd VanHevele, B.B.A.’92, was promoted to Lansing, Mich., regional president for Comerica Bank.

M. Dee Casey Velkoff, B.S.’83, MBA’92, has joined Comerica Bank as vice president of middle market lending. Velkoff serves as a relationship manager, assisting the bank’s middle market clients in southwest Michigan and northern Indiana with their lending and financial needs.

“I love working with our cadets because I make a difference to them, and they make a difference to me. They are my legacy (second to my children) and the reason I go to work every morning.”

– Cris Obreiter, Military Science and Leadership
Michael J. Oliphant, B.B.A.’93, MBA’02, was honored for 20 years of service at the Kalamazoo office of Yeo & Yeo CPAs. Oliphant is a principal specializing in business consulting, financial reporting, and tax planning and preparation. He is a certified valuation analyst and a certified fraud examiner with expertise in business valuation and litigation support.

Karl R. Siegert, B.B.A.’94, was appointed vice president and chief operating officer of MVP Collaborative in Madison Heights, Mich.

Scott D. Burkett, B.B.A.’95, has joined residential mortgage originator PrimeLending, a PlainsCapital company, as a loan originator.

Jennifer E. Chinn, B.B.A.’95, has joined Crain’s Detroit Business as digital marketing manager. Chinn will work on copywriting and production of digital sales materials.

Lauren Curtis Kerekes, B.B.A.’95, received the 2012 International Member of the Year Award from the Association of Women in the Metal Industries. Kerekes is the international treasurer and member of the Columbus, Ohio, Chapter.

Steven C. Woloszyk, B.B.A.’95, MBA’00, joined residential mortgage originator PrimeLending, a PlainsCapital company, as production manager.

Ryan D. Cahill, B.B.A.’97, was elected president of the Portage Education Foundation. The PEF is a nonprofit organization that has awarded more than $390,000 in support for students, staff and district initiatives throughout Portage, Mich., schools.

Jeffrey D. DeLeeuw, B.B.A.’99, has joined Beene Garter in Grand Rapids, Mich., as full charge bookkeeper.

Robert M. Peterson, B.A.’95, MBA’02, joined Battle Creek Unlimited as downtown development director.

I love teaching in the sales and business marketing program. Our professors all have significant industry experience to share with students. And our students expend great effort to be in the classroom every day. What a great combination — professors and students motivated to teach and learn together!

— Dr. Kelley O’Reilly, Marketing

My interest in volunteering at the Olympics stemmed in part from having taught sport management courses at WMU. I was particularly interested in the tactical planning that surrounds this international event. My abbreviated observation of Russian culture reflected significantly different management processes than those in the West. I look forward to integrating these new perspectives into my courses.

— Allison McFarland, MBA’03, professor of business and economics, Bethel College
2003

Jennifer Schoder Holder, B.B.A.’03, M.S.A.’05, has been promoted to manager of Seber Tans PLC’s tax department.

Kristopher A. McWilliams, B.B.A.’03, has joined residential mortgage originator PrimeLending, a PlainsCapital company, as a loan originator.

Michelle Laurila Moore, B.B.A.’03, has been promoted from senior manager to principal with UHY LLP, a leading national certified public accounting firm. Moore is a member of the audit and assurance department, where she works primarily with middle market companies to provide audits and review of financial statements, and reporting on internal controls.

2007

Jennifer L. Cote, B.B.A.’07, M.S.A.’08, joined Brink, Key & Chludzinski, a certified public accounting firm in Portage, Mich., as a staff accountant and works primarily in tax.

Adam C. Luderer, B.B.A.’07, has been promoted from a portfolio manager to a relationship manager as part of Flagstar Bank’s commercial real estate group.

Michelle Laurila Moore, B.B.A.’03, has been promoted from senior manager to principal with UHY LLP, a leading national certified public accounting firm. Moore is a member of the audit and assurance department, where she works primarily with middle market companies to provide audits and review of financial statements, and reporting on internal controls.

2008

Caitlin Van Aalstine Borton, B.B.A.’08, has joined Oak Point Financial Group as a client service coordinator.

Stephanie Thomas Suszek, B.B.A.’08, has joined Community Healing Centers of Kalamazoo as controller.

2009

Jacqueline R. Ewing, B.B.A.’09, has joined Perrigo’s human resources team. Ewing will be working in Allegan, Mich., with many of Perrigo’s benefits plans, with a focus on retirement plans.

Amanda M. Haas, B.B.A.’09, has joined Perrigo in Allegan, Mich., as marketing information analyst. In this role, Haas will analyze and specialize in various retailers’ loyalty program data as the information applies to Perrigo products.

Keith A. Nearpass, B.B.A.’09, M.S.A.’11, has received his CPA license and has been promoted to senior accountant at Yeo & Yeo CPAs. Nearpass, who joined the company in 2011, provides audit services for government entities, schools, not-for-profit organizations and employee benefit plans, as well as tax and business consulting services.

Ashley N. Rowland, B.B.A.’09, has been promoted to marketing coordinator at Diekema Hamann and is responsible for identifying potential opportunities, promoting past work and communicating the firm’s expertise to potential and existing clients.

2011

Michael L. Burgos, B.B.A.’11, has been promoted as SAP business analyst for the SAP Product Lifecycle Management Team at Perrigo.

“\nI really enjoy the diversity of students I have the opportunity to teach and work with in our Communication Center. In particular, I love watching the students’ growth from curious first-year students to motivated professionals.”
– Jo Wiley, Business Information Systems

2005

Stacey Caldeira Elliott, M.S.A. ’05, joined Jansen Valk Thompson and Reahm PC.

Mathew T. Moon, B.B.A. ’05, has been named branch manager of PNC Financial Services Group’s Parchment, Mich., branch.

2006

Daniel J. Carpenter, B.S.’97, MBA’06, has been promoted to manager of safety at Denso Manufacturing in Battle Creek, Mich.
2012

Joseph P. Bigley, MBA’12, was appointed as secondary mortgage market manager by United Federal Credit Union in St. Joseph, Mich.

Joshua D. Buursma, B.B.A.’12, has joined Ship-Pac Inc. in Kalamazoo as accounting clerk.

2013

James S. McCormick, B.B.A.’13, has joined Ralph Hayward Insurance Agency as an agent.

What makes Western so special is being able to help our students launch their professional careers. We have many recruiters from CPA firms and the industry who come to campus year after year to recruit our students.”

– Dr. Donald Gribbin, Accountancy

2001

Hollie Morton Barton, B.B.A.’01, and Bishop Bartoni welcomed their second baby boy, Marx Bishop Bartoni, in August of 2013. Big brother Matteo is very excited for his new baby brother.

2002

Janine Grochoski Holmes, MBA’02, and Christopher L. Holmes welcomed baby Sofia Marie Holmes in September of 2013. She is welcomed by her twin siblings Samuel and Fabiana who turned two in January 2014.

2003


2004

Jillian Grosscup Fraze, B.B.A.’04, and Laura Fraze welcomed a son, Harrison, in November 2013.

2005

John H. Morse, B.B.A.’05, and Gretchen Morse welcomed daughter Lucille in July 2013.

2006

Jessica Harold Brattina, B.B.A.’06, and Bryce R. Brattina, B.B.A.’06, welcomed their daughter, Madelyn Grace Brattina, in March of 2013.

2010

Virgie M. Ammerman, MBA’10, welcomed a new granddaughter, Kendyll Friedrick. She joins big sisters Addisyn, four, and Gabryella, two.
I consider working with students to be symbiotic. As I work with them, I gain perspective which allows me to grow as an individual, a mother and employee.

– Jessica Pelkey, Marketing

Gloria Castillo, president and CEO of Chicago United, a corporate membership organization that promotes multiracial leadership in business to advance parity in economic opportunity, meets with students after her Distinguished Speaker Series presentation titled “Inclusion: Culture in Action in the Corporate Environment.”

To learn more about the college’s speaker series or watch videos of past presentations, visit wmich.edu/business/about/speakers.

Jessica Roerig graduated with a job waiting. By using resources in the Haworth College of Business, she secured study abroad funds, an externship and three internships, helping her build relationships that would kickstart her career.

“Having the opportunity to travel abroad in Japan and Thailand really helped with my Hormel Foods internship. I secured that internship by first getting involved with the college’s externship program. After the externship, I stayed in contact with my mentor, who sent my resume to HR. At the next career fair, the HR representative told me about an international marketing internship. I expressed my interest and after two interviews I received an offer. During the internship, I got involved by joining a young professionals group within the company. In my down time, I scheduled coffee meets with my co-workers and played in charity volleyball tournaments. I ended up taking a full-time position with Hormel, and I’m moving to California after I graduate.”

MyWMU.com/business
SpeechMasterPro began with a movie, a cork and the experiences of first-year student Daniel Floyd. Born with a disorder that makes it difficult to enunciate certain words and sounds, Floyd became inspired in high school through his speech therapy exercises and after watching the movie “The Great Debaters.” Acting on a principle demonstrated in the movie—that muscle memory can help enunciation and elocution when an individual speaks around something—Floyd fashioned a prototype of his device from a wine cork. Today, his prototype is made of silicone and has a utility patent and a design patent pending. Floyd has participated in Starting Gate, WMU’s student business accelerator, to increase marketing for his device and boost investment in his company.