



SPRING 2021

RICHARDS REVIEW



RICHARDS COLLEGE
OF BUSINESS

LETTER FROM THE DEAN



Dr. Faye S. McIntyre

*Dean, Richards College of Business
Sewell Chair of Private Enterprise*

Greetings!

As with most institutions, the 2020-21 academic year began with the Richards College faculty, staff, and students adapting to Covid-19 restrictions and managing our time and relationships very differently than in the past. While I still refuse to call this “normal,” our new reality has allowed us to connect both face-to-face and virtually and continue building for a bright future!

The faculty and staff of the Richards College remain steadfastly dedicated to our mission to transform lives through education, engagement, and experiences. Some courses were moved online, and others were held in safe, socially distanced classrooms. We offered a virtual study abroad with the help of alumni and business partners around the world. Many of our events like the Economic Forecast Breakfast, Women Empowering Women, and the BB&T (now Truist) Lecture in Free Enterprise were held virtually this year.

Our students continue to impress and amaze me. In the midst of the global pandemic, they refused to be sidelined! The Dean’s Council of Student Leaders once again collected food for the Carroll County Soup Kitchen, noting a particularly strong need this year. The inaugural cohort of the Southwire Business Leadership program finished their internships with Southwire by conducting strategic projects, and the second cohort is closing in on the half-way mark. Learning, mentoring, and networking looked a little different this year, and the professional opportunities provided to our students will prepare them for a truly global and connected business world.

Construction of Roy Richards, Sr. Hall continued, and the progress is remarkable. A time-lapse video of the process (<https://www.westga.edu/academics/business/roy-richards-sr-hall.php>) allowed us to see all the excitement. Richards Hall is on target for a Summer 2021 completion with classes scheduled for Fall 2021. Keep an eye out for announcement of the Grand Opening, tentatively scheduled for mid-October. We are excited to invite you to join us in exploring this wonderful new home for the Richards College of Business!

In the following pages, you will find stories on these activities and much more! We have several stories to highlight the accomplishments of our alumni, and we ask you to keep in touch to let us know your successes. We hope you enjoy this issue of the Richards Review!

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BUSINESS STUDENTS WELCOMED BACK TO CAMPUS

Wolfie joined in on the fun as he joined students to sign the beam that was incorporated into the Roy Richards Sr. Hall.



BUSINESS STUDENTS WELCOMED BACK TO CAMPUS

By Amy K. Lavender

Though the start of the semester looked a bit different this fall, the Richards College of Business decided they couldn't start the semester properly without welcoming back their students with their annual Ice Cream Social . . . with a few adjustments, of course.

This year's Welcome Back Ice Cream Social featured pre-portioned ice cream and socially distanced areas for picking up Richards College of Business T-shirts, which is also part of the annual event.

"This event is a great opportunity for our faculty and staff to connect with our students," said Richards College of Business Dean and Sewell Chair of Private Enterprise Dr. Faye S. McIntyre. "This year, we felt that this opportunity was more important than ever because we knew we wouldn't have as many chances to see our students in person this semester." The event, which is held outdoors, already lent itself easily to social distancing guidelines. Coordinators also made hand sanitizer available and mandated masks be worn by all attendees. Throughout the two-hour event, Richards College of Business staff handed out



hundreds of T-shirts and Dine West staff passed out just as many servings of ice cream and water bottles.

UWG mascot Wolfie was also on hand to get everyone into the school spirit as the semester got under way.

New to this year's event was the opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to sign one of the structural beams that is part of Roy Richards Sr. Hall, the new home of the Richards College of Business that is currently under construction on Maple Street. Students, faculty, staff, and even some business alumni dropped by to sign their name on the beam and be a part of UWG history.

Organizers said the event was a resounding success.

"I'm very pleased that we were still able to have this event for the students in a safe manner," said Richards College of Business Associate Dean Dr. Brad Prince. "Everyone kept their masks on, spaced themselves out, and had a great time."



"This event is a great opportunity for our faculty and staff to connect with our students."

- Dr. Faye S. McIntyre, Richards College of Business Dean and Sewell Chair of Private Enterprise



PUTTING OTHERS FIRST

Photo by Amy K. Lavender
Dr. Joseph Harrison McCraw Jr.,
center, with Accounting and
Finance Department Chair Dr. Ron
Colley and Richards College of
Business Dean Dr. Faye S. McIntyre
during a recent visit to campus.



PUTTING OTHERS FIRST

By Sam Gentry

McCraw, Professor Emeritus, Donates Major Gift to Richards College of Business

Whether through service in the military or his years as a revered professor at the University of West Georgia, Dr. Joseph “Harrison” McCraw Jr. has always put others first.

Now, through an incredible life estate donation of \$1 million to UWG, McCraw is ensuring a bright future for his former department in the Richards College of Business and for students in need. McCraw said the choice to offer such an extraordinary donation to UWG was an easy one.

“UWG is my home base, and it’s only second to my faith,” he said. “The university has many wonderful units, but it is greater than the sum of its parts. We’ve come a long way over the years, and I truly feel honored to have been a small part of it.”

As for aiding student success through philanthropic means, McCraw said it is the right path to take when one is in the position to do so.

“I don’t think people realize what a capacity they have to make a difference in the lives of students,” McCraw said. “Some students don’t have the financial means to afford college, and I believe deeply we should boost them and offer aid however we can. If we can help them over the financial hump or otherwise, we need to do so.”

UWG President Dr. Brendan Kelly said he was thrilled and honored that McCraw chose to make such an important and substantial contribution to the university. “I was personally humbled by this remarkable gift from such a celebrated and beloved former professor at the University of West Georgia,” Kelly said. “This endowment will help ensure our Department of Accounting and Finance has additional resources that will serve to build upon the legacy of excellence and selflessness for which Dr. McCraw is cherished.”

Born in Andalusia, Alabama, in March 1945, McCraw received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Auburn University and his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia. While at Auburn, McCraw was a freshman fullback under the legendary coach, Vince Dooley. He continued to contribute as an offensive player for his sophomore and junior years (1964-65) and was moved to linebacker for his senior year.

McCraw is a much-decorated veteran. Upon graduation in 1967, he served a two-year stint in the U.S. Army, having received an ROTC commission. He was then assigned to the 988th Military Police Company at Ft. Benning, Columbus, Georgia. His company saw duty during the March 1968 civil disturbances in Baltimore, Maryland. At the end of his first year of service, he volunteered for Vietnam (1968) where he spent 10.5 months. During his first eight months, he escorted convoys near the Cambodian border and within the Michelin Rubber Plantation. McCraw was promoted in-country to the rank of first lieutenant and also served as provost marshal for the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, during his last few months in Vietnam.

“I was extremely patriotic, a quality I shared with my mother,” McCraw said. “I was willing to put my life on the line. I would highly recommend that anyone who wants to join the military does so. The leadership skills you develop are tremendous.”

Having loved and played sports throughout high school and college, McCraw’s initial ambition was to become a college football coach. In fact, he was an economics major who failed his first accounting class. After refocusing his academic mindset, however, the field of accounting became his passion.

“I love the process of working with students,” McCraw said. “I may have wanted to be a college football coach, but being a professor was the next best thing.”

Having taught at the University of Alabama, Birmingham (two years), and Presbyterian College (4 years) - where he was offered tenure and promotion - McCraw began a 26-year career at UWG (then West Georgia College) in 1985 as an assistant professor of Business Administration in the Department of Accounting and Finance.



Dr. McCraw signs his donation paperwork as Development Officer Nichole Fannin, from left, Vice President of Advancement Dr. Merideth Brumen, UWG President Dr. Brendan Kelly, and Jo Brock look on.

Throughout his career, McCraw wrote numerous articles published in scholarly journals, including the Accounting Educators' Journal, the Real Estate Review, the Journal of Business Ethics, the Journal of College Teaching and Learning, the Journal of Diversity Management and the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) Journal before retiring from the university in 2011.

Dr. Ron Colley, chair and professor in the Department of Accounting and Finance, said McCraw was an outstanding professor, colleague and friend, and he isn't surprised to learn of his incredible legacy gift.

"I have fond memories of working with Dr. McCraw," Colley said. "He strived to provide quality instruction and to provide guidance for his students through involvement in the Accounting Club, the Accounting Honor Society and other organizations. He was also actively involved in the department and provided its members with support and assistance. Dr. McCraw served in an exemplary manner as an accounting educator and colleague."

The endowment made possible by McCraw's generosity is broken down into three legacy gifts that will establish three different funds: the Harrison McCraw Endowed Professors in Accounting Fund, the Harrison McCraw Accounting Fund to provide for faculty and departmental needs, and the Harrison McCraw Accounting Scholarship Fund.

Dr. Faye McIntyre, dean of the Richards College of Business and Sewell Chair of Private Enterprise, praised McCraw for his kindness, intelligence and generosity.

"Dr. McCraw was a valuable member of the Richards College of Business faculty," she said. "He was an excellent instructor and mentored many students outside the classroom as well. Beyond his teaching abilities, Harrison was a wonderful colleague, always willing to help others and offer a kind word of encouragement or humor. His gift will be transformative for our accounting programs, and we are honored he would be so generous."

For more information about how you can support UWG through an endowment or scholarship, please visit the UWG Give West page.



BUSINESS DEGREE OFFERS MBA ALUMNA A FLEXIBLE FUTURE

MBA Alumna, Dr. Kutlay



BUSINESS DEGREE OFFERS MBA ALUMNA A FLEXIBLE FUTURE

By Karsyn Crain

Dr. Evren Kutlay has always been a dynamic multitasker in her academic career and has now molded both her Master of Business Administration and Master of Music in Piano Performance degrees into a unique career as a music professor.

From fourteen-hour days of essentially nonstop education, moving across the world to pursue a double master's degree, to developing innovative techniques in research using the skills from both her degrees, she has always put the pursuit of knowledge at the forefront of her life.

"I have double-majored throughout my entire academic life." Dr. Kutlay says.

From a very early age in Istanbul, Turkey, she learned to manage her time and developed a deep appreciation for learning.

"I was waking up very early in the mornings to do my readings and theory homework, then took the school bus around 6:30 a.m. to my high school. [After school] I was rushing to the piano conservatory. [...] Also, to catch up to the other students who were studying only at the conservatory and practicing piano for 6-8 hours daily, I had to practice extra hours during weekends, holidays, and each summer."

Later, while studying mathematics at Bogazici University, she fell in love with the applications of math in administrative sciences, which sparked a passion for learning more about economics, business management and marketing. With a curriculum of up to 18 hours of electives allowed, she took as many business and economics classes as she possibly could.

Her interest in administrative sciences coupled with her love for piano and music began an interesting career path. Her plan to graduate from the top university in Turkey, pursue an MBA degree in the United States, and to begin a career in a management position was taking shape.

When it came time to select a university in the U.S., Dr. Mustafa Dilber, a professor with whom she had taken several classes, strongly suggested the University of West Georgia's MBA program, and gave her some flyers about the Richards College of Business. That night, Evren read every detail about the program and decided to apply. She was accepted with a full scholarship and a teaching assistantship.

"By then, I had never left home before, even to travel. I knew nothing. Just dreaming of studying in the U.S. was a revolutionary act in my circle!" she says.

Even though it felt like she was embarking on a daring adventure, she packed her bags, got on a plane to Atlanta, and began her UWG journey.

Dr. Kutlay says she appreciates how diverse the community at the Richards College of Business was during her time here, which continues to consist of students from all over the world. This atmosphere allowed her to enhance her ability to communicate ideas, think critically, and interpret matters both locally and globally with team members of diverse nationalities.

"I felt like I found a huge treasure of a supportive, leading, disciplined (but in a liberating manner), open, success-oriented, hard-working, ethical, and positive environment. It was a unique experience and a dream come true to me because those adjectives were also a perfect match to my personality and work approach. While at UWG, I found myself and what I was looking for."

Dr. Kutlay says that the faculty at the Richards College of Business was exceptional.

"In the MBA program, all of our professors had their unique, innovative approaches to their classes. I was always eager to see what I was going to experience in each class. The MBA program not only provided a conceptual and theoretical basis to all aspects of the administrative sciences, but also integrated one's analytical and creative thinking, decision making, communication and problem solving abilities through both individual and team environments. Within the same class, you could learn to solve a problem both by yourself and as a member of a team."

According to Dr. Kutlay, the industry collaboration in her classes, such as marketing strategy, strategic management and organizational theory, gave her the opportunity to get familiar with real-life experiences, which then supplied her with confidence to feel she was equipped for all the theoretical and practical groundwork to pursue a career for any international institution.

As a graduate research assistant, Dr. Kutlay had the opportunity to work with Dr. Beheruz Sethna in his business challenges course. She learned how to conduct a uniquely designed lecture and got to observe a professional model of attitude and leadership by doing so.

"I feel very lucky to have worked for him. That opportunity was a two-fold, hands-on application of my MBA studies: an academic one through the conduct of the class itself, and a managerial one by working for the president of the University. He is such an inspiration and role model!"

Dr. Kutlay worked as a graduate assistant for Dr. Sethna while he was president of the UWG.

Dr. Sethna said he feels that Dr. Kutlay "is an inspiration in her own right! What diversity of thought and accomplishment! She is incredibly talented and smart. I wish that she could return to UWG as a faculty member."

Even though Dr. Kutlay was in the U.S. to earn her MBA, she still wanted to pursue music. After her first semester, she was accepted into the master's Piano Performance program at UWG and began double-majoring. This was a dream come true for Dr. Kutlay because she did not have to choose one passion over the other.

"I always feel incredibly thankful for UWG providing me with the opportunity to have a double master's degree, and for the supportive UWG faculty. They encouraged me to pursue my dreams."

Dr. Kutlay graduated from UWG with both an MBA and MM in 2001. Upon returning to Turkey, she was offered a position as an art manager and faculty member. Dr. Kutlay felt as if this was the perfect opportunity to integrate both her degrees into one career.



As an art manager, she was involved in organizing the program from a business perspective. In fact, the systemized organizational flow models she created are still being utilized by the department today. Her dual abilities from her MBA and MM were advantageous because she was able to run the business side of the organization while being able to understand artists' needs and communicate effectively with them.

Her career went in an unplanned and unexpected direction after taking the job, and she decided to pursue a PhD in Musicology at Istanbul State Conservatory. After four years, she became the very first graduate of the PhD in Musicology program there and was able to exercise the integration of her MBA and MM perspectives by writing about the effects of music on consumer behavior.

She says when she first began her teaching career, she was the first music appreciation/music history instructor in Turkey teaching classes through powerpoint presentations, in English:

"I accompanied my presentations with the most popular musical examples and integrated visuals and audio. I wanted them actively involved in class [...] It was a challenge to teach an underestimated, less-represented subject, in English, to a diverse student body, but I overcame that with my MBA study experience," she says.

Dr. Kutlay admits that obtaining a degree—especially multiple ones – requires passion and support. She says she was fortunate to find that support at the Richards College of Business.

"The Richards College of Business had a very strong and effective university-industry collaboration that enabled me to become acquainted with real life experience while pursuing my degrees. Therefore, after graduation, I was confident that I was equipped with all the theoretical and practical groundwork to be employed for any international institution."

"In the MBA program, all of the professors had their unique, innovative approaches to their classes. I was always eager to see what I was going to experience in each class."

- Dr. Kutlay, MBA alumna

BUSINESS STUDENTS COLLECT CANS TO BENEFIT LOCAL SOUP KITCHEN

By Kimberly Wooten

For a decade, the Dean's Council of Student Leaders and all of the business student organizations have participated in an annual event to donate canned food items to the Carroll County Soup Kitchen.

The Dean's Council of Student Leaders' project, "Cans for a Cause," donated 398 canned items to the Carroll County Soup Kitchen during the 2020 holiday season.

"The canned food donations from the business clubs have been outstanding for many years," said Sue McBrayer, the Carroll County Soup Kitchen Board of Directors. Gina Tabone who represents the Marketing Club on the Dean's Council of Student Leaders and was in charge of marketing efforts for the event. "I volunteered to do Cans for a Cause bause I am a part of the Deans Council of Student Leaders and everyone there creates a great environment to participate," Tabone said. The Marketing Club collected 179 cans, The Southwire Business Leadership Program collected 19 cans, the marketing club collected 30 cans, the Accounting Club collected ten cans, the Business Learning Community collected 20 cans, and the Enactus club collected 138 cans.

"We're so proud of our student organizations for being dedicated to this fundraiser," said Dr. Faye S. McIntyre, Dean of the Richards College of Business and Sewell Chair of Private Enterprise. "This year has been like no other, and our students have had

to overcome an unprecedented situation in order to organize their clubs, communicate with each other, and organize the logistics of this event. We're so pleased to be able to continue this holiday tradition thanks to their determination."

The competition among the various areas of business seems to encourage the students to donate generously.

"The canned goods collected by the RCB students have helped us tremendously with this larger-than-usual need. As a UWG alumna who majored in business education and then taught business classes for 30 years, I couldn't be prouder of the UWG business students!," said Sue.

All the business student organizations received funds for their clubs. The Marketing Club received \$150, The Enactus Club received \$100, and the remaining clubs received \$50.



Members of Richards College of Business Dean's Council students collected cans from their respective clubs in November to donate to the Carroll County Soup Kitchen.



ALUMNUS TAKES FLIGHT WITH MBA

Capt. Damian Jennette as a
young pilot.



ALUMNUS TAKES FLIGHT WITH MBA

By Karsyn Crain

Flying airplanes has always been a part of Captain Damian Jennette's life. He flew solo for the first time on his 16th birthday, and he earned his pilot's license on his 17th birthday. After taking on various flying jobs, such as a skydiver jump pilot, flight instructor, and as a charter pilot for celebrities, it was clear that flying would be in his future.

After earning a bachelor's degree in applied science and technology with a major in aviation flight and technology, Capt. Jennette landed his first airline job in 2000 for Atlantic Southeast Airlines, a subsidiary of Delta Airlines. During his time there, he was promoted to Captain. In 2007, he left Atlantic Southeast for AirTran Airways.

While at AirTran in 2008, the Great Recession hit and the airline announced they were going to begin furloughing pilots. Concerned for his family's financial well being, Capt. Jennette decided to go into the securities industry as a backup plan.

"I always had an interest in financial services, but I needed a little kick (or potential shove) to get me started," he recalls.

After that initial shove, Capt. Jennette decided to take his education even further. Using the GI Bill from his time in the U.S. Marine Corps, he decided to go back to school and pursue his dream of studying finance at the master's level. He decided to enroll in the Georgia WebMBA program at the University of West Georgia (UWG).

Capt. Jennette says that Dr. Hope Udombon, the administrative director of WebMBA at UWG and graduate academic advisor, was a driving force in helping him decide to pursue his master's degree.

"She was honest and forthcoming that the journey isn't easy, especially since my undergraduate degree was in aviation, and I had no academic business experience."

Reflecting on when she first met Capt. Jennette, Dr. Udombon says "Damian is an outstanding individual. I knew that earning an MBA was something he desired, and all he needed was the encouragement to pursue his dreams. I am so proud of him."



Capt. Damian Jennette is pictured while on tour with the United States Marine Corps.

Balancing a full course load, a family, flying full time for AirTran Airways as a Boeing 717 First Officer, and owning a financial services firm was not easy, but he graduated with his MBA in 2013. In that same year, Capt. Jennette became a First Officer with Southwest Airlines when they acquired AirTran.

"The Richards College of Business set a very solid educational foundation for me. I have built upon that foundation through experience, but if I didn't have that basis, I would have nothing to build from."

Capt. Jennette says that almost all of his professors have had a large impact on his life, but Dr. Charles Hodges was especially influential in his core understanding of markets and valuing companies. Kim Holders' Principles of Macroeconomics class also left a lasting impression on Capt. Jennette because she made learning about economics fun.

"I was always fond of how the professors and lecturers were willing to work with me. I felt they were taking my education as seriously as I was, which was an added value. Every single course I took, both in undergrad and graduate, has been useful in my journey. I use elements of accounting, finance, as well as statistics and decision analysis, almost daily."

Capt. Jennette continues to find opportunities to integrate his financial background with his career as a pilot. In 2016, the pilot union put out a vote for a contract they negotiated that failed to be ratified. So when the union solicited new pilot volunteers with backgrounds in the field of retirement plans, benefit plans and financial analytics, Damian jumped at the opportunity.

"We were able to greatly enhance the wages, work rules, and retirement system for our pilots and increase the value of the contract to more than \$3 billion over the term of the contract. The failed agreement was valued at \$901 million over its shorter term. This also includes a \$410 million dollar signing bonus."

Since the pandemic hit in 2020, Capt. Jennette has been working with the company to design early retirement programs and extended leave programs. Using analytics and the skills he gained while completing his MBA, he has been able to show how the manpower of the company would be negatively impacted by furloughs.

All in all, Capt. Jennette says he's proud to be able to use his talents to have a positive impact on both the company and its employees during such a difficult year.

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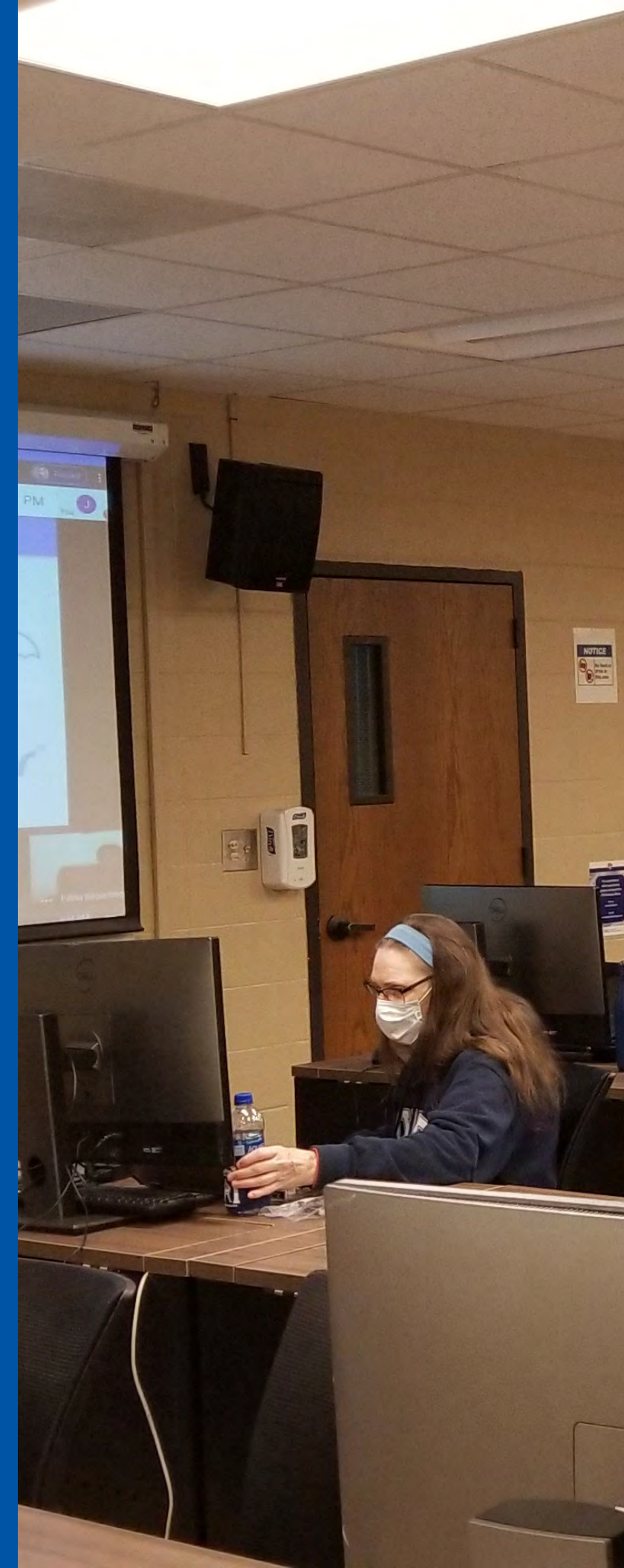
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CYBERSECURITY WORKSHOPS AUGMENT LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Students attend a hybrid workshop on a cybersecurity in one of the computer labs on campus, which enabled students to join both in-persons as well as virtually



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CYBERSECURITY WORKSHOPS AUGMENT LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

By Kimberly Wooten

University of West Georgia (UWG) Management Information Systems Professor Dr. Jeannie Pridmore has partnered with Rausch Advisory Security Consultant Joshua Sorenson, a global information security leader with 15 years of professional experience, to create and offer cybersecurity workshops for UWG students using RaspberryPi both virtually and on campus.

“Working with industry professionals to create student-centered, hands-on labs is a key component in our mission to engage students, inspire learning, and for the Management of Information System group to develop student interest in cybersecurity,” Dr. Pridmore says.

Mr. Sorenson developed the idea to use RaspberryPi devices and PiHole to create a Domain Name System (DNS) filtering server, a sinkhole that protects devices from unwanted content, and created the cybersecurity lab materials. According to raspberrypi.org, RaspberryPi makes computing and digital marketing more accessible by providing low-cost, high-performance, single-board computers and free software. RaspberryPi is a small computing device that allows students to learn how to design, build and program digital systems as well as troubleshoot cybersecurity scenarios.

Mr. Sorenson led the workshop virtually. On-campus, Justin Triggs and Ashley Mallari, two graduate students working on their MBA with a concentration in Business Intelligence and Cybersecurity, guided the in-person students through the lab. The students were instructed how to set up the RaspberryPi devices and how to install PiHole. Nineteen students majoring in management information systems, computer science, and pursuing their master’s of business administration degrees attended the workshop, both face-to-face and virtually.

RaspberryPi’s goal is to harness the power of computing and digital technologies for work, to solve problems, and to enable people to express themselves creatively. By combining RaspberryPi with PiHole, the student can learn how to build a DNS filtering server that will block over 100,000 ad-serving domains.

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100% ONLINE
TEAM-BASED

YOUR PATH TO
YOUR MBA

100% Online in
5 SEMESTERS

AFFORDABLE
ACCESSIBLE
ACCREDITED

GO WEST AND MASTER IT. “I chose to get my MBA because I knew it would be an instrumental part to my success professionally. I enrolled in the WebMBA program because it gives me the flexibility I need in my busy life and will allow me to earn my degree while gaining hands-on professional experience in the workplace. I decided to continue West because of the supportive faculty here at UWG. They pushed me outside of my comfort zone and challenged me to get more involved. The University of West Georgia truly is a place where your wildest dreams can become reality . . . if you work for it.”

Learn more at westga.edu/business.

UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA



“Since the system blocks and not just hides these domains, the created DNS filtering server improves overall network performance while also securing the network. Using PiHole’s statistics web interface, the students can view all of the domains being blocked,” Dr. Pridmore said.

“Having industry connections like Mr. Sorenson, someone willing to give his time and impart his knowledge to our students, is special. Having a Dean like Dr. Faye S. McIntyre, who is willing to financially support these unique forms of student learning, is what makes UWG and RCOB such an exceptional place to learn,” Dr. Pridmore said.

This was the first workshop in a series planned for the 2020-2021 academic year. During the workshop, Mr. Sorenson provided students with hands-on skills that are highly sought after by industry employers.

“Additional RaspberryPi labs will provide our students’ unique hands-on learning experiences, such as an introduction to programming with Python and a Makerspace lab to create a control system with multiple sensors and LED lights. The skills learned in the labs are fundamental in developing cybersecurity skills,” explained Dr. Pridmore. “Hopefully, these labs will create student excitement and lead to producing graduates who will help fill the cybersecurity workforce shortage.”

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OF BUSINESS

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Roy Richards, Sr. Hall





FACULTY AND STAFF EXCITED TO MOVE INTO NEW HOME: RICHARDS HALL

Photo by Amy K. Lavender
Roy Richards Sr. Hall as builders
were completing the brickwork and
working on the front entrance.





FACULTY AND STAFF EXCITED TO MOVE INTO NEW HOME: RICHARDS HALL

By Karsyn Crain

The Richards College of Business has been anticipating our relocation to the new Roy Richards, Sr. Hall late this summer upon the final completion of the building.

The official groundbreaking ceremony was October 18, 2019. Now, we're closing in on the estimated completion of the building, which is the end of May. The grand opening ceremony to celebrate the completion of the building is tentatively planned for this fall pending updated COVID-19 regulations.

The approximately 68,696 square-foot, three-story building will include one lecture hall, two computer labs, a Management Information Systems (MIS) lab, a social media lab, nine classrooms and seven student collaborative spaces. It will house 62 faculty plus 21 staff. These state-of-the-art facilities will offer a flexible teaching and learning environment along with common spaces that foster a sense of community within the department.

Dr. Beheruz Sethna, a regents' professor of marketing at the Richards College of Business, says that this is an important day, 63 years in the making:



“The original ‘business building’ was constructed in 1958 at a cost of about half a million dollars. It housed the entire business faculty from the time business started as a separate entity in the 1970s for about three decades. In 1996, another huge milestone occurred when the college was endowed and the name of the college and the building changed to the Richards College of Business. We were all still in one building until the reconstruction of Adamson Hall was completed in 2003, and some of our faculty and administrative offices moved to Adamson.”

Professor Philip Reeves, a member of the New Building Committee, says he is excited to begin working in the building:

“As a member of the New Building Committee, the group that helped plan and design Richards Hall, I look forward to working and teaching in it as long as they’ll have me! From the new reconfigurable classrooms to the fantastic MIS lab, the building will be a proud point for both the Richards College and the University of West Georgia.”

The faculty and staff say they are excited and anticipating the opening of the building.

“Now, we will all move—together again after 18 years—to Richards Hall in 2021!,” Dr. Sethna says. “Congratulations to Dean McIntyre and her team for making this happen. And great thanks to the Richards family for their support through the decades. We are the beneficiaries of those great efforts.”

Dr. Susana Velez-Castrillon, professor of management, Dr. James H. Burton, professor of real estate, and Cheryl Brown, professor of marketing,

all say they are most excited for everyone in the college to be together in the same building again, classes and offices having been split between Miller Hall and Adamson Hall since 2003.

“I am excited about the opportunity for our students to just hang around and bump into each other,” says Dr. Velez-Castrillon. “It is interesting to think about a marketing major meeting a finance major, and this interaction is going to help take their business ideas to the next level, and they met because of these collaborative spaces.”

Ken Hilderhoff, a professor of marketing and real estate, is thankful for those that made the building of the new facility possible. He says he is enthusiastic because of “the benefit of greater collaboration between the students and faculty that creates a greater learning environment and fulfills the mission of RCOB. The ability to work closely under one roof with newly designed classrooms for experiential learning and more engagement during class time with the students is priceless.”

Dr. Faye S. McIntyre, the Dean of the Richards College of Business and Sewell Chair of Private Enterprise, says she is grateful for all of those involved in the completion of the project.

“We are thrilled with the progress towards completion of Roy Richards, Sr. Hall and are excited at the prospect of moving in later this summer! There are so many people to thank for this momentous achievement for the Richards College of Business, and we look forward to an official ‘thank you’ and the opportunity to welcome our community to the facility this fall.”

BUSINESS SKILLS LEND UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE TO HEALTHCARE

By Karsyn Crain

Sholeh Rezaee has always dreamed of becoming a doctor. After receiving a Bachelor of Science degree at Georgia Southwestern State University, she applied to medical school. However, she ran into some roadblocks. She was waitlisted in her first application cycle to medical school and, ultimately, not accepted.

This, however, did not stop Rezaee from pursuing her dreams. She knew she wanted to do something that would not only strengthen her application when she reapplied, but she also wanted to develop skills that would diversify her background. So she decided to pursue a Master’s of Business Administration here at the University of West Georgia’s Richards College of Business.

“I have always been interested in business and entrepreneurship, but never had the opportunity to pursue this interest. Coming from a pre-medicine background, I had no experience in the field of business. After some research, I learned how obtaining an MBA would allow me to look at medicine from a different perspective, navigate an ever-changing healthcare landscape, and become a physician leader. I spent time learning teamwork, communication, and leadership skills that have intersected with my passion for medicine, giving me the tools I need to be an effective physician leader.”

The flexibility of being able to receive an MBA after only one year at the Richards College of Business is what appealed to Rezaee the most, and drew her to apply. She says that Dr. Udombon was instrumental in her journey of attending medical school.

“Although I had doubts about my ability to achieve my goal of attending medical school, I vividly remember Dr. Udombon being emphatically supportive and so confident that I would reach my goals. She encouraged me to apply for the Early Executive Track program, which exposed me to amazing experiences and people while honing my professional skills. She also advised me throughout the program to ensure I could finish my degree before matriculating at the Medical College of Georgia in the fall.”

Razaee earned her degree through the Early Executive Track, a program for MBA students who want to gain real-world experience and is designed to enhance professionalism and leadership skills before they enter the workplace. She says her favorite memory at the Richards College of Business was the Markstrat Simulation in Marketing Strategy with Dr. Nickell.

“Every week we altered and devised a strategy to effectively increase our brand’s Share Price Index through research and development, increasing market share through brand perception and loyalty, branching out into new markets, and ultimately creating the most shareholder value. It was fun (but also nerve wracking) seeing how our brand and customers were affected by each decision we made weekly. The last day of the simulation was most exciting. Our goal was to win, but we took risks near the end that we were not sure would pay off. As in life, sometimes the risks pay off and our team, Moxie, ended up winning the class simulation.”

Healthcare itself is a business, and employers value professionals who are well-versed in financial analytics and business management. Rezaee has already noticed how her MBA skills have directly impacted her career.

“The skills I developed throughout my MBA program have given me the tools needed to bridge the gap between clinical knowledge and the business of healthcare. I gained ‘hard skills’ that I had never been exposed to before: accounting, finance, strategy, forecasting, and economics. The COVID-19 pandemic has exemplified how important it is to have an understanding of the business side of healthcare and the many-facets of medicine.

“As we work to roll out a statewide COVID-19 Community Vaccination Education initiative, my background in business has been really helpful in understanding and navigating this from a health

policy, economics, and strategy standpoint. It has prepared me to be influential in bettering the health and well-being of individuals and our society on a systematic scale in the future.”

Rezaee does not lack in diversity of her interests and has had a variety of opportunities to explore them, such as volunteering at the Rapha Clinic of West Georgia.

“My time at the Rapha Clinic demonstrated firsthand to me the healthcare need in underserved and rural Georgia, and allowed me to apply my MBA background to solving this problem--using data analysis, forecasting, and health policy.”

She was learning both in and outside of the classroom as she was also a graduate-assistant for our UWG’s student-athletes.

“Having played soccer in college myself, the graduate-assistant position was perfect for me as it allowed me to continue being involved in athletics and work with student-athletes to ensure success in their education and help them navigate the challenges of being a collegiate athlete.”

Sholeh Rezaee took the initiative to expand her knowledge in a field she was unfamiliar with, and excelled in it. She graduated with a 4.0 in 2020 and now, she is enrolled in the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University and pursuing her doctorate in medicine. clinical knowledge and the business of healthcare. I gained ‘hard skills’ that I had never been exposed to before: accounting, finance, strategy, forecasting, and economics. The COVID-19 pandemic has exemplified how important it is to have an understanding of the business side of healthcare and the many-facets of medicine.

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Photo by UCM

Sholeh Rezaee decided to Go west for her MBA before starting her medical doctorate degree to give her the administrative knowledge she'll need to advance in her field.



STUDYING ABROAD IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

Marketing and Management students traveled to South Africa in 2018. They pictured at Cape Point, the southernmost tip of the African continent.



STUDYING ABROAD IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

By Karsyn Crain

While the pandemic has limited our mobility and caused travel agencies to hit pause on traditional travel experiences, the Richards College of Business has simply hit reset and reimagined a new study abroad experience for students this spring.

In a pre-pandemic world, students had the opportunity to study economics, marketing, and management as part of their normal classes throughout the semester, then travel during spring break to places that correspond to what they were learning in class. Past study abroad trips headed to destinations such as London, Greece, and South Africa. Students applied what they learned in class to multicultural group projects and interactions with top executives and business professionals in the countries they were visiting. “We have been doing a Study Abroad Program at RCOB for over 12 years and have seen the benefits for students, both personally and professionally,” says Dr. Erich Bergiel, professor of management and the professor of the study abroad class this spring.

The pandemic may prohibit us from being able to build interpersonal relationships as easily, however, it has caused a shift in communication to function significantly through the use of technology, and it is important to have the skills to be able to do so.

The increase in virtual communication in the business world makes the class quite relevant for



Student Brianna Morris is photographed during her trip to England with Economics and Marketing Departments.

business majors today to gain skills in international communication, oral presentation, writing, and how to use management-specific knowledge in the analysis of diverse business problems.

Dr. Bergiel says that, in business, it is important to have the perspective of others, and studying abroad takes students out of their comfort zone, exposing them to different cultures and increasing their awareness of diverse individuals they may have interactions with outside of the classroom. “While we knew we couldn’t travel, we did feel we could still provide some of those benefits through virtual international “touchpoints,”” Dr. Bergiel says. “The touchpoints would be any opportunity or experience we felt would broaden the minds and enhance the global and cultural knowledge of our students.”

As a result, a group of professors, including Dr. Erich Bergiel, agreed to offer a course this semester that allowed students to broaden their perspectives with international experience while in a virtual environment. An added plus was that rather than focusing on one country or region, students have been able to explore the whole world. “When Dr. Gainey and I first discussed this project, we realized it would have to be something attractive and educational to the students, as well as affordable,” Dr. Bergiel notes.



MBA student Katlyn Bradshaw is photographed in front of ancient ruins during the 2019 study abroad trip to Greece with the Marketing and Management Departments.



Wolfie likes to travel the world, too! He accompanies all of our students on their voyages. On this trip to Europe, he made a quick stop in Venice.

While many students run into the problem of finances when considering studying abroad, virtual study abroad is much more affordable and flexible.

Dr. Bergiel points out that “Most other models for the virtual study abroad programs pay for a third-party to organize guest speakers and activities. While there is much benefit to this, these programs often cost students a couple hundred dollars. We wanted to find a way to accomplish just as much, but at little or no cost to the students. We were able to do this by reaching out to our accomplished network of international alumni who were incredibly eager to volunteer.”

Students attended a virtual presentation from guest speakers who are well-established in the business world, where they had the opportunity to ask relevant questions about business and culture. One of those alumni guest speakers is Tornike Zirakishvili, the Deputy CEO of Enterprise Georgia.

Tornike says that “The course gives students a chance to interact with real-life practitioners from around the globe. In a matter of minutes, they can grasp that specific business etiquette pertaining to each country.”

“For me, personally, it was a chance to go back in time to a place when I, myself, was sitting at the same desk almost a decade ago and conveyed that the world is just a bit grander than one might imagine. I was also excited to share insights of things to be aware of as students progress toward a professional career. Of course, it was also a chance to give something minor back to the University of West Georgia, which has given me quite a lot.”

As part of the class requirements, students engaged in various activities such as choosing an international location to observe through webcams, attending an international virtual tour and giving a presentation on that experience, as well as conducting a Live Case Study with an international business where they competed with groups from the class as well as groups from around the world.

Students also participated in a group assignment in which they were connected with an international liaison to interview them about business and culture particular to their area.



"I'm extremely pleased that our professors have been flexible and innovative and found a way to still offer a study abroad experience for our students," said Dr. Brad Prince, associate dean of Richards College of Business.

"At the Richards College of Business, we feel these programs offer our students a higher level of understanding and enrich their college experience by exposing them to different cultures, expanding

their network, and providing them with real-world examples of what they have been studying in class."

Dr. Bergiel echoes Dr. Prince's sentiment. "When it was all said and done, I think we were able to accomplish two things: provide students an opportunity to broaden their minds and expand their cultural knowledge, and give them the desire to go on their own international adventure. And, perhaps, next time they'll get to experience it first-hand."

"The course gives students a chance to interact with real-life practitioners from around the globe."

- Bergiel



In addition to historical sights and landmarks, students also visit businesses during their trips. Here, students stopped for a quick photo while at Interweave Agency in Athens, Greece.

EMPOWERING YOUTH: UWG ALUMNUS CREATES NONPROFIT TO FOSTER SUCCESS AMONG STUDENTS

By Taylor King

It all started with a catchy Instagram handle and a young man from inner-city Atlanta who went West to see his dreams through. Now, through his nonprofit organization, The Young Executives Foundation, Keith Crawford '17 is using the knowledge instilled in him at the University of West Georgia to make a difference in the lives of others.

Although he wasn't sure UWG was right for him when he was deciding which avenue of higher education to take, Crawford certainly has no regrets. In fact, his love for community service and networking all started at the university.

"I decided to go to West Georgia in 2014 after a lot of thought," Crawford said. "Coming from Atlanta, it felt like a much slower pace than I was used to for the first couple of months. I had a conversation with my mom, though, and she told me I should get involved on campus."

To say Crawford dove in is an understatement. During his time at UWG, he was a member of the Residence Hall Association, president of the Hall Council in the Oaks, a resident assistant (RA), a member and later president of the Student Government Association, and the president of Models and Business. Furthermore, Crawford received his undergraduate degree in business administration from the Richards College of Business in only three years.

The inspiration behind The Young Executives came from Crawford's background. He grew up in the Lakewood area in a single parent household. The kindness of his community and the impact it made on him caused Crawford to want to give back.



Contributed photo
Keith Crawford



Contributed photo

Volunteers hand out free bookbags during one of the community events hosted by the Young Executive Foundation.

He set out to create opportunities for young people and provide resources they would need to be successful. The Young Executives Foundation Inc. was officially founded on Sept. 18, 2017, the same year Crawford graduated from UWG.

The Young Executives hosts community service and outreach events, and offers a variety of programs that allow youth to exhibit their talents. In addition, Crawford has created numerous internships for students in different areas including communications, social media and graphic design. All internships offer students college credit. Crawford is also hoping to expand the nonprofit into the community. He hopes to implement his programs in Atlanta Public Schools and Clayton County Schools. One such program, called Transform Youth Everyday, is based around the importance of community service, health and wellness, career readiness and financial literacy. "We do community events, financial literacy classes, entrepreneur classes, career expos and networking galas," he said. "All that we do – outside of the schools and even in the community – is solely to make an impact that helps the community grow stronger and produce more successful people. That is the ultimate goal of The Young Executives."

To learn more about The Young Executives Foundation Inc., visit the foundation's website at www.theyoungexecs.org.

MARKETING PROFESSOR VOLUNTEERS IN VACCINE TRIAL

By Kimberly Wooten

In August, Richards College of Business marketing professor and former University of West Georgia (UWG) president Dr. Beheruz N. Sethna decided to do what he could to help others during the pandemic by participating in one of the COVID-19 vaccine trials.

"I wanted to do my part, so I volunteered to be a subject in a blind trial," Dr. Sethna said.

Before he was accepted into the trial, there were numerous screenings and questions, as well as a blood test and a nasal swab to determine if he was already infected.

He said he was nervous about participating in the trial. However, while Dr. Sethna's first passion is teaching, his second is helping his fellow man, so he decided to "take the plunge," but with caution.

"Before I went, I asked about the risk to others, such as my wife at home and my students and colleagues at the The University of West Georgia. That would have been a deal-breaker for me. They assured me that I am not infectious by virtue of the shot (because the cells in the vaccine are dead). I asked again in person when I went for the injection, and got the same answer."

Dr. Sethna participated in the Moderna mRNA trial, which has about a 94% success rate for any symptoms and a 100% success rate for preventing severe symptoms.

"This was a double-blind study, so the nurse, the doctor I interacted with and I didn't know whether I received a placebo or the real vaccine," Dr. Sethna says.

Moderna and Pfizer both require two shots, four and three weeks apart. Dr. Sethna took his first shot in late August and took his second one in late September. Before he was given each shot, he gave vials of blood for testing and had a nasal swab test, which was negative each time.

"For about a week after each shot, I had to monitor and report daily my reactions (about 15 questions) on an app – temperature, redness or swelling at the site of the injection, any respiratory problems, etc.," Dr. Sethna explained. "I did not experience any reactions, which probably means that I got the placebo, but we can't rule out my having gotten the vaccine. If I did not get the real vaccine, I will be given the opportunity to get it, though how high trial participants will be in the priority list, I don't know for sure."

Dr. Sethna humbly asserts that his participation in the trial was a small action but an important one that he was proud to be a part of.



Photo by Amy K. Lavender

Dr. Beheruz N. Sethna, marketing professor and former president of UWG, is always looking for ways to help his fellow man. This year, he helped by volunteering in the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine trial.



A WOLF ABROAD: UWG ALUMNUS DESCRIBES EXPERIENCE IN ASIA DURING PANDEMIC

Contributed photo

UWG Alumnus Brett Weinman is pictured with the Wu' xi Triathlon Club. Weinman says as things get back to normal in China, he's excited to start racing again.



A WOLF ABROAD: UWG ALUMNUS DESCRIBES EXPERIENCE IN ASIA DURING PANDEMIC

By Taylor King and Karsyn Crain

Living in a foreign country can have its challenges: the language barrier, the culture shock, getting to know new people. University of West Georgia alumnus Joseph Brett Weinman '11 was prepared for all of this when he moved to China the year he graduated from UWG. However, like the rest of the world, he didn't expect COVID-19.

Weinman credits his mentor, Dr. Charles Hodges, an accounting and finance professor in the Richards College of Business, for encouraging him to work abroad. Weinman began his journey in China as an expatriate, or temporary worker.

After teaching English for one year, however, he began a career as an accounting and finance professor at Soochow University in Suzhou, a city of 11 million people located 60 miles outside Shanghai.

During his time in China, Weinman has explored other Asian countries, including Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. His favorite destination outside of China is Nepal, he said, where he enjoys trekking in the Himalayas.

In February 2020, Weinman traveled to Myanmar and Thailand. Early on in his journey, he was aware of the growing threat of COVID-19, but cases were minimal, and the upcoming lockdown was unfathomable at the time. Nonetheless, everything was about to change.

"I was prepared for travelling, and for any difficulties I might experience, but nothing could have prepared me mentally for the pandemic," Weinman said.

Due to the seriousness of the situation, Weinman chose to stay in Phuket, a popular island for tourism in Thailand. It was during this time that the accounting professor learned his university in China would be going fully online - a new challenge in an already unprecedented situation.

"Because I was able to teach the courses online, I could still travel around to some other small local islands for short trips, and that really helped with cabin fever," Weinman said.

When new cases of the virus started to decrease, Weinman planned a return to China and was able to return to Suzhou safely in the nick of time, quarantining in a hotel for two weeks before he was allowed to return to his home.

"I was really lucky because they closed the border to foreigners four days after I arrived back home," he said.

Weinman says his time studying at UWG prepared him for the experience of teaching during a pandemic in ways that he could not have imagined.

"During those times, the economy was in a recession, and graduating and beginning my career didn't seem to be ideal at the time. After studying at the RCOB for several years and working at the university, I became quite familiar with professors and staff, and everyone was very supportive. Since I was not satisfied with workplace office culture, I began chatting with some professors about what other options were available for me to have a career that wasn't so office-oriented. Dr. Charles Hodges really sparked my interest when we began having conversations about how China had been developing and how they would potentially become one of the world's major economic powers in the future."

Dr. Hodges suggested that Weinman move to China to teach English, learn about Chinese culture, and try to learn Mandarin Chinese. Weinman was ecstatic about this idea, but due to the recession and other personal circumstances, he was not financially able to do so. He says going to China to teach was like a dream to him. One day, Dr. Hodges asked Weinman if he would really go to China given the chance, and he said absolutely.

"On that day my life completely changed. Dr. Hodges said that he had been chatting with his wife about my situation, and they had agreed to provide me with some financial support to get my journey started, and helped me land a position at a university teaching English outside of Wuhan. I was absolutely overtaken with all kinds of emotions because I had no idea that this dream could actually become a reality."

Weinman left for Wuhan, China the next fall with a suitcase full of clothes, a laptop, and 2,000 yuan, and he never looked back. He makes sure to visit Dr. Hodges and his wife when he returns to the states because they significantly impacted his education as well as the rest of his career.

"I believe the education I received at UWG was excellent and what I learned most definitely prepared me for this experience, but it is the faculty and staff that really makes the University of West Georgia a great university. If you seek out the right people and show them your value, they will definitely find a way to help you get that real support you need for your future. So the education is a two-fold experience: knowledge from books/instruction, and the bonds you make with supportive people who really want to help you."

Life in China has changed in response to the virus, Wienman said. His personal hobby of competing in triathlons has also been put on hold due to the pandemic, like most outdoor/physical activities around the world. He used to compete in various races during his free time:

"My favorite race was the Yellow River Crossing Challenge. The race is extremely short; two heats of around three minutes, but quite difficult due to the freezing water, swift current, and high altitude (3,000 meters above sea-level). I placed ninth in my category and would really like to do that race again. After the pandemic began, all of the races were cancelled, so I didn't get to join any races during the 2020 season."

Luckily for Weinman, as cases decrease, activities have slowly begun to open back up, allowing residents to do the things they enjoyed in a pre-pandemic world, once again.

"This year I signed up with the Wu'xi Triathlon Club from a neighboring city because I travelled to so many races with that group and really enjoy their club attitude. Although I haven't started training yet, I will join a few races this year and try to get back in the scene after being unable to race for over a year now."

SOUTHWIRE BUSINESS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

By Karsyn Crain

Partnership Focuses on Mentoring and Internships

The Southwire Business Leadership Program (SBLP) is a brand-new, innovative program for undergraduates at the Richards College of Business that allows students to step outside of the classroom and gain valuable experience in a real workplace setting through an internship. The program is a strategic partnership between the Richards College of Business and Southwire Company, LLC and presents students with unique opportunities to learn directly from business leaders at Southwire while taking classes that correspond to their internship.

Dr. Erich Bergiel, the advisor of the SBLP and a professor of marketing at the University of West Georgia says that the program “is an incredible opportunity for students to get that real-world business experience while still attending classes.”

The SBLP is a highly selective program that prepares students for the competitive business world. Once students are chosen through the application process, they attend an orientation in the fall. Orientation consists of developmental seminars in which students learn about professional development, leadership, and soft skills from guest speakers.

In the spring, students begin their internship at Southwire, where they can integrate themselves into the company’s business culture. They are assigned to specific projects, mentors, and departments that coincide with their field of study. The program culminates with a project that the students work on over the course of their internship, which they then present to the board of directors at Southwire.

The project allows students to gain hands-on business experience as they work to address a current business need or opportunity alongside their personal mentor in their chosen field, as well as real-time workplace application through their individual projects. Students also have a chance to give back to the community by volunteering with Project Gift.

Not only do students gain skills in leadership and business while still taking classes, but they also have a chance of being hired right out of college. At the end of the program, some students are offered a full-time position at Southwire.

Nathan Powell, a student in the program, recently spoke about his experience with the SBLP:

“My experience overall with the program is outstanding. I can’t really think of any other program or internship available to college students that is better than this program with the Richards College of Business and Southwire Company. The projects that you get to work on give you real-world experience in business, and the many connections you make and the mentorships available in this program are phenomenal. You will be matched with people that not only care about how you form your professional career, but also care about your personal life as well.”

Nathan says that his favorite part about the program is the relationships he has built with the people at Southwire and the feedback he receives from leadership.

Through this program, students get to explore a career path they may not have considered before. They have the opportunity to network with various professionals in the field while continuing to build and refine the business skills they have developed in the classroom.

We invite readers to suggest this program to any UWG business students who may be interested. Contact Dr. Erich Bergiel at ebergiel@westga.edu for more information or to apply.



Photo by Amy K. Lavender

Pictured, from left, are the students currently enrolled in the SBLP program and the mentors who are making it a reality: Kate Barlett of Southwire, Naomi Soisson, Shae Hungerfor, Prof. Erich Bergiel of UWG, Caitlyn James, Brian Kamau Muchai, and Kim Sipes of Southwire.