



NELSON RUSCHE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

RUSCHE REVIEW



» HIGHLIGHTS



After 46 years, welcome back Rick Lowry



Blame it on the marching band



To buy Gucci – or not



Management students find value in community service

PILOTING HIS CAREER: MBA STUDENT FUELED BY SUCCESS

A 19-hour day is routine. Work and then school. Then team meetings, strategy and reading. Set the alarm, get a few hours of sleep, and do it all over again. From 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. If it sounds exhausting, it's because it is.

But Corey Johnson '17, currently an MBA student at SFA, is young and inspired, so he can handle a long day. And while he has plenty in front of him, there's an end in sight. He only has four classes left and expects to have his master's degree by fall 2022.

Even if an MBA wasn't on the table, Johnson would have enough to keep him busy. In his fourth year with Pilot Flying J, a fuel and travel center company based in Knoxville, Tennessee, Johnson is moving up the ranks at an impressive pace.

After Pilot Flying J's 24-week Leadership Academy for new hires, which Johnson took shortly after earning his bachelor's in marketing, he relocated to Dallas and became a general manager designate, then sales support coordinator, then sales strategy account manager – his territory included north Texas,



Corey Johnson '17, now an MBA student at SFA, is rising through the ranks at Pilot Flying J, one of the nation's largest privately held companies. This photo was taken before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oklahoma, Colorado and Kansas – and now sales training specialist. He's experienced in operations, recruiting, training, customer retention and credit processing. Pilot Flying J recognized his achievements last year by inviting him into its Founders Club.

"At Pilot they say you'll never do the same thing twice," Johnson said, referring to the opportunities offered by a company that employs nearly 30,000 people and operates in 44 states and six Canadian provinces.

He negotiates directly with trucking companies that rely on Pilot Flying J to fuel their fleets.

"You have to pay attention to detail, and you have to be mindful of body language and tone – yours and theirs," he said. "It's pretty intense."

With the foundation of his career already built, and with a master's degree on the way, Johnson is in good shape. But there was a time when his life was marked by great uncertainty. In August 2005 when he was in the fifth grade, Hurricane Katrina made landfall, forcing Johnson and his family – a younger sister, mother and maternal grandparents – to evacuate New Orleans for Dallas. Though the storm moved on and New Orleans recovered, Johnson remained in Dallas.

"It changed my life for the better for sure," Johnson said.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



I hope your summer is off to a great start.

We have successfully completed an

outstanding academic year in the Rusche College of Business, and summer is in full swing. I hope you enjoy catching up on all the accomplishments of our students, faculty and staff in this edition of the Rusche Review.

The summer session has marked a return to near-normal operations on campus, with in-person student orientation sessions already underway. I can't begin to tell you how great it feels to once again be speaking to a room full of new students, family and friends! Summer activities are injecting new levels of energy and enthusiasm into the college, and this will serve as a great foundation for future successes.

The generous support of our alumni and friends has not only been essential to our daily operations, but it has allowed us to continue making fantastic facility upgrades to the benefit of our students. In addition to all that you will find in this edition of the Rusche Review, we are looking forward to sharing news with you on many more exciting developments in the near future, so stay tuned!

Lumberjacks definitely make great leaders, and with your continued support we plan to lead the way into the next academic year. Our focus remains squarely on the success of our students, and you will find in this edition of the newsletter that, together, our efforts are yielding great results. Thank you for all that you do to support our college.

As always, axe 'em!

Tim Bisping, Dean

Coming out of a Jesuit high school eight years later, Johnson had plenty of options. But he wanted to run track for a Division I program – which he did in the 800-meter his sophomore year of college – and keep his summer job back home at Kroger so he could graduate without debt. At SFA Johnson could do both, so he chose the university over at least four others.

When he first arrived in Nacogdoches he planned to go into education and be a high school counselor. But during orientation he befriended a group of business majors. He soon found himself at the McGee Business Building, where he'd happily remain until earning his bachelor's.

"I miss my professors," he said, citing the influences of Drs. Kahla, Ballenger, Harden, Allen, Cox, Thornley, Crocker and Reese, when he was on campus every day absorbing knowledge.

"The fourth floor of the college was my home. There were so many things to be involved with if you wanted to be involved."

Even though he lives in Dallas and takes class over the internet as one of the college's first Zoom MBA students, Johnson is still a member of the Society for the Advancement of Management and has a seat on the Rusche Alumni Business Advisory Council. He's recruited for Pilot Flying J at SFA and has returned to campus to speak at the Career Success Passport and the Campus to Career programs.

Being a high producer at a big company while also excelling in the classroom as a graduate student takes a lot of work. In Johnson's case, that means 7 a.m. to 2 a.m., but that's not a problem.

"It's a big day, and it's a regular day," he said.

MANAGEMENT STUDENTS FIND VALUE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

When Sharron and Roy Alston came to Nacogdoches in 1968, the azaleas and the dogwoods were in bloom, and Roy, holding a doctorate in math and in need of a job, was offered a position in the math department. All of it was just too much to turn down.

Goodbye, Lubbock. Hello, East Texas.

Four decades later, in 2008, Roy retired. He and Sharron, the parents of two sons, live out on four acres north of town. Life is good. But it's also catching up with them. What used to be easy isn't easy anymore, especially when it comes to keeping up with a big piece of land.

So, around three years ago while at an SFA basketball game, they applied for a service request through The Big Event, a Student Affairs community service program. The request was granted, and since that time, business students with the Society for the Advancement of Management have headed out to the Alston home a few times each year for gardening and heavy yard work.

"We can do things, but we can't do them for long," Sharron said. "It's been a great help."

The service, of course, is also social.

"We love visiting with the students and hearing about what they're going to do after they graduate," Sharron said.

One of the people the Alstons met was management graduate and former SAM president Daniel Rowland, who now works as a sales execution manager for Coca-Cola Southwest Beverages in Houston. He brings a bit of humility to his new job, something he learned in part by pruning trees, moving boulders, breaking up concrete and painting patio furniture out at the Alston property.

"It makes you think about how you can help others," he said of his service. "It will carry on in my career. I think it's vital for leadership."

Rowland started out at James Madison University. But things didn't work out in Virginia so he returned to Texas, where he worked for three years at Chick-fil-A.

He rose to the position of production director at the Spring location, which at the time was ringing up more than \$7 million a year in revenue. The experience gave Rowland a good taste of leadership and teamwork in a high-pressure environment. But without a degree, he was likely at a dead end.

He went back to college in 2018, the second time around at SFA with his sights set on a business degree. He was tutoring at the Academic Assistance and Resource Center when he met fellow tutor Mikala Groshong, then a management undergrad who, recognizing Rowland's experience at Chick-fil-A, convinced him to join SAM.

"Daniel had a lot of real-world management experience, as well as strong leadership traits," Groshong said. "There was no doubt in my mind that Daniel would be a fantastic president for SAM."

Under the stewardship of Groshong and Rowland, SFA's SAM team has racked up several first- and second-place finishes at the organization's annual national conference.

Having earned her master's in professional accountancy, Groshong's years with AARC and SAM are behind her. She's now working as a financial professional in Missouri City near Houston. Like Rowland, she took a piece of the Alstons with her when she left for the business world.



Members of SFA's Society for the Advancement of Management team participate in The Big Event, a Student Affairs community service program. The students do heavy yard work at the home of Roy and Sharron Alston. Back row from left, Mikala Groshong, Dan Nguyen, Ashley San Angelo, Matthew Logan, Daniel Rowland and Amanda Meyer. Middle row: Roy Alston and Sharron Alston. Front row: Kaylee Kieschnick and Lauren Garcia. Patrick Poole, also in attendance, is not pictured.

"I gained family from doing community service for the Alstons," she said. "They welcome you right into the family and tell stories about how they met

and fell in love, their kids and grandkids, and so much more. They take a personal interest in getting to know everyone who visits them."



CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

The Rusche College of Business hosted corporate sponsor Hajoca, an industrial supply company, for a day of networking, education and career opportunities in March. Company representatives Matt McGeehan, left, and Blake Westmoreland, right, were on-site with Dr. Tim Bisping, center, visiting classrooms and talking with students about varied career options at Hajoca. The college looks forward to more opportunities to highlight its valued corporate partners.

TO BUY GUCCI – OR NOT

The perception of luxury was the focus of Dr. Wenjing Li's fifth publication, a cross-cultural study of purchasing habits among U.S., Chinese and Chinese-American consumers of high-end fashion goods.

The paper, "How counterfeit dominance affects luxury brand owners' perceptions: A cross-cultural examination," was co-authored with three other professors and appeared in the *Journal of Business Research*.

Li, an assistant professor of marketing, is building out her CV in her first tenure-track professorship since earning her doctorate from the University of Kentucky in 2018. She says she's unique in that she was born and raised in China but has lived in the U.S. for a decade – Houston, Lexington and Nacogdoches – giving her valuable insights into two of the most influential countries in the world.

"I see the differences firsthand myself," she said.

Indeed, one of the roles in her latest research was as thought leader on the cross-cultural aspect of the findings. Chinese and Chinese-American buyers don't seem to care if cheap counterfeits have more than a 50% market share. If they like Gucci, they'll continue to buy Gucci. But in the United States, if Anglo consumers feel that the market is dominated by fakes, they'll buy fewer goods by brands such as Burberry, Louis Vuitton and Hermès.

According to Li, Chinese consumers have a stronger social-adjustive mindset – the need to fit in with their peers – than American buyers.



*Dr. Wenjing Li, assistant professor of marketing, was recently published in the *Journal of Business Research*.*

"Our research shows that counterfeit dominance negatively affects the perceived quality and purchase intention of luxury fashion brands across product categories only for Anglo-Americans, but not for Asians," the study concludes.

From start to finish, the project took about three years.

The real-world implications are that managers of luxury brands could tailor their marketing efforts to meet the expectations of different buyers – encourage brand loyalty in the U.S. while perhaps offering group discounts in Asia.

Li said similar studies could be conducted with other major markets like South Korea, Brazil and India. As the China-U.S. study is believed to be the first of its kind, the field is still wide open.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg," Li said.

INSTITUTIONS SUPPORT THE NEXT GENERATION OF COMMUNITY BANKERS

Commercial Bank of Texas and the Texas Bankers Association, through the Texas Bankers Association Foundation, donated a total of \$10,500 to the Chadwick Family Banking Program.

Commercial Bank of Texas gave \$5,500, and the foundation gave another \$5,000.

David Kaiser, lecturer and director of the banking program, said the contributions will help the college meet its goal of providing students with experiential learning and connections to the banking industry. A portion of the foundation's funds, Kaiser said, will be used as scholarships to support the attendance of banking majors at the annual TBA Bankers Convention in Austin. Funds from Commercial Bank of Texas will be used for scholarships and to support extra-curricular learning experiences.

Commercial Bank of Texas, founded in 1901 in Nacogdoches, has deep ties to SFA and the Rusche College of Business.

"CBTx has a long history of supporting SFA," said Raymond "Rusty" Rust, president and CEO of CBTx. "Employees at all levels of the bank have graduated from SFA and are very important to our success. We are particularly excited to support the banking program as it trains the next generation of bankers."

Lizzie Williams, vice president of Amarillo National Bank and chair of the TBA Foundation, echoed Rust's remarks.

"We want to encourage the enthusiasm that our future bankers have right now," she said. "What better way to do that than to get them in the room with real Texas bankers."

BUSINESS STUDENTS EARN TOP HONORS AT NATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMPETITION

A team of business students won third place overall, and racked up a handful of additional honors, at the Society for the Advancement of Management International's 76th annual conference.

The organization's Collegiate Business Skills Championships is organized by SAM and provides an opportunity for students to showcase existing skills and further develop fundamental skills for business success. This year's conference was held virtually.

Dr. Gina Harden, a professor in the Department of Management and Marketing and the team's faculty advisor, applauded the "powerhouse" team, which this year featured a mix of both undergraduate and graduate students.

"There were lots of challenges due to the pandemic, and the case was a tough one – the cruise line industry – but the students used their creative genius and came up with a solution the judges were extremely impressed with," Harden said. "As always, I am proud of the quality students I am honored to work

with here at SFA. They represent us well on the national stage."

Dr. Marcus Cox, also a professor in the Department of Management and Marketing, joined SAM as a faculty co-sponsor this spring and worked with the case team to sharpen its presentation and analytical skills. The team members were undergraduates Daniel Rowland and Will King, and graduate students Mikala Groshong and Corey Johnson.

Designed to engage students in the application and practice of classroom learning to real-world challenges, the competition comprises five events: Extemporaneous Speech, Business Knowledge Bowl, Business Pitch, Written Case Study, and Presentation Case Study. Teams are scored by academic and industry professionals who have real-world experience in leadership and management.

Formed in 1912, SAM is the world's oldest management society, and provides a place for discussion and promotion of Frederick Winslow Taylor's principles of scientific management.

SFA'S TOP RESULTS AT THE SAM COLLEGIATE BUSINESS SKILLS CHAMPIONSHIPS:

INDIVIDUAL EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEECH

1st Place – Corey Johnson
2nd Place – Mikala Groshong

INDIVIDUAL BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE BOWL

1st Place – Will King

TEAM PRESENTATION CASE STUDY

2nd Place / Carnival Cruise Lines in a post-pandemic world

TEAM OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT / UNDERGRADUATE DIVISION

3rd Place

INDIVIDUAL OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT / UNDERGRADUATE DIVISION

3rd Place – Will King

IN SECOND CAREER, SHREWSBURY ENGAGED WITH STUDENTS AND PEERS



Dr. Stephen Shrewsbury, assistant professor of legal studies, was honored with the 2021 Marlin C. Young Teaching Excellence Award.

"My focus in being a college professor as a second career has always been on employing the most effective teaching methods possible to engage students and help them learn," Shrewsbury said. "Being recognized by my peers in the Rusche College of Business motivates me to press on toward that goal even more."

Prior to joining the faculty in 2017, Shrewsbury served as general counsel and director of legal services for the U.S. Air Force in the United Kingdom

and Japan. He also served as general counsel and chief of operations and international law for Pacific Air Forces in Hawaii; deputy general counsel for U.S. European Command in Germany; legal advisor for the Office of Defense Cooperation at the U.S. Embassy in Athens, Greece; deputy staff judge advocate for the 20th Fighter Wing in South Carolina; and chief of military justice and tort law at the Ogden Air Logistics Center in Utah. From 1993 to 2017 Shrewsbury also worked as an executive trainer and instructor for the U.S. Air Force. His research interests include air and aviation law, corporate ethics and international business ethics.

BLAME IT ON THE MARCHING BAND; BUSINESS GRAD LANDS JOB AT AMAZON

Blaring trumpets. The crisp roll of the drumline. Flashy purple uniforms and plumed hats. When the Lumberjack Marching Band performed at an exhibition about six years ago, it captured the imagination of a high school clarinet player sitting in the stands. Inspired by the music and the pageantry, Brittany Dunbar '19 wanted to know more.

At that time, she had never heard of SFA. As an Alabama transplant living in Orange, she was new to the state of Texas. But after that exhibition, Dunbar and her parents made a visit to Nacogdoches. They liked what they saw. Dunbar arrived in 2016 and left in 2019 after finishing her degree in management.

These days, Dunbar is still driven by curiosity. But she's a long way from being a teenager at Little Cypress-Mauriceville. She's now in Lexington, Kentucky, working as an area manager in fulfillment for the world's largest online retailer, Amazon.

"It's been a huge step," Dunbar said. "It's humbling working with so many smart minds. I'm learning every day."

Due to COVID-19, 2020 was a lost year for Dunbar. She hunkered down with her parents in Jackson, Mississippi, and rode out the pandemic. But she poked

her head up at the right time, landing the Amazon job and moving to Lexington in January to begin her career in operations management.

With no immediate family living nearby, at 23, Dunbar's on her own.

"This is an adventure for me," she said. "There are new sights and new places, and I'm trying new things."

During college she was a teacher for SFA 101, served as a campus tour guide, and worked one summer as an events facility intern for the city of Beaumont. Along the way she picked up a bit of Spanish, made the dean's list four times and earned a minor in hospitality administration. Her faculty advisor was Dr. Elton Scifres.

"I loved advising Brittany because she was very conscientious and always followed through," Scifres said. "Very polite, a bit reserved, but a really good student and a pleasure to work with."

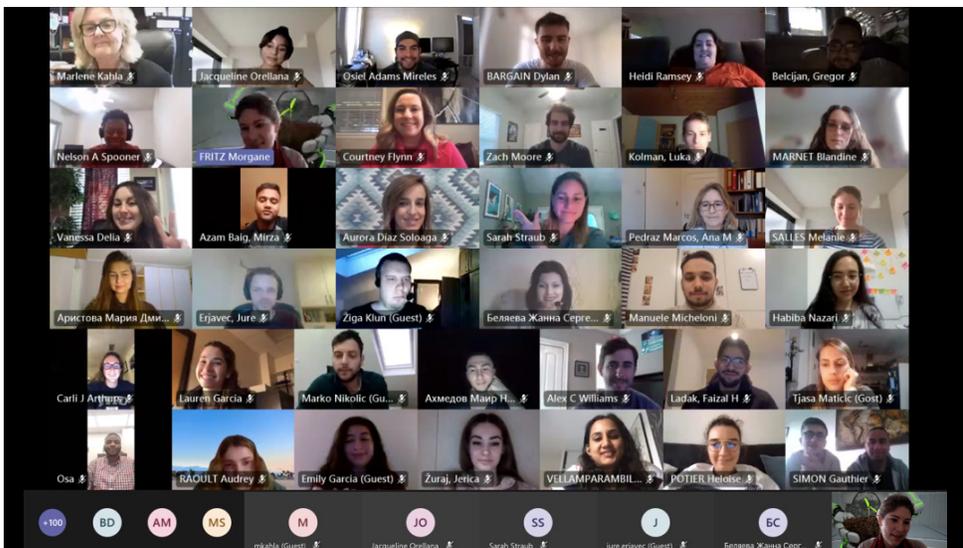
Dunbar keeps in touch with her besties from SFA, even though they have gone their separate ways. One of them sent her a Lumberjack face mask. When it came time to decorate the new apartment, she pulled out the SFA memorabilia and the class ring. With the degree, a circle of friends and the career underway, Dunbar



Management grad Brittany Dunbar '19 was recently hired by Amazon and works at the company's facility in Lexington, Kentucky.

likes her chances. And she can't help but smile when she admits that it was the marching band that started it all.

"That was the first time I had seen SFA," she said. "The music, the colors – all of it was beautiful to me. I never thought that's how I would find a college. It's amazing how things happen."



FRENCH CONNECTION

A group of Dr. Marlene Kahla's marketing students participated in an international conference on sustainability and digitalization hosted by Dr. Morgane Fritz of the Excelsia School of Business in La Rochelle, France in March. Students from schools in Afghanistan, Pakistan, the UK, Germany, Slovenia, Russia and Kazakhstan also participated. The SFA contingent was joined by those from two other U.S. universities, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Fordham University in New York.

PROFESSOR ELTON SCIFRES CALLING IT A CAREER



With nearly 30 years in the College of Business, Dr. Elton Scifres decided to retire. Among other things, he plans on playing his custom-built banjo throughout the next chapter of his life. Photo by Robin Johnson

SFA professor Dr. Elton Scifres is retiring in August, trading in a life of academia teaching management and strategy for one of gardening, photography, music and travel.

A faculty member for 28 years, Scifres had been thinking about retirement for a while and recently decided to make the move.

“There were mixed feelings,” Scifres said. “Part of me is sad to give up what I do. It wasn’t easy, but I felt it was time to move on and do something different.”

With nearly three decades of service, it’s safe to say that Scifres functions as one of the elders of the college. For newcomers, especially those in the Department of Management and Marketing like Dr. Rajat Mishra, he provided safe harbor.

When Mishra arrived on campus as an assistant professor seven years ago, he was just 31 years old. Now well published and tenured, Mishra is an important part of the department in his own right. But he needed guidance along the way.

“Elton’s been my F1 key on the keyboard, my help button,” Mishra said. “When I got stuck, I’d go to his office.”

Scifres, a native of Jackson,

WISHING THEM WELL

Saying farewell to retiring faculty is something you never like to do, but having six professors retire all at once is like nothing I’ve experienced. Of course, as dean, you also have unique insights into the incredible contributions made by faculty throughout their careers, and thoughts about retirement turn quickly to respect and admiration. My debt of gratitude for Dr. Marsha Bayless, Dr. Elton Scifres, Dr. Joe Ballenger, Ms. Cathy Henderson, Ms. Esther Bunn and Mr. Keith New is immense. Spanning the departments of business communication and legal studies, accountancy, and management and marketing, these faculty members represent over a century of scholarship, mentorship, instruction and collegiality. That’s something you can’t simply replace. I wish these colleagues well as they enter the next phase of their lives. Of course, we will continue to move forward. As is the case for the graduation of our students, however, retirements don’t end relationships; our faculty will always be part of the Rusche Family. — Dr. Tim Bisping



Dr. Marsha Bayless, Department Chair and Professor, Business Communication and Legal Studies

Dr. Marsha Bayless received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Emporia State University and her doctoral degree in business education and communication from Oklahoma State University. Bayless joined the SFA faculty in 1989 after serving for several years in universities and community colleges across the nation.



Dr. Joe Ballenger, PhD Assistant Professor, Management and Marketing

Dr. Joe Ballenger graduated from North Texas State University in 1983 with a Ph.D. in marketing with an emphasis on management and economics. Since SFA held its first Undergraduate Research Conference in 2009, Ballenger has sponsored 26 undergraduate projects.



Cathy Henderson, Lecturer, Management and Marketing

Cathy Henderson received her bachelor’s degree from SFA and her master’s degree from Texas A&M University. She has taught undergraduate management and marketing courses at SFA for more than 30 years.



Keith New, Lecturer, Business Communication and Legal Studies

Keith New has an MBA from Texas A&M University and a B.A. in English and business from SFA. He has been a lecturer and adjunct faculty member at SFA since 2009.



Esther Bunn, Lecturer, School of Accountancy

A two-time SFA graduate, Esther Bunn received her Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting and her Master of Professional Accountancy from SFA. Bunn joined the SFA faculty in 2007.

Mississippi, is a Southern gent. But he also has plenty of backbone.

“When he says something, it’s well-received,” Mishra said. “He’s upright and respected in the department.”

Though Scifres is about to call it a career, he made sure he added one more entry to his curriculum vitae. He was the lead author – with contributions from Drs. Marcus Cox, Robert Crocker, Mishra and professor G.W. Scott – on a paper, “Academic Motivation and the Undergraduate Business Major,” that was published in February in the Journal of Education for Business.

He started collecting data a few years ago, and resurrected the idea last year. He did a lot of the work over the summer of 2020, when he had no classes and he was riding out the pandemic.

“It was a loose thread I wanted to tie up before I left,” he said.

Cox helped with the data collection, while Crocker, Mishra and Scott handled revisions and submissions.

The study examined, and contradicted, the long-held belief that business is the “default” major for students who are more interested in a job than they are the subject matter, and that they are among the least motivated and the least engaged.

“We found no evidence to suggest that business majors were less motivated than other majors, but we did find a difference in the patterns of motivation,” the study concludes.

Business majors place an extrinsic value on the high-powered jobs and the big salaries, but they also have an intrinsic motivation for accomplishment in general, according to the study, which sampled 515 SFA students, 243 business majors and 272 non-business majors. The conclusion was based on results drawn from seven subscales of the Academic Motivation Scale.

In line with the study, Scifres recommends experiential approaches and gamification in business education,

which emphasizes point scoring and competition, a method that might be disruptive in a traditional academic environment, like literature or philosophy, but could be energizing for students driven by rewards and achievement.

“That’s a perfect way to engage business majors,” Scifres said.

Looking at retirement, Scifres sees plenty to keep him busy. In the past few years he’s reacquainted himself with an instrument he fell in love with during his undergraduate days at Mississippi College, the banjo. He had one custom built by the Old Time String Shop in downtown Nacogdoches. He’s also an avid photographer and a member of the Nacogdoches Photography Association.

He and wife Sharon plan on visiting their daughters, one in Seattle and one in Dallas. There’s also yard work and travel abroad, preferably Asia and Latin America.

“Now that it’s decided, I’m looking forward to it,” Scifres said of his future.

COLLEGE TO CAREER CONFERENCE A CHANCE FOR STUDENTS TO MEET PROFESSIONALS



Ana Romero of Amazon speaks to students at the professional network session.



Eric Miller of Increase Financial speaks to students at the entrepreneurship session. Photos by Robin Johnson

The college hosted its annual College to Career Conference, referred to as C2C, in April. Students attending the event met with panels of seasoned professionals from across many sectors of the business world for advice on topics such as Acing the Interview, Business Ethics and Integrity, Career Development and Success, Professional Networks, Entrepreneurship, Professional Behavior, First Hundred Days, Social Media, Financial Savvy, Going Global, Personal Branding and The Job Search.

In addition to the opportunity to engage with successful businesspeople, attending students were rewarded with Career Success Passport points for their potential scholarships. This year’s participating companies included Elliott Electric Supply, Increase Financial, Mustang Cat, Walgreens, Austin Bank, Ogletree Deakins, Amazon, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, Henry & Peters, Pepco, Pilot Flying J, Lockheed Martin, Bridget Moore Realty, The Buckle, Anozie LLP, Kovar Capital, Moore Supply/Hajoca, Oneview Healthcare, Enbridge and Kohls.

SPRING MEETING



The Executive Advisory Board, a group composed almost entirely of Rusche College of Business alumni, held their spring meeting in April. The board provides perspective and expertise on items such as course offerings, degree plans, fundraising, facility upgrades and more to help support the Rusche College of Business. Front row from left, Dee Williams, Mitch Fralick, Jeff Rhame, Mike Parham, Eric Miller, Sam Loughry, Gregory Price, Wendy Buchanan, Marsha Bayless, Kelly Noe, Justin Blount and Joe Booth. Back row from left: Timothy Bisping, Mitch Crocker, Cory Beasley, Norman Schippers, Korbin Pate, Lou Ann Richardson, Elton Scifres and Mikhail Kouliantsev.

UNDERGRAD WHO LEFT SCHOOL 46 YEARS AGO IS FINALLY FINISHING HIS BUSINESS DEGREE

A few years ago Rick Lowry was driving down the road when he heard an interesting tidbit on the radio – Texas residents aged 65 and older are entitled to free college tuition. A career professional and empty-nester who never finished his degree, Lowry checked into it and liked what he found.

So, in 2019, he re-enrolled in the College of Business – 46 years after he left the school in 1973 to put food on the table for his wife, newborn son and, eventually, a daughter.

Unable to make the kind of salary he needed in Nacogdoches, he moved to Houston, where jobs were plentiful, and went about the work of building a career that has included stints in sales, financial printing, executive search and real estate.

These days, Lowry still maintains clients in “head hunting” for the oil and gas industry and sells houses in Houston. But it’s his status as a student – one who’s already ground through a year of English and Texas history in pursuit of his bachelor’s in general business – that he treasures.

“I’ve been a senior for a long time,” the Ohio native quipped. “Getting the degree is not going to have an impact on my career, it’s just something I wanted to do. It always sits in the back of your mind that you didn’t finish something.”

Though the print industry in general has suffered catastrophic financial losses in the transition from paper to digital, Lowry was there during the tail-end of the glory years. In financial printing for publicly traded companies – think of annual shareholder reports, compliance filings and mergers and acquisitions among corporations that employ thousands – the print needs could be enormous. Lowry once sent a \$2-million invoice for just one job, and by the time his print career ended, he



Rick Lowry returned to the College of Business to pursue his degree 46 years after leaving school to provide for his family.

was a regional VP managing 11 offices that served 20 states.

Moving into executive search in 2003, Lowry found high-paying jobs for those in the upstream and midstream sectors of the oil and gas industry. But COVID-19, along with the cyclical convulsions in oil and gas, have bitten into executive search, which Lowry describes as “not what it used to be.”

Through it all, Lowry maintained a fondness for Nacogdoches. He was on campus when the business college was still in the Rusk Building. The county was still dry, and former university President Ralph W. Steen was wrapping up his building boom, which included the namesake library and the McGee Business Building, as SFA transitioned from a college into a regional university.

“I loved Nacogdoches in the early ’70s, and it was hard to leave,” Lowry said.

Lowry’s résumé is of such scope and variety that he has returned to the college as a guest to speak to undergraduates about the Career

FACULTY PROMOTIONS

In April, the SFA Board of Regents approved the following promotions in the College of Business:

MATTHEW LINDSEY
Professor, Management and Marketing

CHRISTOPHER MCKENNA
Associate professor, Business Communication and Legal Studies

PAMELA ROGERS
Associate professor, Management and Marketing

DREW THORNLEY
Associate professor, Business Communication and Legal Studies

Success Passport scholarship program. And while he’s an online student based in The Woodlands, he likes to make it to campus at least once a year to meet with his advisor, Dr. Carol Wright, and other Rusche faculty and staff.

“Everyone has been incredible,” he said. “They’ve embraced me with open arms.”

If all goes to plan, Lowry will graduate at the end of the 2021-2022 academic year. He said he doesn’t really know what he’ll do once he’s finished. But by then, he’ll be more than 70 years old. The career would have already been had. With the kids grown and living their own lives, all the heavy lifting has been done.

The degree, Lowry knew all along, is not about the future, but about making up for the past by embracing the here-and-now.

“It’s never too late to do the right thing,” he said.

ECONOMICS AND FINANCE STUDENTS EARN CASH AWARDS

The Department of Economics and Finance partners with local financial institutions to award top students at the end of each spring semester. These students are recognized with a check from the sponsoring bank or firm during the Finance Club's banquet. The Finance Club award goes to a particularly active student selected by faculty advisor David Kaiser. The Asset Liability Management and Financial Institutions prizes are awarded to students who perform exceptionally well in certain upper-level finance courses, selected by faculty members teaching those courses. The Entrepreneurship award is selected by Dr. S. Kyle Jones from students participating in the Mast Student Investment Roundtable. High-ranking seniors and juniors have the highest GPAs among finance majors in their respective designations. This year's winners were:



Name: Sean Christy
Hometown: Sugarland
Major: Finance
Career plans: MBA program at SFA, financial advising and investments
Award: Entrepreneurship, Wells Fargo Advisors, \$500
Takeaway: It has been an amazing opportunity to learn and study under the finance professors at SFA. They are true industry professionals. The hands-on experience from the Mast Student Investment Roundtable has shown me what I have to look forward to in my career. I highly recommend looking into the finance program if you are a business major.



Name: Caeden Byrd
Hometown: Euless
Major: Finance
Career plans: Financial advisor/entrepreneurship, philanthropy
Award: Financial Institutions, Bancorp South, \$250
Takeaway: One of the core tenets that I live by as a person is to recognize and encourage potential. As a business student I developed this tenet by observing how our professors interacted with their students. I would like to extend my gratitude to all SFA business college faculty for recognizing and encouraging my potential.



Name: Stephan McLawrence
Hometown: Windward, Carriacou, Grenada
Major: Finance
Career plans: Financial analyst and entrepreneurship
Award: Asset Liability Management, Citizen's 1st Bank, \$300
Takeaway: The College of Business is an exceptional one, particularly the Department of Economics and Finance. The professors and staff have taught me how to learn effortlessly, lead efficiently and, as a result, I am optimistic that I will effectively launch my career.



Name: Seng Bu
Hometown: Fort Worth
Major: Finance
Career plans: Investment banking
Award: High Ranking Finance Senior, Southside Bank, \$500
Takeaway: I want to thank all of my professors, especially my finance professors. Without their support and guidance, I wouldn't be where I am today. They made me a better student and a better person, and for that I'm eternally grateful.



Name: Kaili Cox
Hometown: Nacogdoches
Majors: Finance and accounting
Career plans: Corporate finance
Award: Portfolio Management, Wells Fargo Advisors, \$500
Takeaway: SFA and the College of Business have provided the resources that have equipped me with the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to chart a successful career path. I am thankful for the practical experiences such as the Mast Student Investment Roundtable. Axe 'em, Jacks!



Name: Leah Trascher
Hometown: Tomball
Major: Finance
Career plans: Real estate/brokerage, personal financial advisor
Award: High Ranking Finance Junior, Southside Bank, \$500
Takeaway: The College of Business has shown me that it cares about the success of its students. The Department of Economics and Finance has provided me so many opportunities to get involved and have hands-on experiences. Axe 'em!



Name: Silas Brown
Hometown: El Paso
Majors: Finance and management
Career plans: The New York Stock Exchange
Award: Finance Club, Commercial Bank of Texas, \$250
Takeaway: I want to thank the faculty within the College of Business, specifically Drs. Kosovich and Phelps, David Kaiser and Gina Small, for their continuous help and advice. I wouldn't be where I am today without them. They have been so helpful and kind since I've been here and have given me more than enough opportunities to grow and improve in a way in which I can never repay.

PASSPORTS IN HAND



The Career Success Passport is a professional development and career readiness opportunity for students. The program equips them with the knowledge and experience needed to launch their careers. Participants gain valuable insights and can accumulate points for substantial scholarship money through personal and professional branding, experiential learning, leadership development and cocurricular events and activities. The 2020-2021 winners of the \$2,500 scholarships were, from left, Kaylee Kieschnick, senior, management; My Pham, junior, international business; Jorge Huerta-Caratachea, sophomore, management; and Roman Farias, freshman, sports business.

PHI BETA LAMBDA



From left to right: Brittney Upstill, Dr. Tim Bisping, Camilla Yvette Latin, Ashley Rodriguez, Olivia Escobedo, Johanna Bruhn, lecturer Manny Guerrero, and Martarosa Velazquez.

Eight members of the SFA chapter of Phi Beta Lambda competed at the 2021 PBL State Leadership Virtual Conference in April. These students competed against others from across the state of Texas in a wide variety of events. Camilla Latin placed first in business sustainability and business law, Amanda Martin placed third in business presentation, Johanna Bruhn and Brittney Upstill placed first in business presentation and digital media, Scott Moore placed first in financial concepts, Olivia Escobedo placed third in information management, Martarosa Velazquez placed first in marketing concepts and third in management concepts, and Ashley Rodriguez placed first in retail management. The top three test takers and top two presenters in each event compete at the National Leadership Virtual Conference.

PAYROLL PROTECTION PROGRAM



Cameron Shepherd, a banking major, was on the front lines when his employer, Commercial Bank of Texas, processed about \$85 million in Paycheck Protection Program loans for local businesses. Shepherd works as a customer service rep at the bank and was answering phones as people applied for the funds that would save their businesses. Here he speaks with Miles L. McCall, executive vice president of CBTx, during a TV shoot with KTRE news.