



WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

UPDATE

SPRING | SUMMER 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

8

TO WATCH

Meet WSB alumni who are making an impact

Charlotte Du oversees strategic real estate investments at Nuveen

Charlotte Du

+ Failure Museum founder Sean Jacobsohn finds insights from flops



Letter From the Dean

Here at the Wisconsin School of Business, we've been opening a lot of doors lately: both figuratively and literally.

In April, WSB threw open our physical doors to the public as part of the UW 175th Anniversary Community Open House. Visitors to Grainger Hall participated in an interactive challenge across the building—exploring our contributions to Wisconsin and beyond while getting a firsthand look at how we prepare the next generation of business leaders.

Because, with our industry-driven curriculum and experiential learning opportunities, WSB truly opens doors for students. We foster connections with leading companies, showcase the limitless possibilities of business careers, and create opportunities to thrive in today's competitive job market.

Don't just take my word for it, however. In this issue, you'll see how a WSB degree has opened doors for Business Badgers across a variety of industries—including Marina Bloomer (page 6), an alum using her business experience to create women-powered leadership in STEM, and this year's impressive 8 to Watch selections (page 18), who are

leading at top companies like Google, Spotify, Cisco, and EY.

You'll also read about how our redesigned executive MBA is creating accelerated opportunities for business leaders (page 26) and how the school's new undergraduate "pathways" model is establishing more entry points to industry (page 16).

Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank you—our loyal alumni—for opening doors for our students. You are a powerful part of our programs, and it's inspiring to see Business Badgers create a network that truly transcends our corner of the university.

On, Wisconsin!

Vallabh "Samba" Sambamurthy
Albert O. Nicholas Dean
Wisconsin School of Business

Photo by Paul L. Newby II



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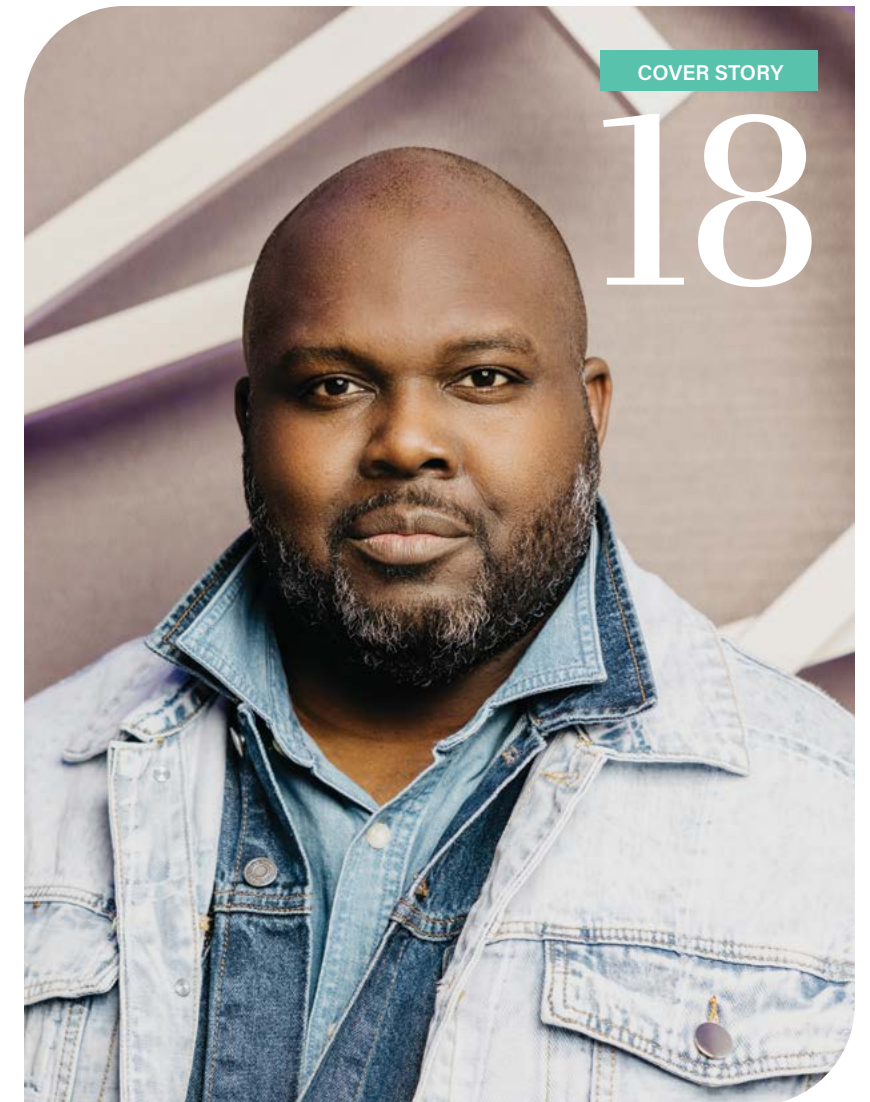
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Spotlight on Student Leaders

With over 50 student organizations at WSB, there are ample opportunities for Business Badgers to apply their classroom knowledge and hold prestigious leadership positions.

Three student presidents chat about their organizations—and their proudest accomplishments so far.

Angana Nath (MBA '24) | Tech Product Club

"The club is a community of graduate students interested in product management or product marketing roles at tech companies. By organizing a product case competition and hosting industry leader talks, my team has helped students build practical skills, develop product sense, and enhance their readiness for these roles."

Jason Li (BBA '25) | Wisconsin Business Review

"Our organization positions WSB and the greater university as a focal point of business journalism and insight. In our first year as an organization, we've published multiple articles, held a student workshop on writing and research guidelines, and sent two teams to the Wisconsin Ideas Conference."

Lila Randall (BBA '26) | Madison Business Mentors

"We prepare Badgers for the business world by pairing students with professional mentors to advance their professional interests. I have created positive change by expanding the program. This past recruitment year, we've gained an additional 30 mentors and now boast an impressive 85 mentees."

Photos by Paul L. Newby II

UPDATE

SPRING | SUMMER 2024

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▶ **Hannah Lesko (MS '23)**
COMMODITY DATA ANALYST
WHOLE FOODS MARKET
AUSTIN, TEXAS



GOT A MINUTE?

A PEEK AT WHAT MAKES BUSINESS BADGERS WHO THEY ARE

What products do you work with?

I work on the Global Commodities Team within our Exclusive Brands Team, which is the 365 brand by Whole Foods Market. I use data aggregation, data visualizations, and cost formulas to conduct risk analysis, cost avoidance, and cost savings for our current and future products. Some of the products I support are dairy, eggs, and meat.

What's something you're proud of?

My adaptability—both personally and professionally. Having lived all over the U.S. during my childhood and professional life, I am most proud of my independence and ability to step outside of my comfort zone.

What's your favorite WSB memory?

The business analytics program took us ice fishing on Monona Bay; it's a fun tradition they've done in the past. Professor Daniel Bauer brought fishing poles and hand drills for the ice, and there was a bunch of food, too. It was awesome because I had never been fishing before—let alone ice fishing!

Oh, and a few more things:

Lesko pivoted from health care to business analytics in grad school. | Favorite Whole Foods products: 365 Organic Kansas City Love Barbeque Sauce and fresh garlic bread. | 6 a.m.: When you'll catch Lesko going for a run before work. | Best advice to students: "It's never too late to discover your true passions and switch career paths."

Photo by Jessica Attie

SCHOOL NEWS

To read more, visit business.wisc.edu/news



WSB Puts Artificial Intelligence at the Forefront of Student Education

During the 2023-24 academic year, the Wisconsin School of Business hosted a variety of applied learning events focused on the rapidly evolving topics of generative AI and large language model applications like ChatGPT. These events not only offered a foundational introduction to these models and their applications, but examined the challenges, impacts, and opportunities of AI in the workplace.

"Generative AI is transforming all business functions, promising significant leaps in human productivity and creativity," says WSB's Neeraj Arora, the Arthur C. Nielsen, Jr. Chair in Marketing Research and Education and a professor of marketing. "At WSB, we're at the forefront of this revolution, integrating generative AI into cutting-edge research and classroom experiences for students."

At one event, students had the opportunity to engage in panel discussions with industry representatives from companies like Google and Mailchimp. In addition, WSB has also launched an online hub to highlight the growing body of AI research at the school, including a state-of-the-art marketing lab that aims to make AI and analytics tools accessible for businesses of all sizes.

"AI is transforming all business functions, promising significant leaps in human productivity and creativity."



—NEERAJ ARORA
ARTHUR C. NIELSEN, JR. CHAIR IN
MARKETING RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

BADGERS SUPPORT WSB STUDENTS ON DAY OF GIVING

On April 16-17, alumni, parents, and friends came together to support the Wisconsin School of Business for UW-Madison's annual day of giving: Day of the Badger.

296

Number of donors who gave to WSB during the annual giving tradition

\$40,000

Amount of the generous matching gifts to WSB from UW-Madison parents Jeff and Kathleen Lawrence, as well as Dean Vallabh "Samba" Sambamurthy

\$118,927

Total amount raised to support experiential learning opportunities at WSB

The school also hosted a Day of the Badger student event to celebrate the power of collective giving.

Introducing WSB's Fully Online Master's Program in Business Analytics

With the new Master of Science-Business: Data, Insights, and Analytics, students can now earn an in-demand, advanced graduate degree without leaving their homes or pausing their careers.

Delivered 100% online, the two-year program prioritizes flexibility while providing a comprehensive analytics curriculum taught by top-ranked faculty. By mastering topics such as data visualization, cloud technologies, machine learning, and more, students learn to harness the power of data and drive expert

decision-making for their organizations.

The program builds on the success of the in-person Master of Science-Business: Analytics program that launched in 2019. "We've honed the curriculum, we've honed the projects and experiences, and we took those lessons learned and applied them to the online program," says program director Cody Baldwin. "We know how to do analytics. We know how to build analytics talent."

Reimagined Undergraduate Curriculum Prepares Students for Dynamic Business Landscape

Reinforcing the school's commitment to excellence and ongoing investment in its highly ranked undergraduate program, the Wisconsin School of Business has redesigned and modernized its undergraduate curriculum to prepare students for academic and industry success.

The bold new curriculum will add four new courses that will gradually roll out starting in Fall 2024. The new courses—Sustainable Capitalism, Human

Centered Design and Business, Cloud Based Analytics, and Integrated Strategic Leadership—will give students the technological, ethical, and innovative skills to lead in an increasingly complex business landscape.

The multi-year redesign builds on previous initiatives, like Career Forward, that help undergraduate students design their own pathways and learn key skills through certificates and Business Badger Badges.



WSB Pilots Lifelong Learning Opportunities

The Wisconsin School of Business is conducting a series of pilot programs to learn more about lifelong learning needs among alumni. These opportunities create spaces for lasting curiosity and creativity, provide resources for career advancement, and foster new communities of learning and growth for alumni.

In February 2024, the first pilot was launched with a focus on business analytics. Participants learned about principles of data storytelling through a series of short videos, a live Zoom discussion, and a

Q&A session. "Lifelong learning is an opportunity for alumni to gain new connections and knowledge while WSB levels up its reputation. We do this by delivering trustworthy content, presenting trends and thought leadership, and fostering a community of lifelong learners," says Sandra Bradley (MS '90), director of the lifelong learning initiative at WSB.

"We are really excited about what we're seeing through testing and learning with alumni. These insights allow us to identify market needs and continuously improve." ◀

"We're fostering a community of lifelong learners."



—SANDRA BRADLEY (MS '90)
DIRECTOR OF
LIFELONG LEARNING



OUT OF THIS WORLD

Marina Bloomer shapes the next generation of powerful women in STEM

BY CHRIS MALINA | PHOTOS BY PAUL L. NEWBY II

Step into a workshop at Stellar Tech Girls and you might see model rockets being shot into the air or smell the spark of electrical circuits being constructed. Whatever the activity, you're likely to sense an underlying theme of bold experimentation—and not worrying if the result doesn't pan out.

Which, says Marina Bloomer (MBA '22), is exactly the point.

"Everything I do encourages girls to not be afraid," she says. "I want them to try things early, to build prototypes, to not be afraid of failure, to keep testing and iterating because that's what engineering is."

As the founder and program director of the Middleton, Wisconsin-based Stellar Tech Girls, Bloomer is on a mission to get more girls and

nonbinary children interested in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Through workshops and camps filled with hands-on experiments—and camaraderie—Bloomer is taking a unique approach to leveling the STEM playing field.

"Only 15% of the engineering workforce is female," says Bloomer. "There's a lot of work to do and I'm doing my best to change that."

With years of experience working in rocket propulsion, degrees in mechanical and aerospace engineering, and an MBA from the Wisconsin School of Business, one thing's for sure: There's no one better to help girls launch their STEM careers into the stratosphere.

Continued on page 08



Through hands-on projects and experiments, Bloomer helps participants cultivate a love for STEM.

Ready to launch

There was something about that first physics class that just clicked.

Growing up, Bloomer enjoyed all subjects at school, but physics sparked her scholarly interest in engineering. And while she enjoyed *what* she was learning in the classroom, she started noticing *who* wasn't there with her.

"When you start taking those advanced math and science classes, you begin to see fewer women," Bloomer says. "Then, as I climbed the ranks in my

career, I eventually became the only woman in the room."

It's something she continued to think about as her engineering work took her to companies like GE Aviation and SpaceX. While she developed propulsion systems and launched rockets, she also made time to host engineering workshops for girls and teach Lego robotics to middle schoolers—a critical life stage for cementing interest in STEM.

Over the years, she saw the positive impact of this informal mentoring—to

"Everything I do encourages girls to not be afraid."

—MARINA BLOOMER (MBA '22)



the point where the idea of leaving behind a stable engineering job to start something new took hold. When her career took her

to Madison, she found the perfect opportunity for a little experimentation through the Wisconsin MBA program.

"I decided to use it as a test platform," Bloomer



says. "I wanted to build out a business plan, learn a bit more about marketing and other sides of business, and see if it made sense to make the jump."

While working full time, Bloomer dug into the MBA program. Through coursework and support from WSB's Marketing Leadership Institute and Weinert Center for Entrepreneurship, she began building the plan for what would become Stellar Tech Girls—and nearing graduation, left her engineering job to focus exclusively on bringing the business to life.

"That last semester was really my launchpad," she says. "That's when I was looking at commercial space, working the financials, and finalizing all the details. And as a solo entrepreneur, having that support and resources from WSB made all the difference."

Powered by possibility

It doesn't take an engineer to notice that the Stellar Tech Girls space doesn't exactly resemble your traditional laboratory. With bright colors, natural light, and a playlist of music curated by girls in the program, Bloomer has designed a distinctly fun, purposeful space.

"I tried to create a place where girls would want to

invite their friends," says Bloomer, who officially opened the doors of her business in May 2022. "We want girls to feel like this is a community for them—an inclusive space where they can love science *and* all the other things girls love at that age."

Whether it's the cool space or the engaging engineering activities, the business has attracted its share of attention over the past two years. Stellar Tech Girls took first place in the Business Services category at the Governor's Business Plan contest in 2022, and Bloomer later appeared on the TV show *Project Pitch It* and landed a \$10,000 prize for the business.

Poised for growth, Bloomer says she's primarily focused on the here and now: getting through the busy summer camp season, expanding programming options, and reaching more kids through sponsorships and scholarships.

But growth is only one way to measure success, and when you're working with middle schoolers, getting their approval just might be the ultimate test. With rave reviews so far, one might say there's enough data to form a solid hypothesis—or, in Bloomer's words:

"It means we're doing something right." ◀



Actually, it IS rocket science...

What does someone working as a rocket scientist actually do? Check out these examples from Bloomer's time as a...

Senior flight reliability engineer at SpaceX: Worked on the chief engineering team that sent NASA astronauts to the International Space Station on a commercial spacecraft for the first time.

Design engineer at GE Aviation: Led an inlet and exhaust team for a significant engine upgrade program.

VP of program management at Ursa Major Technologies: Managed a team developing and producing liquid rocket engines.

LEADING THE CHARGE

Yash Babar measures the boost to local business from electric vehicle charging stations

BY CHRIS MALINA | PHOTO BY PAUL L. NEWBY II



YASH BABAR

It's not every day that the idea for a new research study gets hashed out over text messages while waiting for an electric car to charge.

But that's exactly what happened when Yash Babar discovered that his research colleague was killing time at a public Tesla Supercharger station.

"I asked him what he does when he's there, and he said he usually finds a Starbucks or grabs something to eat,"

Babar says. "I thought, somebody should write a paper about this and find out just how much of this business is happening."

As an assistant professor of operations and information management at WSB, Babar studies the social and economic impacts of technology—especially as it relates to digital platforms and the sharing economy.

"I like to study big questions which matter to

people's lives," says Babar, who joined WSB in 2020. As the John and Anne Oros Term Professor, his research explores everything from the impact of ride-sharing services on public transportation to how food-delivery platforms change our eating and cooking habits. With a growing number of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations popping up across the country, Babar saw an area ripe for research.

To that end, Babar and his co-author set out to explore how the placement of Tesla Supercharger stations—which promise a full battery charge in under 30 minutes—impacts the volume of consumer foot traffic received by nearby retail establishments. That's important, because retailers like big-box stores and supermarkets are increasingly partnering with the automaker to have the stations installed in their parking lots—and with Tesla promising them a business boost, while also covering the installation bill, it's easy to see why.

"For retailers, it seems like a win-win," Babar says. "Part of Tesla's promise is that by installing the Supercharger, you'll attract a wealthier customer who probably wouldn't have otherwise casually walked into your store."

By analyzing cellular geolocation data and credit

card records to assess both range and spending, Babar found merit to Tesla's claims. Following the installation of a Tesla Supercharger, nearby retail establishments experienced a 4% average increase in monthly visits, with a 5% increase in monthly spending.

Perhaps unsurprisingly,

"I like to study big questions which matter to people's lives."

—YASH BABAR

only the businesses closest to the charger received benefits. Nearby retailers had to be less than 150 meters away—or about 500 feet—to experience any spillover traffic, and not every type of retailer benefited equally. Quick stops like grocery and convenience stores fared better than establishments requiring lengthier visits, like full-service restaurants and

department stores.

It's good news for retailers looking to bring in new revenue streams—but beyond that, Babar says the research also has implications for public policymakers. Through a 2021 federal infrastructure bill, Congress has earmarked billions of dollars to build new EV charging stations, with the

Biden administration pushing to have at least 500,000 publicly available chargers by 2030.

With EV companies and charging networks scrambling to take advantage of the money on the table and find new locations for charging stations, Babar hopes the results he's found can be used to make their placement more equitable.

For instance, if policymakers can present businesses with data that show installing a charger in their parking lot will boost their bottom line, businesses might then agree to help offset the installation and charging costs.

"Then, you can take these precious funds that you have from the federal government and use them to subsidize the placement of an EV charging station elsewhere," Babar says. "Because if you don't have a lot of charging stations in neighborhoods where people live, you're not creating any incentives for them to transition to an EV."

Going forward, whether it's his work on EVs or the various case studies he's developed for his classes, Babar says he continues to show his students the real-world applications of information systems—and the positive impact those applications can create.

"Tech doesn't have to be just about making money or things like that," Babar says. "We're showing students how tech can empower people throughout the world." ◀



Time to get moving

Workplace wellness programs have proliferated in recent years—but besides offering a cash incentive for exercise, are they truly effective in getting employees moving?

In a separate research study, Babar recently examined the effects of two digitally delivered

"nudges" through an online wellness program, including light social support (likes and kudos) and motivational messages.

While both types of nudges moved the needle, Babar found that motivational messages were more effective over the entire program.

All Hail the Fail

Failure Museum founder Sean Jacobsohn finds insights from business flops

BY CHRIS MALINA
PHOTOS BY BORIS ZHARKOV

It all started with a bobblehead. When Sean Jacobsohn (BBA '94) attended a Golden State Warriors game in 2022, he received a well-intentioned promotional item with an untimely sponsorship. The item: a nine-inch-tall replica of starting guard Jordan Poole. The sponsor: FTX, described on the bobblehead's box as the team's "official crypto platform and NFT marketplace."

"This was right around the time FTX was imploding," Jacobsohn says. "I realized right away I had something here."

As a lifelong collector, the unique nature of the item appealed to him, but as a successful executive and venture capitalist, it spoke to him in a different way—and the idea for a new project, aimed at helping entrepreneurs, was born.

Enter Jacobsohn's Failure Museum: a personal collection of artifacts showcasing a wide range of failed companies, products, and ideas. As the museum's founder and chief historian, his collection began with the bobblehead and now includes everything from cans of New Coke to Blockbuster membership cards.

It's a cheeky hobby with a deeper purpose.

Continued on next page

In addition to showcasing each item online, Jacobsohn shares his thoughts about failure on his blog and personal LinkedIn page, and what business leaders can learn from each unique misfire. Because as good as success is, Jacobsohn says it's the failures that are frequently more revealing—and common.

"Not a lot of people like to talk about failure and lessons from failure, but really, most companies fail at some point," he says. "Even the most successful companies have had to pivot, and many of the most successful entrepreneurs have had a failed startup before. I've found that you really need to learn from failure—and learn quickly."

Mequon to Silicon

These days, Jacobsohn sits on 13 separate boards, using his expertise and position to help entrepreneurs and their companies build successful teams, find new opportunities, and raise funds.

He's come a long way since his first taste of entrepreneurship, which came as a teenager and combined his lifelong interests in sports,

collecting, and business.

"I bought entire memorabilia collections from other students and sold the pieces for a lot more in aggregate," Jacobsohn says. "That helped me pay my way through college."

Growing up in Mequon, Wisconsin, Jacobsohn knew he wanted to attend one university and one university only: UW-Madison. Seeking a well-rounded business education, he declared majors in finance and marketing at WSB while minoring in international business. Along the way, he founded a student-based sports club, got involved with school entrepreneurship programs, and over the course of four years, watched the Badgers go

Marketed as Ken's friend, Allan flopped hard but had a surprising resurgence after an appearance in the 2023 film, *Barbie*.

from a one-win football team to Rose Bowl champions.

Then, nearing graduation, Jacobsohn's interest was piqued by a job ad in *The Badger Herald* for a position at Prudential Financial, which became the launchpad for his business career. He'd then earn an MBA at Harvard Business School, join three early-stage companies that would eventually go public, and become involved in angel investing.

About 10 years ago, he was recruited to Norwest Venture Partners, a global

venture capital and growth equity investment firm. Headquartered in Menlo Park, California—deep within the heart of Silicon Valley—the firm manages more than \$12.5 billion in capital and has investments in more than 700 companies.

"I continue to network with entrepreneurs and product leaders to see what opportunities they're looking to start," says Jacobsohn, a partner at Norwest. "I'm always looking for companies in spaces that I think are ripe for disruption."

In other words, he helps businesses successfully launch, operate, scale ... and not become fodder for the Failure Museum.

Turning lemons into lemonade

Businesses and products fail for any number of reasons. Maybe a product was ahead of its time or entered a saturated market. Maybe a business ignored customer feedback or had the wrong team in place.

While Jacobsohn has identified primary reasons for failure—he frames them as the "Six Forces"—what's universal is that no business leader sets out to fail.

As such, Jacobsohn's blogging doesn't mock or point fingers—and his open-minded approach has earned him fans,



Once boasting over 9,000 locations worldwide, **Blockbuster** lost the movie-rental battle to Netflix—but remains a nostalgic favorite.

including some executives who've directly experienced failure themselves. When he first blogged about Juicero—a tech-infused juicer that hit the market

viewed online—has grown significantly. Through donations and his own forays into eBay, he's up to over 500 artifacts and counting. Products, companies, toys, sports memorabilia: It's all there, and even Wisconsin

Meanwhile, Jacobsohn keeps a list of items he's hoping to add to the collection—everything from Colgate frozen meals to an ESPN-branded flip phone. Each new item provides another opportunity to generate more insights into failure, and Jacobsohn says the public response to his work on the topic has been overwhelmingly positive. At the end of the day, Jacobsohn wants his readers to come away from the Failure Museum feeling optimistic. After all, if a company like Apple can have a few flops in their closet, and still see wild

success, there's no reason you can't either. "You shouldn't fear failure and shouldn't be afraid to take risks," he says. "Failure can be your springboard to success." ◀

Pets.com was one of the most recognizable symbols of the 1990s dot-com boom and eventual bust.

"You shouldn't fear failure and shouldn't be afraid to take risks."

—SEAN JACOBSON (BBA '94)

in 2016 and now lives in the museum—the company's original CEO reached out to Jacobsohn, and the two sat down for an interview. Other business leaders soon followed suit, giving Jacobsohn and his readers a unique and unfiltered perspective. "I'm one of the few people deeply interested in their stories," he says. "Allowing them to tell their side of things can benefit a lot of entrepreneurs across the world." Since launching the Failure Museum, Jacobsohn's personal collection of items—all of which can be

has representation in the museum. Among other items, Jacobsohn owns a program from a 1926 NFL game between the Chicago Bears and the Milwaukee Badgers—and no, that wasn't a printing error. "Pro football was much less popular than college football at the time, and the thinking was that by naming a team the Badgers, Wisconsin fans would pay more attention to them," Jacobsohn says. "Milwaukee and Green Bay actually played each other 10 times. Green Bay won nine of those games, they tied once, and people stopped going to the Milwaukee games."





On the Inside Track to Industry

Bennett Cole delivers specialized know-how through WSB's new career pathways model

PHOTO BY PAUL L. NEWBY II

Setting students up for career success is what gets Bennett Cole out of bed in the morning. After decades in the private sector, Cole pivoted to higher education in 2023. He now serves as finance program director at WSB, where he's leading the charge for a new model of career preparation at the school: one centered on more than 40 career pathways, including seven in finance. His job mixes teaching, pathway development, and external relationship building with alumni and industry. It's a three-pronged approach that gives students the knowledge, practical skills, and experiential learning opportunities to land their dream jobs.

WSB: How would you describe the pathways model?

Bennett Cole: I look at it as melding the academic and theoretical sides of business with an applied perspective. As part of WSB's Career Forward initiative, we're developing the infrastructure to focus students on what we refer to as "industry pathways" to better prepare them for their future careers.

When students arrive at WSB, we ask them to either declare a major within business or be "business exploring" and take a year to decide. We then want to expose students to the various pathways as early as possible and have them understand what these industries are, who the companies are that participate in them, how they compete and make money, and what opportunities exist for people entering these fields.

In finance, we've developed seven pathways, from corporate finance to investment banking and global markets. I work with three specialists to develop an overarching vision and strategy for each pathway that incorporates academics, experiential and applied learning, and relationship development.

WSB: What are the benefits of this approach?

BC: The recruiting timelines in business, and especially finance, have accelerated dramatically. Let's take investment banking as an example. You really need to know your freshman year that this is a road you want to go down.

With the pathways model, our hope is that students will be able to visualize their career path more quickly, build focus, and become much more mature, savvy job applicants when it comes

"I'm really obsessed with getting students the education they need to understand what these industries are all about."

—BENNETT COLE

time for recruiting.

I'm really obsessed with getting students the education they need to understand what these industries are all about and helping them develop a very intentional roadmap to get there.

WSB: Where do students go with questions?

BC: Our pathways specialists work side-by-side with the school's

career coaches. As part of the team, the career coaches help students with writing résumés, developing interview skills, and preparing them for the recruiting process. Pathways specialists, on the other hand, complement this work through their teaching, industry experience, and insights. They're a great resource when students have very industry-specific questions, and we have a seamless handoff between career coaches and

pathways specialists when students get to that level.

WSB: How are you bringing industry insights to students?

BC: We know students learn by osmosis. If you look at what peer institutions on the East Coast are doing, they're bringing in dozens of financial companies every week to talk to students. Since we don't have

the same geographical advantage and proximity to financial hubs, I focus on how we can create a similar experience here in Wisconsin, and we've unleashed some programs that are phenomenal at leveling that playing field.

For example, we created podcast series for each pathway that are conversations with executives and recent graduates. These are probing dialogues about what students should be asking in job interviews, what daily life is like inside their organizations, and more macro-level topics. Not only do they serve as an immediate mechanism for student exploration, but they can also be revisited when preparing for interviews down the road.

We found that students in Finance 200—our required industry fundamentals course that introduces the seven pathways—were rapidly consuming these podcasts, and so we're hard at work making more. Because at the end of the day, students can hear this information from a professor or a pathways specialist, but it's different when they're hearing it from peers or an executive at the company they're interested in. ◀

Interview conducted and edited by Chris Malina

COVER STORY

8 TO WATCH

Meet WSB alumni who are making an impact

BY CHRIS MALINA AND HALEY TOLLISON

Photo by Lexi Webster



Charlotte Du

MBA '19

Senior Associate, Alternative and Strategic Transactions | Nuveen

Location: New York

Previous jobs: Development associate, Hudson Capital Properties; corporate revenue and sales analyst, Marcus Hotels and Resorts

Why she's among the 8 to Watch: At Nuveen, Du oversees investments in alternative real estate sectors such as manufactured housing. She played a key role in creating a partnership between Nuveen—an investment subsidiary of TIAA—and a prominent real estate investment trust. The joint venture builds high-quality, attainable housing for families across the country, while generating investment returns for fund investors and TIAA participants.

A global mindset: Du grew up and attended college in China, where she studied hospitality management. Her American dream took her to Wisconsin in 2016, and since then, she's traveled to over half of the United States and has lived in eight of them. "My experiences have sharpened my skills as an investor, enabling me to connect with diverse groups of people and understand their perspectives."

From passion to profession: Working on acquisition deals at Marcus Hotels and Resorts sparked Du's scholarly interest in real estate investment. After researching business schools and MBA programs, she discovered WSB's nationally renowned real estate program—just 80 miles west from where she was living in Milwaukee.

Impact of a WSB degree: Participating in three case competitions built analytical skills that Du has carried into her career. She also made strong industry connections at WSB, thanks to the vast network of real estate Badgers and the relationships fostered by Sharon McCabe, who served as the associate director of the James A. Graaskamp Center for Real Estate.



Kevin Pickett

BBA '14

Strategy and Operations Manager | Google

Location: Chicago

Previous jobs: Analytical lead for Travel, Google; various roles in operations/supply chain management, AbbVie

Why he's among the 8 to Watch: Pickett's diverse business background has made him a rapid riser at Google. He previously helped grow the company's travel division, driving partnerships with global hospitality and entertainment firms, and now develops market strategies for some of Google's most well-known products, including the popular Chrome browser.

The winning formula: The Onalaska, Wisconsin, native initially pursued premed and business paths at UW-Madison. While organic chemistry and operations management classes might seem anything but similar, Pickett saw an overlap. "Both felt like big puzzles to solve with patterns to discover."

Impact of a WSB degree: Coursework infused with real-life scenarios—including a supply-chain exercise focused on placing a new warehouse—prepared Pickett for nearly identical situations at AbbVie, where he launched his career and later worked as a global warehouse analyst. His international business experience through WSB also came in handy when he took on a yearlong stint for the company in Sligo, Ireland.

Race to the top: When he's not running strategy meetings, you'll find Pickett doing a different kind of running. He's competing in his ninth marathon later this year and is already eyeing number 10.

I'm feeling lucky: Pickett says achieving career success and getting to Google required a combination of hard work and luck—but stresses that the former frequently begets the latter. "Adding that extra 10% of work and taking on everything from seemingly mundane tasks to complex projects can put you in a position to be luckier in many situations. When you work hard and create opportunities for yourself, you're going to go a long way."

Photo by Paul L. Newby II



Kelly Goldthorpe

MBA '15

Lead Product Manager | Peloton

Location: Minneapolis

Previous jobs: Various roles in product management, Peloton; bike and scooter marketing positions, Lyft

Why she's among the 8 to Watch: As a leader in product management for the company's app strategy, Goldthorpe champions growth at Peloton by introducing new features and product offerings. Her work with Peloton Corporate Wellness, a program that allows businesses to offer Peloton services to their employees at a discounted rate, has resulted in immense growth for the company—yielding over 100,000 new members.

Bike ride, anyone?: Outside of her day job, Goldthorpe uses the biking and fitness spaces to positively impact her community. She's a coach for Girls on the Run—a program that teaches life and running skills to girls in elementary school—and has served on transportation advocacy boards to make streets safer for cyclists and pedestrians. By partnering with adult learn-to-ride programs, she's also on a mission to teach 1,000 people how to ride a bike.

Impact of a WSB degree: Goldthorpe says the powerful network she honed during her MBA program empowered her to make successful career changes—like pivoting from consulting to

marketing, and now product management. "Every time I've made a change, I've had someone from my MBA program who I could call and ask questions. The relationships we built extend far beyond our graduation ceremony."

'Relishing' the opportunity: Before driving product innovation at Peloton, Goldthorpe found herself driving something else: Oscar Mayer's Wiernermobile. During her tenure as an official "Hotdogger," she visited 22 states, appeared on news outlets like *The Weather Channel*, and even drove the 27-foot-long vehicle through an unforgiving blizzard.

Advice to students: "Close your books and start talking to people. The benefit of school isn't just what you learn in the classroom, it's the people in the classroom."

"The benefit of school isn't just what you learn in the classroom, it's the people in the classroom."

—KELLY GOLDTHORPE (MBA '15)

Photo by Lexi Webster



Marcus Alston

MBA '19

Leader, Senior People Partner | Cisco

Location: San Jose, California

Previous jobs: Chief of staff, Cisco; underwriter, Auto-Owners Insurance; personal banker and assistant branch manager, Chase

Why he's among the 8 to Watch: With HR leaders like Alston, it's no wonder why *Fortune* consistently ranks Cisco as one of the top workplaces in the U.S. Leveraging his unique background and experiences, he empowers individuals to bring their complete selves to work. "My strength is accelerating team performance through building thriving cultures of belonging—with business growth as the outcome."

Low and high notes: A classically trained clarinet player, Alston studied music in college before pausing his studies. After moving back home and detouring into banking, he battled feelings of shame for not graduating. But while working full time at Chase, he began putting in long, grueling days to finish his music degree while playing in an orchestra at night—and couldn't figure out why his employer was being so supportive. "They understood that when their people thrive, the business thrives. That's when the synapses in my brain fired and I realized HR can be transformative."

Photo by Boris Zharkov

"Wisconsin put rocket boosters on the vision I had for myself."

—MARCUS ALSTON (MBA '19)

Impact of a WSB degree: Alston came to WSB with a new career goal of becoming a chief HR officer. Attracted by the specialization in strategic human resources management, he threw himself into the coursework. "Wisconsin put rocket boosters on the vision I had for myself!"

Leadership calls: After WSB, Alston joined Cisco's three-year HR leadership program and hit the ground running. He graduated from the program early and took an offer to become chief of staff for one of Cisco's HR executives to better understand the company's inner workings.

Culture add, not culture fit: Alston proudly shares his unique path into business—and encourages students and prospective employees to follow his lead. "Bring your unique gifts to the table and watch your wildest dreams become your truest reality. The world is waiting for what you have to offer."



Aleja Ross
BBA '16

Manager, People Consulting Practice | EY

Location: Chicago

Previous jobs: Financial consultant, Divine Wellness & Counseling; workforce planning manager, Cushman & Wakefield; consultant, Accenture

Why she's among the 8 to Watch: As a leader in consulting at one of the world's largest professional services networks, Ross helps companies redesign and transform their workforces to promote employee growth and success. In addition to leading sales and delivery for EY's generative AI efforts, Ross is spearheading Skills Foundry, a tool in the firm's energy sector that helps clients upskill their teams. "By looking at what skills and jobs are trending in the market, we can help companies get their workforce from where it is to where it needs to be."

Turning passion into progress: Seeing the economic and racial disparities in her hometown of Milwaukee was an eye-opening experience for Ross that sparked a lifelong pursuit: improving financial literacy among disenfranchised populations in her community. When she's not serving on Hope Chicago's Young Professionals board—which helps high school graduates from marginalized backgrounds pursue four-year college degrees—

Ross is partnering with the state of Wisconsin to help social security recipients manage their benefits.

Impact of a WSB degree: For Ross, it was the soft skills she honed at WSB—like critical thinking and networking—that impacted her the most. "The interpersonal skills I developed have allowed me to carry myself in a way that is unique from my peers."

Stop and smell the roses: As someone who creates floral arrangements in her free time, Ross not only takes this advice literally, but encourages others to pause and appreciate their successes as well. "Know how to celebrate your small wins. Take a look around and appreciate that you've taken thousands of steps from where you used to be."

"The interpersonal skills I developed [at WSB] have allowed me to carry myself in a way that is unique from my peers."

—ALEJA ROSS (BBA '16)

Photo by Paul L. Newby II



Keith Agoada
BBA '08

Founder and CEO | Producers Trust

Location: Ibiza, Spain

Previous jobs: Procurement specialist, Veg-Fresh Farms and Albert's Organics; CEO, Sky Vegetables

Why he's among the 8 to Watch: Agoada is working to fundamentally reshape the global agricultural supply chain, with justice and sustainability at the forefront. At Producers Trust, he aligns diverse stakeholders—from growers to governments—to increase access to direct upstream markets, while providing farmer networks with data services and marketing tools to command better prices for their goods. "We're in service to real human beings on the ground and we always keep their livelihoods front and center."

Sky's the limit: Working with tropical plants and produce in a campus greenhouse near Grainger Hall initially ignited Agoada's curiosity about food systems. Combining his interests in horticulture and business, he wrote a feasibility study on rooftop farming and developed a business plan around commercializing urban agriculture—which ultimately won WSB's business plan competition and became his first company, Sky Vegetables.

Going global: Working in agricultural jobs across Latin America, Agoada met stakeholders across the supply chain and saw both challenges and opportunities. One big win came during his time

working with a small family farm in Mexico. There, he helped get the family's avocados—and personal story—into the hands of Whole Foods shoppers in the U.S. That ability to boost a family's economic situation spawned the idea for Producers Trust, which Agoada launched in 2017. The company now partners with thousands of organizations across the globe representing over 4 million farmers.

Impact of a WSB degree: Agoada has gone all in on entrepreneurship—something the Boston native says he never saw coming when he first arrived at UW-Madison. He credits WSB for giving him direction and support along his entrepreneurial journey, as well as honing the professional communication skills needed to be the best leader possible. "I can't speak highly enough of my Wisconsin experience and what it's brought me." ◀

"We're in service to real human beings on the ground."

—KEITH AGOADA (BBA '08)

Photo by Paul L. Newby II



Jenna Herr

MBA '19

Senior Director, Risk Management and Insurance | Equity Residential

Location: Chicago

Previous jobs: Senior risk and compliance specialist, Kearney; technical services specialist, City of Waukee, Iowa

Why she's among the 8 to Watch: Herr coordinates insurance purchases and implements risk management policies for one of the nation's largest owners and operators of apartments—and with nearly 80,000 residential units, it's no small task. But her most meaningful project since joining Equity Residential in 2021 was revamping the company's crisis response program. "When you're responsible for people in their homes, you want everybody to feel safe and secure and to have a plan."

Mentorship matters: At her first job waiting tables in rural Iowa, Herr's boss immersed her in the restaurant's business operations and finances—then encouraged her to apply for scholarships and attend college. She'd go on to learn from many more mentors as a first-generation student at the University of Iowa and WSB, and now does mentoring of her own through several organizations and programs.

Impact of a WSB degree: In addition to learning from WSB professors like Joan Schmit and Tyler Leverty, Herr says working alongside other professionals in her MBA program helped develop

"You're allowed here and you belong here, shaping the future of business."

—JENNA HERR (MBA '19)

leadership skills and had direct applications in the working world. "Every room you're in, you have an opportunity to learn from somebody and an opportunity to teach people."

A sense of belonging: Herr has garnered media attention for her personal story of overcoming hardship, from having an incarcerated parent to tackling college and grad school while raising her daughter. She tells her story to send a message of belonging—especially to students and young professionals who've faced similar life circumstances or have struggled with acceptance. "Business leaders come from all over. No matter your background, you're allowed here and you belong here, shaping the future of business."

Photo by Paul L. Newby II



Anders Larsen

BBA '19

Product Marketing Manager of Podcasts, Video, and Audiobooks | Spotify

Location: New York

Previous jobs: Various product marketing roles, Intuit

Why he's among the 8 to Watch: Larsen is on the forefront of technological disruption at Spotify, leveraging his passion for product innovation and global impact to benefit both creators and consumers in the developing age of artificial intelligence (AI). During his first year on the job, he successfully scaled the company's video podcast format to a global level—a daunting challenge for the world's largest audio platform. Now, there's more than 100,000 creators publishing video podcasts on the platform. Most recently, Larsen has turned his attention to Spotify's fast-growing audiobooks business.

From boats to business: Growing up in marina-rich Door County, Wisconsin, Larsen turned his skills for boat maintenance into an entrepreneurial pursuit. As he traversed the area on his bike, cleaning people's boats and fixing their computers, his interest in business was ignited.

Impact of a WSB degree: Thanks to his cross-functional education at WSB, Larsen possesses a well-rounded understanding of analytics, finance, and operations. That allows him to skillfully partner with Spotify functional experts around the globe.

Photo by Lexi Webster

"I'm a firm believer that everyone should embrace a little Midwest nice in their life."

—ANDERS LARSEN (BBA '19)

The podcast heard around the world: Larsen launched AI voice translation, a new offering that replicates a podcaster's voice and translates content to other languages—something he says is a rare win-win-win. "It helps podcasters grow their audience. It helps fans around the world discover and engage with new content they otherwise wouldn't be able to, and it helps Spotify grow podcast consumption globally."

The power of Midwest nice: As he continues to cultivate meaningful relationships at Spotify, Larsen's grateful for his Wisconsin roots. "Whether it's watching out for people, checking in, or helping them find success, I'm a firm believer that everyone should embrace a little Midwest nice in their life."

An Executive MBA Education... Accelerated

WSB's redesigned degree program puts executives on a fast, flexible path to the C-suite

BY CHRIS MALINA | PHOTO BY PAUL L. NEWBY II

Over the course of two frigid days in January, nearly a dozen alumni, executives, WSB staff members, and faculty gathered in Grainger Hall to take part in a first-of-its-kind pilot program.

Through a series of lectures and group activities, the participants discussed approaches and strategies for effective communication across different business scenarios. It was an exercise with a purpose, and one aimed at shaping a key learning opportunity—all before the material debuts in a real classroom later this year.

In Fall 2024, the first cohort of students in WSB's redesigned executive MBA (EMBA) program will embark on a path which combines a new curriculum, experiential learning, and an emphasis on skills like executive communication through co-curricular residencies. The goal of the degree: put today's business professionals on an accelerated path to the C-suite while offering unprecedented flexibility and value.

"Our agenda over the past couple of years has been relentless innovation," says Enno Siemsen, associate

dean of the MBA and master's programs at WSB. "We redesigned our professional MBA, created new specializations within the full-time MBA, and launched new master's programs. With WSB's redesigned executive MBA, we've completed a transformation of our entire portfolio of graduate programs."

The EMBA redesign, which was informed by market research and corporate feedback, comes at a time of changing student expectations. To that end, Siemsen says the biggest change with the new program is moving it to a hybrid format. Whereas past EMBA students took courses entirely in person, the new program will see students attending weekly online classes, plus one weekend per month of in-person learning.

"The hybrid model achieves the goal of fitting flexibly into people's lives, as well as the goal of creating a network and relationships among peers that are incredibly valuable," Siemsen says.

The redesigned EMBA program can be completed in 18 months (down from two years) and is divided into

four modules that give students a comprehensive understanding of general business basics, strategy development, organizational transformation, and leadership development. Four new courses were also developed for the program: Corporate Governance and Board Membership, Growth Marketing, M&A (Mergers and Acquisitions) and Global Strategy, and Competing Through AI.

Students will also participate in two weeklong residencies, which offer deep dives into topics that complement the general curriculum.

"These residencies are foundational for developing

"With WSB's redesigned executive MBA, we've completed a transformation of our entire portfolio of graduate programs."

—ENNO SIEMSEN

as an executive-level leader," says Jean Sink, director of career management for MBA and master's programs at WSB. "They allow our students to step out of



Executive MBA alums like John Richter (BA '04, MBA '22) participated in a January pilot program centered around executive communication.

their day-to-day routines, connect with classmates, and immerse themselves in the content."

These in-person learning opportunities place an extensive emphasis on subjects like executive coaching and communication: key areas that have taken on greater importance in today's business world. Executives need to be adept at switching communications tactics based on an increasing number of situations and expectations, from presenting to boards and investors to providing thought leadership through personal social media channels.

Of course, any good communication strategy also involves listening. As such, Sink wanted to hear from other executives and EMBA alums before finalizing the content of the residencies—hence the two-day January pilot, followed by another pilot in March.

What they found—and what will now shape the student experience when the first residency kicks

off in August—is that the executive-level participants benefited not only from faculty lectures, but from their own conversations with each other.

"We saw that many of the points we wanted to cover in our lectures were already being illustrated by real-life examples from participants in small-group discussions," says Sink. "They also really benefited from hearing about how various strategies were applied across different industries."

Going forward, both Siemsen and Sink are committed to keeping the listening going—and will continue to evolve the curriculum in service of leveling up today's professionals.

"We're preparing a strong cohort of future executive-level leaders," says Sink. "I'm very excited to see how this degree helps our students catapult forward in their careers, impacting not only themselves but their teams, their direct reports, and their broader community." ◀

Which graduate degree is right for me?

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1950–1959

Raymond Morton (BBA '54) passed away in February 2024, at the age of 92 in Tampa, Florida.

Jerald Hage (BBA '55) published a new book, *Saving Societies From Within*, which offers a new paradigm of coordination with System Coordinated Inter-Organizational Networks (SCIONS) that is quicker and more effective than market coordination.

Jack William Porter (BBA '59) passed away on December 8, 2023, at the age of 86. He enjoyed his time as a drum major at UW–Madison and went on to hold many leadership positions in his long-time community of Issaquah, Washington, including terms as chamber of commerce president and Kiwanis president.

1960–1969

James E. Kroening (BBA '62) passed away on May 10, 2023. As a vice president at U.S. Bank in Seattle, he helped large businesses in trouble get back on their feet and was known for his unique form of humor.



Martin Feldman (BBA '64) has returned after a visit last year to Barcelona! His next adventure is a cruise to Gibraltar, France, and Italy.

Steve Cain (BBA '68) will soon be celebrating his ninth anniversary of managing the Midwest office of Fairfield Capital Group, LLC.



Micca Hutchins (BA '68, MBA '00) has been importing affordable,

exceptional wine from France to Wisconsin for 10 years as part of her business: Micca's Small French Vineyard Collection.



More Class Notes are featured in the digital issue at business.wisc.edu/update/spring-2024

1970–1979



Michael McMillen (BBA '72, JD '76) published six books on the history of

equipment finance in 2023 and is publishing two in 2024. He was also appointed to the adjunct faculty of Columbia Law School and is celebrating his 19th year teaching as an adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School. He continues in his day job as a partner at the international law firm of Curtis, Mallet-Prevost, Colt & Mosle LLP in New York City.



Bill Rauwerdink (BBA '72) is happy to announce that his fund started

2024 with a great investment. The company he invested in specializes in directional genomic hybridization, which is a method that enables direct visualization of chromosomal changes in single cells.



Stephen Bye (BBA '73, MBA '74) published his fourth novel, *The Developer: Phase III (Avenue into the Abyss)*, in February 2024. In this third novel of a trilogy, real estate developer Alexander (Xander) Kellogg is confronted with his murder conspiracy trial and a series of complications that threaten his legacy as an office building tycoon.



Jayne Neuendorf (BBA '76) has been recognized on *Forbes'* Top Women

Wealth Advisors Best-In-State list for 2024.

David LeMahieu (BBA '77) spent over 30 years in real estate brokerage and new home construction and finished his working career in sales management. As he enjoys retirement, he splits time between the Kettle Moraine area of Wisconsin and Rouen, France.

1980–1989



Steve Albert (BBA '80, JD '86) recently co-authored an article

with professors affiliated with the National Science Foundation.

Their study applied natural language sentiment analysis and transformer models to evaluate the effectiveness of 10 nationally ranked hospitals' social media messaging during COVID-19. Albert's article appeared in the *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*.



David Jewell (BBA '80) rode his bicycle from Vancouver, Canada, to the Mexican border in August and September 2023 to raise money for multiple sclerosis (MS) and Type 1 diabetes research. His team raised just over \$47,000 for the MS Society and \$22,000 for Type 1 diabetes research at the Children's Hospital of Orange County.



Jon Schmieden (BBA '81, MBA '84) is celebrating 12 years of retirement from Alcon Laboratories. During his retirement, he's traveled to all parts of the globe—including a visit to his seventh continent, Antarctica. When he's not traveling internationally, Schmieden splits time between Texas, Wisconsin, and Florida, where he enjoys lobster fishing.



Randall Page (MS '82) has joined Conspectus, Inc., the nation's

largest independent specification consulting firm as senior specifier. Since 1992, the company has



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provided industry-leading consulting services on thousands of projects for many of the country's most prestigious design firms.



Terri Lynn Yanke (BBA '83) has joined Rouse, a local, family-

owned property management organization with 28 different properties across the Milwaukee and Madison areas. She is the marketing strategist for Rouse and the property manager for Irish Fields, the company's newest development in Fitchburg, Wisconsin.



Brett Hawkins (BBA '86, MBA '88) has been working in

entertainment technology for two decades in the Los Angeles area. He recently launched Monad. Social, a music-focused creator platform that helps artists monetize their fanbases through virtual venues. It leverages technologies like Web3, AI, and augmented/extended reality to create interactive virtual experiences.



Stephen Wagner (MS '86) recently released the

second edition of his textbook, *Fundamentals of Medical Practice Management*.



Terence T. Ow (BS '88, MS '90, MBA '92, MS '94, PhD '00) was recently recognized as a Top 50 Undergraduate Business Professor by *Poets&Quants*. He is also one of few alumni who has earned five degrees at UW–Madison. His daughter, **Grace Ow (BBA '24)**, is a current Business Badger studying information systems and operations and technology management.

1990–1999



Bruce Donald Campbell (MS '90) is kicking off his fifth year of

state government advisory roles, where he makes interactive visual analytics tools available to state residents. He says it feels useful and meaningful to apply a career's worth of insight and experience to state government objectives that pursue improved health care and broadband experiences for people in Rhode Island and California.



Charles Liedtke (MBA '90, PhD '97) presented his latest research paper,

Advances in Horizontal Interaction, at the annual Minnesota Quality Conference in Minneapolis in October 2023. Liedtke is also the owner of the management consultancy Strategic Improvement Systems, LLC.



Carrie Thome (BBA '91, MS '96) is excited to report that

NVNG Investment Advisors announced the final closing of its Fund I with commitments of \$50 million, making it the largest Wisconsin-based fund of funds. NVNG's approach combines a network of best-in-class national venture funds with investments in Wisconsin funds and startups.



George Hofheimer (BBA '92, MBA '03) completed a self-supported, cross-country bike ride with his wife, which raised \$30,000 and awareness for financial barriers to medical care in the U.S. He also published his first book, *Banking on a Human Scale*, which documents a strategic path forward for smaller, community-based financial institutions. Finally, Hofheimer celebrated the three-year anniversary of his consulting business, which advises ambitious credit unions across the world.



Bob Paulsen (BBA '93) recently sold his business, PlayerLync, to

Intertek, the leader in quality assurance services with 44,000 employees in 100 countries. Paulsen has now shifted his efforts to find a cure for CMT, a degenerative neuromuscular disease affecting 250,000 people in the U.S. and 3 million people worldwide, including his son.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



MARJORIE (GREINER) OLSEN (BS '96, MBA '01)

is now a grants and contracts accountant at the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP) at UW–Madison. After her fitness business was impacted by COVID-19, she obtained her accounting degree and now manages over 100 RSP post-grant research accounts. Additionally, she and **Chuck Olsen (BA '87, MBA '00)** just celebrated their 22nd wedding anniversary—having met 25 years ago in Marketing 700.



Mike Ryan (BBA '98, MAcc '00) has acquired majority ownership in Keith McMillen Instruments (KMI), a Berkeley, California-based technology firm. KMI pioneers hardware and software for musicians that seamlessly

Continued on page 30

blend traditional instruments with computers. With a commitment to nuanced musicality, KMI's products redefine how musicians interact with technology.

2000–2009



Steve Shepherd (BBA '00) was named 2023 Broker of the Year

by the Minnesota Commercial Association of Real Estate for his outstanding contribution to the profession, civic and community involvement, professional conduct, and production in the state's industry. Shepherd leads the Minneapolis suburban office brokerage practice at Newmark, a position he has held since December 2017.

Judy Jandro (BBA '01) recently started a new job at United Properties as the vice president of capital markets. She is responsible for sourcing and closing equity for real estate developments and investments.



Michael Pottern (BBA '01) recently opened the Denver Zen Den, which is the first sober psychedelic clinic in Denver. It uses vibrational frequencies, virtual reality, and light to reset the nervous system and simulate mind-expanding experiences without using actual psychedelics. These are ideal for parents, professionals, and anyone seeking to build deeper personal

connections and empathy with themselves and others.



Stephanie (Reed) de Groot (BBA '02, MAcc '03) was promoted to

Wisconsin assurance practice leader at BDO in January 2024. In this role, she oversees the assurance practice for the Madison and Milwaukee offices.



Jason Lobel (BBA '02) launched GenomicMD, Inc. in January 2024, a

clinical-grade genomics platform that predicts an individual's genomic risk for common diseases, like cancer and diabetes.



Amy Lee (BBA '03, MBA '16) recently joined Stryker in a new role as a

director of upstream marketing in the Medical Business unit. This leadership role drives collaboration across independent product portfolios to solve customer problems on the health care continuum.



Lance Mikus (MBA '04) joined StatLab Medical Products as vice

president of marketing and product management in January 2024. Mikus is also pleased to share that he built and operated a small e-commerce business, PlugShields.com, in 2023. He will continue to oversee the company as president.



Neal Spinler (MBA '06) just started a new position as executive director

for BRAVO Youth Orchestras.

BRAVO offers music education to underserved youth in Portland, Oregon, and provides free instruction and instruments. BRAVO is currently celebrating 10 years of life-changing arts engagement.



Krystle Felcaro Heaps (BBA '08) completed her master's in sports

administration from Northwestern University in March 2023. She also had the honor of representing the entire School of Professional Studies as student speaker during the June 2023 convocation.



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2010–2019



Sandy Walter (MBA '11) was promoted to co-head of equity

capital markets (ECM) at Baird in Milwaukee, and currently partners with **Peter Kies (BBA '87, MS '89)** to lead the business. Walter will perform his leadership role while continuing to actively manage his ECM coverage in the consumer, distribution, and real estate sectors.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



MAXWELL BRACEY (BBA '12)

established the nonprofit DiverSeaFy in 2020, which aims to diversify scuba diving and advocate for marine conservation. Since its inception, DiverSeaFy has graduated 22 students of color from its program. In addition, Bracey recently secured a \$30,000 grant from the California Coastal Commission for inclusion and coastal access.



More Class Notes are featured in the digital issue at

business.wisc.edu/update/spring-2024



Matt Billings (MBA '13) and his family recently relocated to the Madison

area after almost eight years in Seattle. He is now leading multiple data center projects as part of Microsoft's Cloud and AI team and remains actively involved in supporting the Wisconsin School of Business through an alumni advisory board.

Jennifer Hoege (MBA '14) is building the first Vistage Small Business Peer Advisory Group in the Madison area for leaders of organizations worth \$1 million or more. Vistage is the world's largest CEO coaching and peer advisory organization for leaders of small and midsize businesses.



Vanessa Mariscal (BBA '16) and **Jake Berger (BBA '15)** were married in

Chicago on December 9, 2023. They first crossed paths in the same section of Accounting 100 and remember seeing each other often in Grainger Hall. On their wedding day, they were surrounded by Business Badgers, including both their best man and maid of honor! The couple now lives in San Francisco.

Mark Elsdon (MBA '17) recently completed his second book, *Gone for Good? Negotiating the Coming Wave of Church Property Transition*. It addresses the massive change coming to communities throughout the U.S. as an estimated 100,000 church buildings and billions of dollars of church-owned property will be sold or repurposed by 2030.



Scott Maurer (MBA '17) has been with Prime Video for the past two

years, where he focuses on sports. During his tenure with Amazon, he's built the Thursday Night Football discovery experience within the company's app, has been promoted, and is now responsible for all sports discovery. He lives in Bellevue, Wisconsin, with his incredible family and a couple of amazing doodles!

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



PRINCE AMOAKO (MBA '14)

started a new role as head of operations with PendoTECH, a Mettler Toledo unit. He is excited to lead a team of talented manufacturing and supply chain professionals and continue to advance innovation in pharmaceutical, biopharma, and bioprocess applications.

2020–2023



Keegan Nesvacil (MBA '20) is the co-founder and vice president of Woodland Tools Co., which provided the Badger football team with sledgehammers—for ceremonial and training purposes—in September 2023.



Daniel Adix (BBA '21) recently founded a startup to combat the effects of drinking. His company, LiQure, has a patent-pending formula which combines vitamins, electrolytes, and herbs

into a tasty, convenient gummy. The company's mission is to incorporate wellness into the social lives of adults.

Bridget (Wilcox) Jobe (MBA '21) left American Family Insurance in November 2023 and looks forward to what comes next. She also got married in July 2023 while on vacation. She says the wedding was spontaneous and perfect.



Cassie Lebl (BBA '23) began her first full-time position in August 2023.

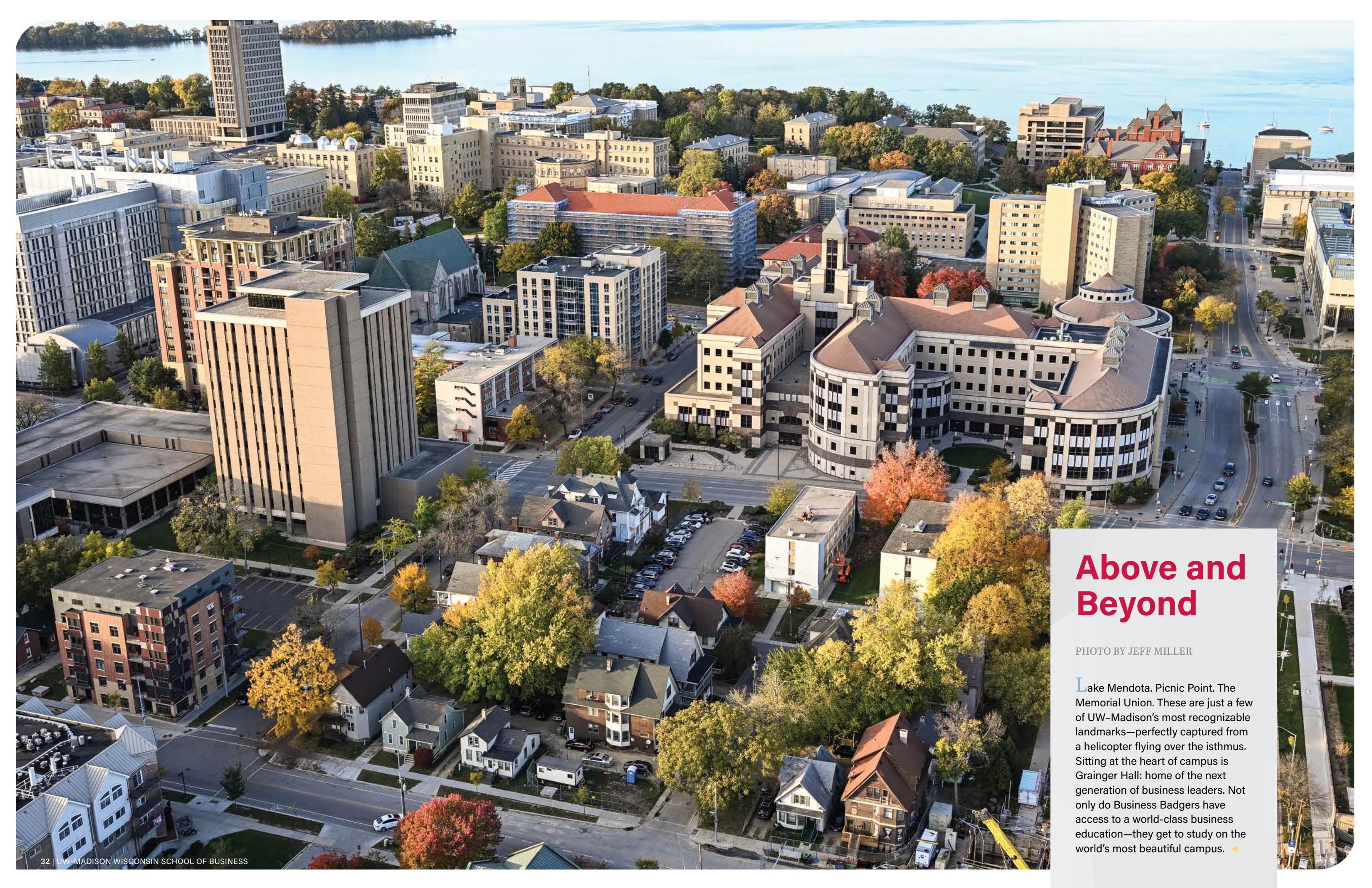
Working in 3 World Trade Center, Lebl holds a media planning role for Nestlé at one of the largest global ad agencies. She often runs into fellow Wisconsin graduates in New York and loves watching Badger games with them. ◀



"I am excited to share that I have started my new role as Senior Operations Associate at Vensana Capital!"

I am thrilled to be a part of the Vensana team and to continue to learn and grow."

—MAGGIE SULLIVAN (BBA '21)



Above and Beyond

PHOTO BY JEFF MILLER

Lake Mendota. Picnic Point. The Memorial Union. These are just a few of UW-Madison's most recognizable landmarks—perfectly captured from a helicopter flying over the isthmus. Sitting at the heart of campus is Grainger Hall: home of the next generation of business leaders. Not only do Business Badgers have access to a world-class business education—they get to study on the world's most beautiful campus. ▶



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Alum serves up science
with a side of fun **P. 06**

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