

# CARLSON

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

SPRING 2022

## A Brain for Business

Dr. Alexander Drofa,  
'21 MBA, is building  
better healthcare



THE MAGAZINE  
FOR ALUMNI  
AND FRIENDS







Right: Kelly Yang, '21 BSB, proves persistence pays off.

Below: Student-athletes can now make money on their name, image, and likeness. See what's working so far and what lies ahead. *Illustration by Valerie Chiang.*

Opposite: Students watch trained therapy dog Cayleigh perform for a treat as part of Boynton Health's Pet Away Worry and Stress (PAWS) program in the Carlson School Atrium in January 2022. The popular PAWS program offers a chance to interact with dogs, chickens, and other furry friends to promote positive mental health.



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## On Our Mission and My Future



As dean of the Carlson School for the past 10 years, for me, it has always been about the mission.

It's about embracing our purpose to create a brighter future for Minnesota, our nation, and the world. It's

about focusing on our promise to our students, to prepare them for lives and careers that are fulfilling and make a profound difference in their communities.

As I look forward to transitioning back to our faculty sometime next year from serving as your dean, I'm renewing that pledge to keep our mission top of mind. It has been a privilege to lead this amazing school, and I will stay on until a new dean is appointed and takes over. There is still much to do, and I remain committed to ensuring the Carlson School's excellence as we look ahead to the future.

It's no secret that these past two years have been difficult for many. This too-long period of adjusting and re-adjusting, and, in so many ways, of being distant from one another, has often distracted us. We are not alone. I hear that from a wide circle of deans at other world-class business schools. Soon, as we turn to what living with COVID-19 might look like, we can't forget our fundamental mission—to develop and disseminate the ideas that will change how organizations function, and to enable our students to dream big and go into the world ready to live the ideals of business as a force for good. Thanks to our outstanding staff and faculty, we're constantly improving how we do that, with countless success stories. Our alumni and donors play critical roles, too, for which we're grateful.

More than ever, we must work with our partners in the business community to help our students become thoughtful, inclusive leaders in tomorrow's world. We need, too, to be aware of the needs of our alumni and other working professionals to have just-in-time education and support.

In doing so, valuing diversity in our school and community is critical. Gazing into the next 10 years, I see us becoming a more diverse and more welcoming place, a place where everyone feels comfortable and can thrive. It will take all of us doing our part to achieve this vision.

So, as I mark this humbling anniversary, let's revisit our mission with energy and optimism. Now's the time to re-examine who we are, where we want to go and how we can enhance our promises to our students and to our community.

Our mission must guide us, as it has me for these 10 wonderful years I have had the privilege of serving as your dean. I will continue to cherish each day I have left leading this special place.

Warmest regards,

Sri Zaheer,  
Dean, Carlson School of Management

# DISCOVER

"I was beyond impressed with the depth of expertise and engagement shown by Carlson School faculty, staff, alumni, and Board members."

— ANGELA SPRANGER

## New Chief Diversity Officer Begins



In mid-February, Dean Zaheer announced Angela Spranger, PhD, MBA, as the Carlson School's new chief diversity officer and founding

director of the Center for DEI in Business. Spranger comes to Minnesota from Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia where she served as Assistant to the President for Equity and Engagement and Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer. She was also an Assistant Professor of Management in the Luter School of Business.

"I was beyond impressed with the depth of expertise and engagement shown by Carlson School faculty, staff, alumni, and Board members thus far, on the journey towards inclusive excellence," said Spranger, who is the first person to hold these roles at the school. "I'm grateful and honored for the opportunity to serve."

Spranger holds a doctorate from Regent University, Master of Arts in Education from George Washington University, Master of Business Administration from Virginia Commonwealth University, and Bachelor of Arts from Duke University.

She began her job on April 1 and is busy getting to know members of the community.



## School Leaders Focus on the Future

Dean Zaheer to transition to faculty, two new leaders join school

Exactly 10 years into her tenure, on March 8—also International Women's Day—Dean Sri Zaheer announced that she will "transition back to the faculty over the course of the next year." In messages to faculty, staff, students, alumni, and others, Zaheer expressed her gratitude for the contributions of everyone who was part of her journey. "Your contributions are the reason we are among the best business schools in the world. It has been one of the greatest joys of my life to serve as your dean."

Zaheer still has much she wants to accomplish. Already, though, her tenure has enhanced and elevated the school in a variety of ways, including raising \$190M as part of the *Driven.* campaign,

adding to an impressive increase in philanthropy during the last decade. A Military Veterans Initiative to help servicemen and women transition from military to business careers, launched in 2012, resulted in the Carlson School being named the number one Military Friendly business school in the nation three years running.

University of Minnesota Executive Vice President and Provost Rachel Croson will lead a national search to fill the role. Zaheer will stay on until a new dean begins.

The first Indian-American dean in the University's history and only the second woman to hold the deanship, Zaheer also holds the Elmer L. Andersen Chair in Global Corporate Social Responsibility. **C**

## New Assistant Dean Joins Undergraduate Program



In October 2021, the Carlson School welcomed Nicholas Wallace as the new assistant dean of the Undergraduate Program.

In this role, Wallace is responsible for the strategy and operations of the program, including student enrollment; diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts; career services; academic advising; and marketing, communications, and fiscal oversight.

Before joining the Carlson School, Wallace served as dean of Liberal Arts and STEM at Dakota County Technical College and held admissions leadership roles at Rutgers Law School and the University of Minnesota Law School.

Wallace holds a BA from St. Olaf College, a JD from the University of Minnesota Law School, and a PhD in Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development also from the University of Minnesota.



## Despite Labor Shifts, Carlson School Posts Strong Employment Numbers

The Full-Time MBA, Part-Time MBA, Master of Human Resources and Industrial Relations, Master of Science in Finance, and Undergraduate programs all have at least 93 percent of its graduates accepting job offers within 90 days.

Some industries, such as healthcare, have grown because of the pandemic. The Graduate Business Career Center (GBCC) reports 30 percent of 2021 Full-Time MBA graduates found employment in healthcare, the highest of any industry tracked and a 19 percent increase from 2020.

Overall, the Full-Time MBA program saw 95 percent of its graduates receive job offers within three months after graduation, with an average starting base salary of \$112,000+. With more students looking at their quality of life, the GBCC is tracking benefits packages, which continue to provide compelling perks. Starting this fall, how graduates work (remotely, hybrid, or in-person) will be monitored.

The Undergraduate Program saw similar success, with 97.6 percent of graduates finding employment, which includes a full-time opportunity, graduate school, volunteering, or joining the military within 90 days of graduation. The average starting salary was just under \$62,000, the highest in school history.

After a dramatic rise in unemployment at the beginning of the pandemic, the need for workers came soaring back in 2021. “The great news for Carlson School grads is that employers are competing very hard, especially for younger workers,” says Assistant Professor Aaron Sojourner, who specializes in labor economics. “Employees under age 25 are experiencing the fastest wage growth ever seen in records that go back in many decades.”



## Reflections from the International Climate Conference

World leaders met in November 2021 at the United Nations climate conference, COP26, to negotiate a deal to decrease greenhouse gas emissions to reduce the impacts of global warming.

Susanna Gibbons, the managing director of the school’s David S. Kidwell Funds Enterprise, was among the University of Minnesota delegation that attended the historic gathering in Scotland.

“The clear message from COP26 was that it is time to act,” she says. “There was no disagreement on that point. We have no more time to waste. In order for our actions to be effective, we need to collaborate in ways that we have not in the past.”

Nations participating in the conference adopted the Glasgow Climate Pact, which includes strengthening the efforts to build resilience to climate change, curb greenhouse gas emissions, and provide the necessary financing for both. These agreements can

have major impacts on businesses, but Gibbons says leaders need to find ways to adapt.

“Businesses need to make decisions not just on whether they are required to price external consequences [like carbon emissions] today, but on how those impacts may be felt across time,” she says. “We have seen time and again—whether it is with asbestos or tobacco—businesses that do not anticipate shifts in society’s willingness to accept the consequences will ultimately lose.”

While the conference outlined a daunting road ahead, Gibbons says she left Scotland with hope for the future.

“Young people—not just in our delegation—were clearly frustrated with the slow pace of progress to date, but I think they are forcing the world to take notice and respond—to try and deliver a better world than the one they were born into,” she says.

“Young people are forcing the world to take notice and respond—to try and deliver a better world than the one they were born into.”

— SUSANNA GIBBONS



“The clear message from COP26 was that it is time to act.”

— GIBBONS

## Veterans Serve Veterans Through Carlson Consulting Enterprise Project

Helping a fellow military member doesn’t end when service is over—and a project within the Carlson School of Management is allowing veterans to hold true to that promise.

The project is a partnership between the Carlson Consulting Enterprise (CCE), where students work with a real-world client to assess ways to improve business practices, and Outward Bound USA, an experiential and outdoor education nonprofit.

The organization turned to CCE to review its program designed for military veterans with just one request: Have military veterans work on the project. Pat Shuman and Joe Crawford, ’22 MBA, two former Marines, jumped at the opportunity.

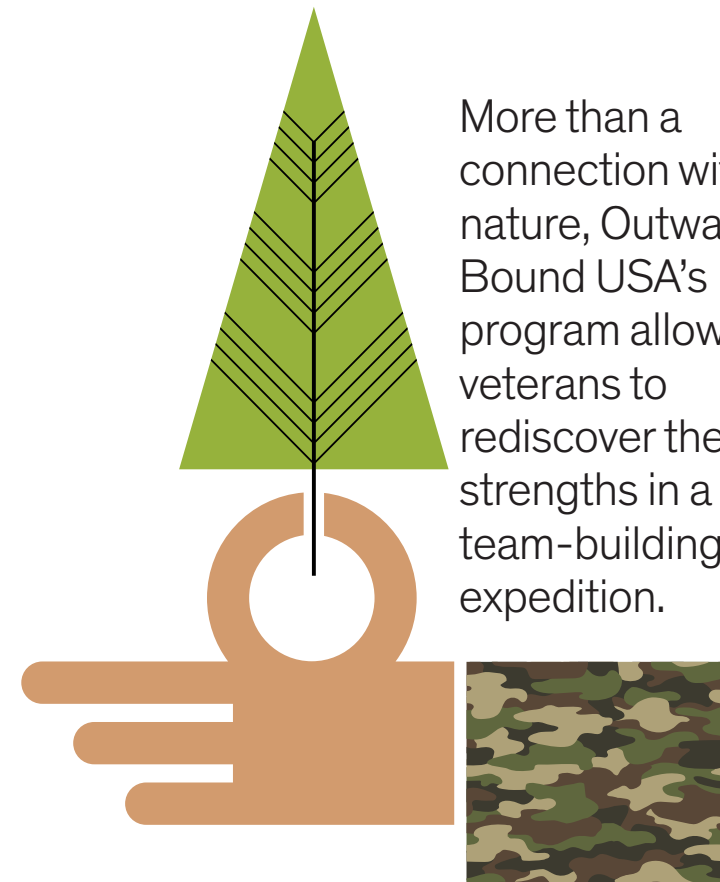
“That loss of community can be so jarring for veterans regardless of what you did in service,” Crawford says. “Being able to have the ability

to positively improve Outward Bound’s program and see if there are ways to serve more veterans in a year, I think is very worthwhile.”

More than a connection with nature, Outward Bound USA’s free program allows veterans to rediscover their strengths in a team-building expedition. While the program receives high interest, it struggles with high cancellation rates among participants, causing a financial drain on the system.

Through CCE, students interviewed staff across the entire organization and analyzed data to evaluate current program challenges.

The team hopes to streamline operations, determine how it compares to others in the market, and lay the foundation for Outward Bound USA to build sustainable partnerships to integrate the program within a treatment network.



More than a connection with nature, Outward Bound USA’s program allows veterans to rediscover their strengths in a team-building expedition.

## Carlson School Faculty Members Rack Up National Awards



For his countless contributions to the field of information systems, Professor **Alok Gupta**, Carlson School senior associate dean of faculty, research, and administration, received the LEO Award for career achievement from the Association for Information Systems (AIS).

The award, which is the highest honor given by AIS, recognizes outstanding scholars who have made a global impact on the discipline.

As the Curtis L. Carlson Schoolwide Chair in Information Management, Gupta’s research focuses on economic engineering of systems—where system design explicitly considers incentives of participants—as applied to a variety of transactional systems from the Internet, real-time databases, B2B systems, and e-commerce.



Pinar Karaca-Mandic



Soumya Sen



Dr. Archelle Georgiou



Ravi Bapna

Gupta was also part of two research initiatives from the Carlson School which were recognized with the 2021 INFORMS Information Systems Society Design Science Research Award. Gupta’s research on flower market auctions shared the award, which is one of the top in the field of information systems, with the COVID-19 Hospitalization Tracking Project led by Professor **Pinar Karaca-Mandic**; Associate Professor **Soumya Sen**; **Dr. Archelle Georgiou**, an executive-in-residence; and PhD student **Yi Zhu**.

Carlson School Professor **Ravi Bapna** and two co-authors were honored with the “Best Publication of 2020” at the annual International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS). Bapna, along with Nishtha Langer from the Lally School of Management at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Ram Gopal from the Warwick Business School, were recognized for their paper “Onward and Upward? An Empirical Investigation of Gender and Promotions in Information Technology Services.”

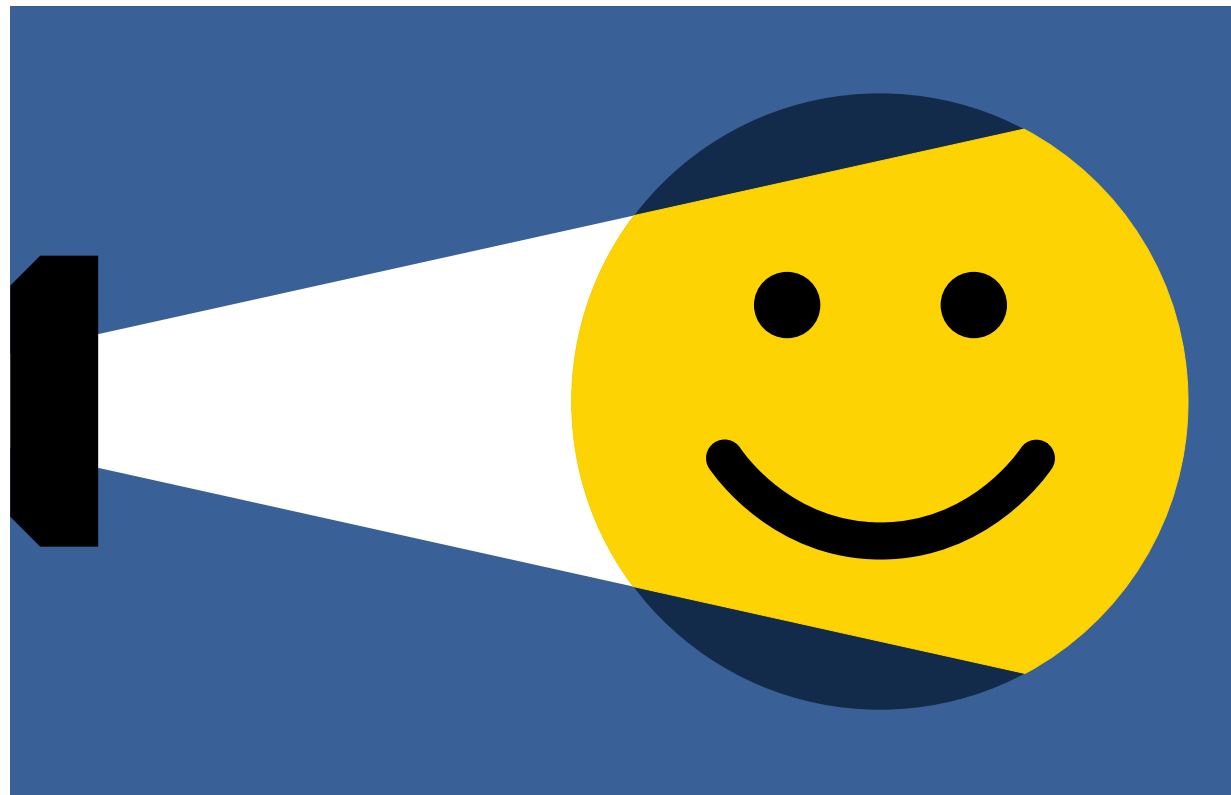


Professor  
Rohini Ahluwalia

MKTG 4090  
**Finding Happiness in the Age of Consumption**

In today's culture, the pursuit of happiness through material gains seems to be an attainable goal. Still, we feel empty, wanting, and dissatisfied time and again. Why this paradox? Using recent research in consumer behavior, decision making, neuroscience, and psychology, this course, developed and taught by Professor Rohini Ahluwalia, tackles tough questions while developing a tool kit to help students on their journey to happiness and success.

“Engaging and eye-opening course. [This is] one of the most valuable courses that I’ve taken during my experience at Carlson. Not only has it drastically changed my mindset, I believe it is changing the course of my future.” —STUDENT PARTICIPANT



**Happiness in the U.S. is falling.**

2021 World Happiness Report lists the U.S. as No. 19, down from No. 12 a decade ago. Further, the U.S. experienced a drop in happiness during that period greater than most other countries in the world.

**Brain chemistry** plays a critical role for each of us in our happiness.

**College students face mounting challenges.**

Today, only 41 percent of college students rate their emotional health as above average, compared to 64 percent in 1985. On the Twin Cities campus, more than 2 in 5 students have a mental health diagnosis in their lifetime.

**Research shows**

happiness is more likely to determine success than vice versa. If we are happy, we're more creative, make better decisions, develop stronger relationships, have more energy, are physically healthier, and more efficient and productive. We're also better managers at work!

**Weekly reflection**

activities, daily practice exercises, and group assignments help students better understand their own lives and put into practice what they are learning. The tool kits they develop have staying power and can be used across contexts.

**1. What are you reading?**



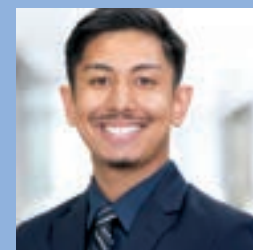
**Lee Thomas**  
Communications Director,  
Carlson Analytics Lab

I often have more than one book going at any given time. At the moment, I've been reading a book about metabolism, the memoir *Heavy* by Kiese Laymon, and a couple of poetry collections, including *Obit* by Victoria Chang. I'm a poet myself (my first book, *Honey in the Dark*, was recently published), and I found Chang's collection utterly compelling. Her book is a careful and honest consideration of grief, and the form she uses (obituaries) is very inventive.



**Meg Reid**  
'22 MBA

I'm reading *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times* by Katherine May. In light of the pandemic's two-year anniversary, I'm thinking about mainstream narratives of work, productivity, self-care, and wellness and want to learn more about other frameworks that center justice in our conversations about rest and healing. Another good resource on this is @TheNapMinistry on Twitter.



**Pranav Karmacharya**  
'24 BSB

I am currently reading *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen. I always enjoy reading adventure and survival books because they are exciting to read and also have a meaningful message I can apply practically in my life. Portions of the book remind me that even when things seem to be at the lowest point in your life, you should always try to find hope or a dream that anchors you, otherwise you can become lost.

**2. What is your favorite website?**

I'll say *The New York Times*. For the news, of course, but also for their cooking app, the product reviews in The Wirecutter section, and the games. My spouse and I are obsessed with the Spelling Bee!

I've never been able to pick one favorite anything, so I'm loving local journalism at *Racket* and the *Minnesota Reformer*, and I also recommend my favorite newsletter *Two Bossy Dames*.

My favorite website is [Unveilstudios.com](https://unveilstudios.com) because my team and I recently created it when launching our video production company, Unveil Studios. I believe that the Unveil team will continue to shape the website to be as engaging and impactful as possible, which is why it's my favorite!

**3. What is your dream job?**

A few years ago I developed an interest in wine and later visited the Sonoma Valley on vacation. I think it would be fun to learn more about the making of wine, what it takes to manage a vineyard and run a winery business. Maybe I could be a **sommelier** someday?

My dream job involves **helping social impact organizations** in the Twin Cities build capacity through effective systems and equitable organizational culture.

My dream job would be to **develop my own successful company** that serves and positively impacts others. I am working toward this dream after I founded Unveil Studios. I started the company because I constantly notice that many students have the potential to make life-changing impacts on people, but there aren't many dedicated social media channels or companies that are highlighting them.



Every person within the Carlson School community has a story. Our Faces of Carlson series explores these unique perspectives, showcasing our deeper connections. In this issue, our inimitable students, faculty, staff, and alumni reflect on finding happiness and overcoming challenges.



**Gillian Hedberg**

'22 MHRIR

"I think something that brings me happiness is helping other people unlock some sort of new skill or interest. I worked as a tutor most of my life and right now, I also work at the [UMN] Rec[Well] Center as a group fitness instructor. Seeing the smile and look on [participants'] face[s] when they realize that they can do something they didn't think they could do a week or a month ago inspires me to keep building and making myself better, week to month. So just being able to stretch your limits, seeing that in other people, and being able to unlock that in other people also inspires me to do the same thing."



**Nach Karnik**

'21 MBA

"I think like a lot of other business school students, I have a little bit of imposter syndrome that manifests itself in on-campus recruiting. You've got to interview, apply to positions, and you really have to believe in yourself and convey that belief to others throughout the process. I think that's on my mind because I just got through that, and so I am really excited about the opportunity that I'm going to have next year. If you had asked me about six months ago, whether that would be what I was doing, I'm not sure I would've said yes."



**Christian Edwards**

'22 MBA

"I'm in the Carlson Executive MBA Program and I haven't been in school in almost 20 years. Getting back in school and getting my mind back into a place where I'm being educated was a significant challenge. I was just learning how to be a student again, learning how to write papers, and take tests again. That was a significant challenge I've overcome in the last 18 months."



**Mary Larson**

Program Coordinator,  
Brand & Consulting Enterprises

"I have seen people I love and care about age greatly over the last couple of years, which has been a difficult challenge I need to accept. I have not overcome this. The best I can do is live with this, acknowledge it, and with purpose, make every day count and live life to the fullest, while not missing opportunities to let those who I love know how much they mean."

**Ben Trnka**

'15 MAcc

Assistant Professor of Accounting and Finance, College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University  
Lecturer, Carlson School of Management

"Being a full-time teacher, that's also my passion. On Mondays, I look forward to going into work. What really brings me happiness is seeing students succeed. It's fun to challenge students in the classroom and push them and then see them push through and be able to achieve their goal. It's different for everyone. I get to ask, 'OK, what's your goal? How can I help you succeed?' And that's fun. I'm lucky. Every day, all day—I get to do that."





“Since algorithms don’t have ‘moral principles,’ humans must be involved in decision making at some level.” — ALOK GUPTA

## Algorithms: The Human Factor

BY GENE REBECK

They’re powerful business tools—  
but only when people are in control of the code.

Algorithms have become deeply intertwined with our lives. These crafted strings of digital code can take our online data—our shopping habits, the websites we like to visit, our entertainment preferences—and make suggestions for products, services, and movies we might want to acquire. Algorithms are helping companies automate analysis and augment decision making, not only about marketing but also other objectives, such as production and supply chain management.

Carlson School research has demonstrated that algorithms can be powerful tools for business management. But that research also is revealing that they, too, need to be managed.

### POWERFUL TOOLS— WITH POWERFUL BIASES

What is an algorithm? Put simply, it’s a set of digital instructions designed to analyze data and use that analysis to solve a specific problem. In a business context, these problems can include predicting what customers will buy, or determining how long a certain production machine will be able to operate before requiring service or replacement.

“Companies in all kinds of sectors are undergoing a major process of digital transformation,” says Ravi Bapna, professor and the academic director of the Carlson Analytics Lab. One aspect of this is “how to convert massive amounts of data into an asset.” Companies “are data rich but insight poor. Analytics and algorithms are essentially the modern tool kit,” a set of tools “that companies need to start understanding and start using to make better decisions.”

Still, Bapna and other Carlson School scholars acknowledge that algorithms,

like any tool, have limitations.

For instance, they can incorporate and reinforce certain human biases that can work against business and societal objectives. In a forthcoming paper, Gedas Adomavicius, chair of the Carlson School’s department of Information and Decision Sciences, and Mochen Yang, an assistant professor in the department, discuss how algorithmic biases can result in unfair decisions, and what can be done to mitigate those biases.

To take an all-too-common instance: gender bias in hiring, particularly for higher-level positions. Many companies use algorithm-based tools that automate resume screening to identify qualified job candidates. If a company has a history of hiring men instead of equally qualified women, a screening algorithm trained on historical hiring data will rate women lower. As Yang observes, “algorithms are pattern recognition tools,” and they identify patterns based on the company’s historical biases.

### PREDICTING THE FUTURE— MORE FAIRLY

That noted, companies also want to create fairer screening processes. As Adomavicius and Yang argue in their paper, overcoming biases in algorithms will be complicated. “It’s not merely a technical problem,” Yang says. “It will take an integrated approach.”

This approach, the authors say, needs to consider the complexities in governing the design and use of algorithms to augment decision making, such as navigating different (and sometimes incompatible) fairness objectives and adopting fairness-aware practices for data collection and algorithmic model building. “As a

society, we have to play a major role in providing frameworks for designing such systems,” Adomavicius says.

Alok Gupta, the Carlson School’s chair in Information Management, has conducted extensive research in the strengths and limitations of machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI), which are used in designing and “training” algorithms. They also allow algorithms to “learn” how to make better-informed decisions by incorporating additional data.

“Algorithms rely on past instances of what has been experienced,” Gupta says. “When an algorithm encounters data from a previously unseen situation, it will have a hard time making robust decisions.” The decision it makes will be based on “the past and whatever seemed to be the best approach for various parts of the problem.” But, he says, it “won’t be a creative solution such as one a human might come up with, nor necessarily the best one.”

Like Adomavicius and Yang, Gupta notes that data often contains our implicit biases. But most of us, when we become aware that this is a problem, can recognize these biases and change our attitudes accordingly—for our own benefit and for that of our organization. Since algorithms don’t have “moral principles,” Gupta adds, “humans must be involved in decision making at some level.”

In other words, humans need to actively counteract the biases that humans themselves have incorporated into automated predictions and decisions. To paraphrase an investment truism, past results are no guarantee of future success. This is crucial—particularly for businesses using algorithms for human interactions, such as hiring and marketing. In many instances, Bapna says, the decisions they make won’t “be accurate for anyone under 30, for instance, or for people in minority groups.”

Still, algorithms will continue to play an important role in business, so understanding and improving it is key.

“This is one of the most important factors of modern management now,” he adds. “If you’re not doing this, you’re not going to be able to compete in the next five to 10 years.” **C**



Gedas Adomavicius



Ravi Bapna



Alok Gupta



Mochen Yang

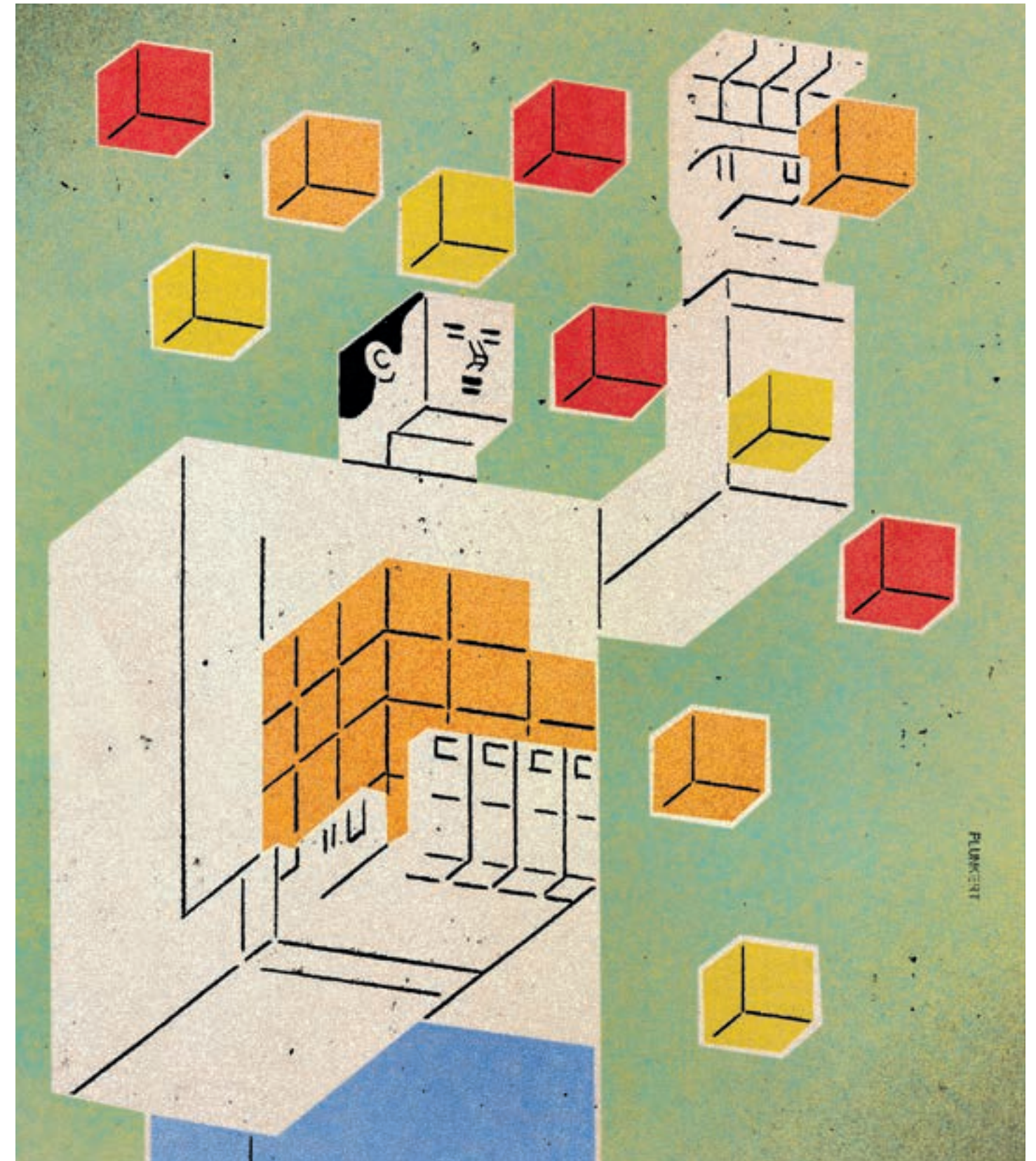


ILLUSTRATION: DAVID PLUNKERT





Stylish Carlson School Senior Lecturer Rand Park wraps his teaching prowess and compassion into one big gift.

# PUT A BOW ON IT

BY KATIE DOHMAN

It is almost finals week, and the semester break is beckoning. The first blasts of cold are gusting across campus. The headlines shout COVID-19 is bad. Again.

Carlson School Senior Lecturer Rand Park appears completely undeterred. He bounds into the classroom 10 minutes ahead of his first section of MGMT 1005: Corporate Responsibility and Ethics, wearing a pale yellow Oxford button-down shirt, a maroon-and-gold barbershop-stripe bow tie, and a Goldy Gopher-themed face mask, wavy gray hair flowing over the top of his backpack.



For the next hour and a half, he delivers a rapid-fire, straight-talking multimedia tour de force—including a choice *Seinfeld* mention—highlighting the landmark Betty Dukes and Lois Jenson sexual harassment cases, covering at-will employment law, and sexual harassment in the workplace. Everyone’s laptops are open, but no one is shopping or playing games—they’re focused on the PowerPoint slides he makes available before class.

He dismisses the class, wipes the now-full whiteboard clean, and does it all again for a second section minutes later, with no discernible dip in purpose or energy.

Park has been teaching multiple sections of this required class, sometimes year-round, for nearly a decade. By his own, and most others’ estimation, that’s a long time to carry that many students through a topic that might seem like a drag.

But Mary Benner, department chair of Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship, says that it’s exactly this opportunity that likely invigorates him.

“That is a tremendous responsibility, shaping our undergraduates to be part of ‘business as a force for good,’” she says. “I suspect Rand gets energy from shaping how students learn, challenging them, and facilitating their understanding of business and ethics. ... And, of course, Rand does an outstanding job.”

Stephen Parente, professor of Finance, says he’s witnessed Park’s commitment through several roles within the school, and he’s shone in all of them. “It takes tenacity, passion, and steadfastness. But you don’t do it if you don’t love it. That’s the key.” And Parente concurs with Benner: Park’s got it in spades.

The son of a reference librarian and community banker, Park says he puts a lot of effort into making the lectures relevant and colorful, but never has to fake the enthusiasm. “I love your energy’ is something I hear a lot,” he says. “But, like, I hate sitting in a classroom where the professor looks like they’re having laparoscopic surgery ... if you don’t care about it, why should I?”

As a result, he’s been acknowledged by his peers for his outstanding results, racking up a mittful of teaching awards: 2014 and 2017’s Undergraduate Faculty

of the Year, the 2019 Executive MBA Curtis Cup Faculty of the Year, and the 2021 Outstanding Teaching Award.

The proof is in the student pudding, too, as his near-perfect RateMyProfessor ratings reflect, studded with reviews like this one: “This guy is truly the bee’s knees .... This dude does it all. Definition of a beauty GOAT. Can’t say enough fantastic things about this man.” Or, “Rand Park and his 1005 class is amazing. He takes a potentially dry topic like Business Ethics and makes it dynamic, interesting, and applicable to everyday life and future careers. His lectures are like TED Talks—you’ll never look at the clock and then be surprised when the class is over. Definitely one of the best at Carlson.” Reviews are tagged with adjectives like “caring,” “inspirational,” “respected,” and “hilarious.”

**“I love your energy’ is something I hear a lot. But, like, I hate sitting in a classroom where the professor looks like they’re having laparoscopic surgery. If you don’t care about it, why should I?”** — RAND PARK

**THE PERIPATETIC PATH**

Park says his sister, who has an MBA from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and works in treasury management, likes to tease him about sneaking onto his ivory perch, because he didn’t go to business school.

But he’s no educational slouch: He’s earned a BA and an MA in literature from the University of Georgia, a JD from the now-Mitchell Hamline School of Law, and a PhD from the University of Minnesota in organizational leadership, policy, and development. He’s been teaching on and off since he was offered a TA role at Georgia.

And he finds a lot of parallels in business ethics to his literature studies: “There are villains and heroes and the story builds and there’s an epiphany along the way, and consequences. An unheralded person works really hard and

good prevails or not—it could be a comedy or tragedy—but it really has all those elements in what I loved studying about lit, and it’s even more relevant because it’s real! It’s happening! In real time!”

Plus, as he says of his work experience, “I’ve seen a lot of shit.” As a public finance banking associate, as an attorney (he passed the bar and realized very quickly he wasn’t interested in practicing law), and in corporate institutional giving within the Carlson School, among other roles.

The marriage of his professional experiences and education experiences help shape how he approaches his classes today. For example, he acknowledges that business ethics can easily turn into a “parade of horrors,” so he makes sure about half the class material is positive. And he constantly is looking

for zeitgeist-y examples to keep topics feeling relevant to current students.

Recently, he swapped one Silicon Valley tech founder, Elon Musk, for another, Theranos’ Elizabeth Holmes. “I thought, this really could be relevant, she dropped out when she was 19 and became an entrepreneur ... so, for the last week of class, I chopped off [Musk] and did a whole new case: Elizabeth Holmes.”

**THE RAND BRAND**

In part inspired by a midlife crisis, another by a general feeling that higher ed’s sartorial sense could use a nudge, and his mother, he challenged himself when he turned 50 to do something differently and well. So, after a lifetime of private schools and corporate jobs, he grew out his hair, took off his straight necktie, and turned to YouTube to learn how to tie a proper bow.



**RateMyProfessor**

**“caring”**

*“This dude does it all. Definition of a beauty GOAT. Can’t say enough fantastic things about this man.”*

**“inspirational”**

**“respected”**

*“His lectures are like TED Talks—you’ll never look at the clock and then be surprised when the class is over.”*

**“hilarious”**



When they started garnering comments, he realized he was making a mark. “It gave me an identity. ... It’s OK to have a little theater. It helps me get my mind right. If I put on my Oxford shirt and tie my bow tie, I’m ready to go. I feel like Professor Rand. It’s a state-specific attitude and energy.”

But, he says, while he has an appreciation for the performance aspect of his job, it’s 100 percent himself up there. “Students can smell BS a mile away,” he says. “If you’re faking it or putting on airs, or doing anything that’s not who you really are, it gets in the way.”

Loving Cup, the most prestigious honor bestowed on an undergraduate student. Taye mentioned in his interview that Park’s class was a standout.

Taye initially felt like an outsider, and wasn’t sure he’d stay enrolled. Park remembers him as a “back-row but highly-engaged student who made [his] job easy.” Taye told *Poets&Quants* that Park’s genuine interest in him boosted his confidence. “It was unbeknownst to me. I wasn’t trying to do anything extraordinary. I don’t claim any great insights,” Park says. “It was the simple fact that I listened and engaged with him

**“Students can smell BS a mile away. If you’re faking it or putting on airs, or doing anything that’s not who you really are, it gets in the way.”** — RAND PARK

**MAKING SURE THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT**

Another frequent theme among reviews is that Park “really cares” about his students.

He’s shepherded them through a lot, knowingly and unknowingly. He was particularly touched by a former student, Nate Taye, ’21 BSB, who became a *Poets&Quants* Best and Brightest. He also earned the 2021 Tomato Can

and showed up every day—turns out, that’s a significant reason not to drop out of school ... it comes down to consistency, availability, and authenticity.”

He notes that his current classes still have a “low hum of concern” when it comes to safety as COVID wears on. “But kids are showing up,” he says. “Especially given current times, I want to be there for the kids who

will be there. You’re going to show up? I’m going to be there for you.”

And that also means he’s willing to show up in new ways to accommodate the world they’ve been thrust into.

Past work experience with designing online learning was great prep for the lockdown transition. Benner, the department chair, says he went around campus and took photos of the buildings so students would feel a part of the places where they’d normally be. He made tests open book—but shuffled questions and made them so rigorous that even putting up “one hell of a scavenger hunt” wouldn’t be doable within the allotted time. And he has hung onto some of the features he adapted for online learning with the return to in-person classes, such as giving students his slides up front.

He says a partner at Deloitte validated his teaching choices. “He told me he didn’t want a young audit associate who simply relied upon memory. He wanted a pro who would see a question, have a question, and know where to look for the answer.”

“Some people hold fast to the old ways and are overly concerned about the academic rigor, like we can’t be so flexible and have to be the Guardians of the Whatever,” he continues. “You can take that approach, or you can be like, ‘We’re all dealing with this.’ ... If I want my class to succeed, I have to do everything I can to lower the barriers, but it doesn’t mean give up!” And he acknowledges his privilege as a white middle-aged man—in the end, he’s working hard to make his classroom more equitable, not perpetuate gaps, because as he says, he’s preparing students for a life where there isn’t a rule book to consult, and there are some big decisions ahead.

“We’re taking a messy, complicated world and ... you want to be a thoughtful, reflective person. You need the intellectual tools and perspective to stop and breathe and think and not just act on a first impulse.” He rattles off a heavy list of factors—human rights, sustainability, economic viability, social and environmental impact—that all of this decision-making affects. “It’s not empty rhetoric, it’s real ... it’s about doing good *and* doing well.” **C**



# The Class of



**2020**

When the pandemic shut the world down, it would have been easy for students to feel like their educational experience locked down, too.



**2022**

Instead, these Carlson School students found a world of possibility and potential, both within and out in the wider world.



**DEANNA WALLIN**

Management Information Systems; Marketing



“Before [online courses], learning for me was very passive. ... Now I get to know my professors, I get to know people in my classes more, and I think I make more out of it than I used to. I take less for granted.”

As an honors student, she’s working on her thesis, researching and writing about misinformation, vaccine hesitancy, and persuasion tactics surrounding COVID-19.

“[The pandemic] actually shifted my perspective about the world and where I fit into it and what I care about,” Wallin says. “I’m just seeing so many people get affected by this, and seeing my own family and friends getting sick, people ending up in the hospital who don’t need to be.”

She credits many of the skills she has learned through the Carlson School for giving her a foundation on which to build.

“A lot of the critical thinking skills I’ve learned in classes kind of proves that even if it’s not necessarily a business topic, learning how to analyze an ambiguous set of data and information that doesn’t necessarily have a clear path is something that applies pretty much anywhere. And I think that’s something that the Carlson School has been really good at teaching—because in business, everything’s ambiguous.”

After graduation, Wallin is joining Boston Consulting Group’s Minneapolis office, but she believes her future is wide open. Maybe she will continue on a path toward public health.

“I think the change management skills I have learned would be a big part of working in public health. And using my background of marketing and studying consumer behavior sets me up really well for that.”

**“[The pandemic] actually shifted my perspective about the world and where I fit into it and what I care about.”**

— DEANNA WALLIN

Deanna Wallin was in Denmark, studying abroad, when the pandemic began.

“I went straight home, and I spent those last months of the semester taking classes from the U in my childhood bedroom.”

As the months wore on, Wallin decided to increase her credit load.

“I thought, ‘If I’m taking online classes, I might as well just focus on school.’ So I just powered through it, thinking that at least if senior year is not online, I can relax a little bit and enjoy it.”

While online learning was initially challenging, Wallin says a lot of good came from the experience, including her approach to in-person learning and work.

**CECILIO AND CLAUDIA SANTANA**

Part-Time MBA

Cecilio and Claudia Santana started the Carlson Part-Time MBA program in the spring of 2018, just months after marrying.

Both working professionals—he from Minnesota, she from Texas—they met through their careers. Cecilio worked as a civil engineer; Claudia in marketing, at Target.

Claudia says she chose the Carlson School because many of her coworkers had graduated from the MBA program, and she wanted a school with national recognition.

“There are not a lot of Latinos with MBAs, so being able to change that and to have a seat at the table in our organizations was important,” Claudia says. “I want to continue to grow and develop as a leader and show that I’m just as capable as anyone else.”



**“We hold each other accountable, we motivate each other, we remind each other why we’re doing this. I think it’s made our relationship stronger and our friendship stronger.”**

— CLAUDIA SANTANA

Cecilio, meanwhile, was looking for a career change, and Claudia inspired him.

“I didn’t want to be pigeonholed as just an engineer, but have a broad background that could be applied to a lot of different areas,” Cecilio says.

In April 2020, the Santanas welcomed their second child.

“That was a really challenging and exciting time for both of us,” Claudia says. “I gave birth to our son and then immediately signed up for a summer course. With the pandemic, my family wasn’t able to be with me during postpartum recovery, and so I felt very isolated. I opted to take a summer course so I could have some interactions with peers.”

The course, with its international business focus, was perfect for the times.

“We were talking about all the supply chain impacts, GDP loss globally, what the pandemic meant for businesses across the world ... our professor actually tailored the course to examine a lot of those issues,” Claudia says.

What’s gotten them through was experiencing this together.

“We hold each other accountable, we motivate each other, we remind each other why we’re doing this,” Claudia says. “I think it’s made our relationship stronger and our friendship stronger.”

In mid-2021, Claudia moved to a different team at Target that uses her new skills in finance, marketing and logistics. “And I’m definitely looking for that leadership role.”

Not surprisingly, so is Cecilio, who now works for Target’s real estate division.

“I’ve found that I don’t just want a seat at the table. I want to be the one leading,” he says.

**WENLI (STEPHEN) DENG**

Carlson Executive MBA—China Program

Stephen Deng’s plans weren’t drastically disrupted by COVID-19. As a member of the Carlson Executive MBA—China Program (CHEMBA), now in its 20th year, Deng was planning to take many of his courses virtually from Beijing, although U of M faculty do teach some classes on-site in China.

“Although the teaching process was quite challenging—we really needed to leverage a lot of tools like Zoom, Canvas, and discussion boards—I didn’t feel the loss of the teaching quality,” Deng says.

Classes within the CHEMBA program are primarily co-taught by faculty appointed from the Carlson School of Management, Lingnan (University) College, or other prestigious business schools. Deng, who works for BFE Corporation Limited, a global e-commerce logistics and warehouse provider headquartered in Guangzhou, says he’s already seeing benefits from the program.

In early January, Deng was placed in charge of BFE’s global warehousing operation, including North America, after working since 2019 as business unit and marketing director for Europe, Australia, and China.

Deng says his new responsibilities are broad, from overseeing operations functions to marketing, finance, and human resource aspects.

“It brings me a totally new perspective of understanding, because when I was back in my bachelor program, I surely learned some of these things. But I didn’t understand it because I didn’t have the experience,” Deng says. “Now, in the CHEMBA program, it’s closely linked with what I’ve done in the past 10 or so years in my work.”

**“I have already surprised my boss and I’ve been leveled up.”**

— STEPHEN DENG



In fact, Deng recently collaborated with the CEO of BFE on a new organization optimization project, not long after he’d completed a course on international HR management.

“My boss, who is an expert in HR, we’re having some discussion, and I can see the surprise from her eyes and from her face. She was like, ‘Stephen, you’re on the same page with me.’ I could feel the respect from her,” Deng says. “This was really a big moment for myself. I have already surprised my boss and I’ve been leveled up.”

Deng, who was voted by his classmates and the CHEMBA council as the representative of his cohort, is also its youngest member, at age 32.

He’s not yet sure about travel plans with the pandemic, but hopes to graduate in person.

While COVID-19 derailed Deng’s plans to see the “famous Minnesota snow,” he is hoping to walk across the stage at commencement.



**LAZAR LAZAROV**  
Full-Time MBA

Lazar Lazarov, a Fulbright Scholar from Dobrich, Bulgaria, says he always wanted to experience the U.S. educational system, then take new ideas back to his country.

As the former executive director of the BEST Foundation (Bulgarian English Speech and Debate Tournaments), Lazarov organized English-language speech and debate tournaments for Bulgarian high school students and sponsored the country's largest international public speaking tournament.

But after six years with BEST, Lazarov, who is also president of the FT MBA Class of 2022, felt like he needed new ideas to help organizations like BEST reach their goals.

"[BEST] showed me how much I didn't know. So I thought, 'You know, an MBA would be really good so that the next time I really believe in a cause and maybe

**"I think the Carlson School stands for something ... you've got the 'business as a force for good,' but behind that slogan there are hundreds of faculty and staff who are actually looking to enact some good change in the world."**

— LAZAR LAZAROV

end up in a leadership position, I know every single thing to do," Lazarov says.

At the Carlson School, Lazarov is particularly interested in corporate strategy. He believes that kind of work is important considering the country's political and cultural history, which changed after the fall of communism in 1989.

"It's a very young private space—we've had private, for-profit companies held in Bulgaria for what is now 32 years, as opposed to other countries around the world, with hundreds and hundreds of years of experience."

Lazarov says that he chose the Carlson School because it fits with his ambition to make a difference.

"I think the Carlson School stands for something ... you've got the 'business as a force for good,' but behind that slogan there are hundreds of faculty and staff who are actually looking to enact some good change in the world."

Lazarov believes he's learned how to collaborate better digitally because of the pandemic.

"As a team leader, I really had to learn how to organize every single thing that needed to be discussed, and how we come together and integrate it. That's something I'll be taking to my future workplace."



**KAY LACHER**  
Accounting

Kay Lacher's pursuit of a college degree started decades before the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 1973, Lacher enrolled in college courses at North Hennepin Community College, then transferred to the University of Minnesota's business school. A single mother of two boys, Lacher balanced her family life and her job with her studies.

In 1980, she dropped out of school, just five credits short of her degree.

"My sons needed me," she says. "I really needed to be home with them, so I dropped out to be with them."

After working for the U.S. Olympic Committee and various other organizations over the years and compiling a book written by her father—*Quaday's Quotes, 70 Years on a Blue Earth River Valley Farm*—Lacher still had one accomplishment on her bucket list: finishing her college degree.

Lacher plans to walk in the Carlson School's commencement ceremony, just as she did in 1980, but with a feeling of genuine achievement. She will have earned her degree for real this time.

Learning to study after a 40-year absence was a challenge, Lacher admits. She also accomplished her goal to improve her cumulative GPA.

Her diploma is hanging in her home office, and she is amazed every day that she has it.

With a UCard in her purse and new University of Minnesota Alumni Association membership, Lacher says that making the decision to finish her degree at age 78 was a big deal. "I feel a real sense of pride."

**MARIA MORANDE**  
Management Information Systems

Before she turned 18, Maria Morande had already been attending courses at the U of M for two years through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program, which allows high school students to earn college credit.

When the pandemic struck, she was just getting settled on campus in a more official capacity. Instead of letting that stop her, she took steps to get more involved.

One experience Morande has cherished is the Carlson Student Ambassadors program, where she talks to kids about going to college and business school. "Being involved and joining other student groups has really helped me to build myself up and feel like I'm part of that larger community," she says.

Morande also serves on the executive board of the National Association of Black Accountants, which supports Black students interested in business and technology, and she's particularly

proud of her involvement as the undergraduate student representative to the Carlson School Dean's Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, which is supporting the school's efforts to address racial justice and inclusivity within the Carlson School.

"To have that firsthand experience even before entering my professional life is something that I think is going to be so beneficial for me as a leader," she says.

She also believes online learning played a role in her leadership development, helping to ease her into spaces she was previously uncomfortable in occupying.

"I remember a competition I was a part of, and my teammates and I wanted to learn more about this offering from a consulting firm, and we decided, 'Let's just call the global partner for this and see if he'll be open to meeting with us.'" They were.

"Having that sort of brazenness ... that opportunity to share space with people just by asking for 15 minutes for a quick Zoom was something that really wouldn't have happened without being online, and essentially without the pandemic I don't know that I would have gained that mindset of not limiting myself," Morande says.

As she nears graduation, she's realizing she's ready to lead.

"[Before college] I thought of myself as somebody who was completely leadership averse," Morande says. "But I feel like I've just completely flipped around. I have become so much more confident and I've become somebody who no longer shies away from being looked to as a leader. Carlson [School] has been just so instrumental for me." C

**"Having that sort of brazenness ... was something that really wouldn't have happened without being online."**

— MARIA MORANDE



**New Grad Seeing the Bigger Picture**

**TAVIS PIKE, '21**  
MS, Supply Chain Management



Tavis Pike was deployed with the Minnesota Red Bulls National Guard First Brigade in Kuwait when he began the Carlson School's MS in Supply Chain Management program in September 2020. But he almost didn't enroll.

He had started the application, but then deployed. Scott Martens, the professional director of the Supply Chain Management Program, asked him why the application never went through. When Pike explained he didn't think he would return in time, or may have to quarantine, Martens proffered the COVID new normal: going entirely online.

Pike worked and traveled between Kuwait and Fort Hood, Texas. He only missed one class.

The program was a perfect fit. As a property book officer, now with the 34th Combat Aviation Brigade, he already works in logistics: He ensures that when his brigade deploys, soldiers have everything they need, from boots to helicopters, food to medical supplies.

Pike says he chose the program partly because as an active Guard member with three young children, graduating quickly was key. It's also popular with veterans, who represented more than 35 percent of the MS in Supply Chain Management class of 2021.

Pike says the experience changed his perspective.

"Instead of thinking about how to get supplies from here to there, it's trying to think more about how it affects people—seeing the bigger picture," he says. "We do that in the military quite a bit, but to actually personalize how you're going to try to work through your corporation to make other people's lives better. ... It was a kind of awakening for me."

Pike, who has nearly 23 years total service and 19 years of active duty with the National Guard, plans to retire in 2023—when he hopes to begin a new career.

"At this point, supply chain managers are definitely a need. A lot of companies are focusing on trying to get supply chains right, so this should end up helping me get a job."



# A BRAIN FOR BUSINESS

It may not be common for a surgeon at the peak of his career to head back to the classroom for another degree, but **Dr. Alexander Drofa** is far from common. The neurosurgeon and medical director for cerebrovascular neurosurgery at Sanford Medical Center Fargo earned his Carlson School Executive MBA in 2021 and is already putting it to good use.

BY SARAH ASP OLSON

Dr. Alexander Drofa was on campus at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities for one of his first immersion weeks as a student in the Carlson Executive MBA (CEMBA) program when his day job called. There was a crisis and he needed to get home. For a typical CEMBA participant that might mean a supply chain issue or a PR incident—something a CEO might be able to handle remotely. Not so for Drofa, who was called back to perform surgery at Sanford Medical Center Fargo [North Dakota]. This crisis was literally life or death.

“That speaks to his capabilities but also [his] perseverance,” says Joe Weber, Drofa’s CEMBA classmate and a SaaS operations executive to private-equity businesses. “He had to go save somebody’s life.”





While he missed a day of class, Drofa returned the next day and “didn’t lose a beat,” says Weber.

It’s one of many stories colleagues and friends tell that exemplify Drofa’s determination, persistence, and seemingly endless well of energy. Like the one about how he came to be the medical director for cerebrovascular neurosurgery at Sanford Medical Center Fargo in the first place.

#### “I JUST WANTED TO BUILD.”

**D**rofa, who hails from Novgorod, Russia, has physician parents, so following in their footsteps was a natural fit. He chose a specialty in neurosurgery because he likes a challenge.

“Neurosurgery is one of the most challenging specialties to be trained in,” he says. “It’s not only a mental challenge; it’s a physical challenge and intellectual and technical challenge.”

After medical school, Drofa did his residency in Manitoba, Canada, and eventually accepted a fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic. When it came time to find a place to settle, Australia was on his radar, but he hadn’t considered the extent of opportunities in North Dakota.

“When you come from one of the best cerebrovascular fellowships in the world at Cleveland Clinic, you can go anywhere,” he says. “When I came to Fargo for the interview, I realized that this is a great opportunity to start practice and grow the program. There were no cerebrovascular care facilities from Seattle to Minneapolis.”

In fact, Fargo is 230 miles from the University of Minnesota Medical Center and more than 1,200 miles from more prominent neurosurgery centers on the West Coast. In between, there wasn’t much available for patients suffering stroke, brain aneurysms, or other complicated cerebrovascular issues. Drofa took it as a challenge.

“I just wanted to build,” he says.

“Prior to Dr. Drofa’s arrival in Fargo, Sanford did not have a neuro-endovascular

program,” says Brittany Sachdeva, vice president of operations at Sanford Medical Center Fargo. “The majority of the patients with vascular pathology in their brain were sent out of the region and out of state for care.” But since Drofa’s arrival, the team has grown, including a second endovascular neurosurgeon, an interventional neurologist, two stroke neurologists, and three neurocritical care physicians, who respond to an ever-expanding call for care—more than 2,500 cases of various kinds of strokes in the last three years alone.

“We did everything ourselves,” he says. “We built it from scratch.”

“When cases like this come in and they’re outside of normal framework or previous experience or guidelines, you view it as a challenge. ... I just do basically a technical calculation: ‘What if I do this? What if I don’t do this?’” — DR. ALEXANDER DROFA

#### “WHY NOT? LET’S JUST TRY IT!”

**O**ne of the first exercises Drofa and his CEMBA cohort, including Weber, were given in the first year of the program was the “lost at sea” challenge.

“It’s a typical challenge around what tools you should keep to survive if you’re lost at sea,” says Weber. The exercise is

designed to promote team-building and strategic thinking. But, while most individuals get about half the items in the optimal order, “when you get a team together, they start talking about it and generally go in the wrong direction.”

As Weber recalls, Drofa got a nearly optimal sequence right off the bat, but that wasn’t the most remarkable part.

“Ours was the only [group] to actually improve beyond that,” he says. “That speaks to Alex’s ability to integrate and work well with teams. Not only did he

convince us of his direction, but we were also able to improve upon that by saying, ‘If we’re going to apply the logic you’ve convinced us of, we actually see some improvements we could make.’”

Weber continues to work with his former classmate in a variety of entrepreneurial ventures outside of the healthcare space and has seen the way Drofa’s leadership skills play out in the real world.

“One of the phrases he uses is ‘Why not? Let’s just try it!’ He’s able to bring an extraordinarily high intellect to problems as well as that ability to be selfless and collaborate. The combination of those two is very rare.”

As a surgeon the “why not?” approach may feel risky, but when coupled with training, careful calculation, and risk assessment skills, it can lead to some remarkable outcomes for patients in his care.

One such example came early in Drofa’s tenure at Sanford. In 2016, a nine-day-old newborn arrived at the hospital, having suffered a stroke. It seemed like there was nothing to be done. His parents were preparing to say goodbye—until Drofa proposed they try something. He spoke with the parents, consulted with colleagues, and decided to perform a procedure that was routine in adult stroke patients, but had never been done on such a young child.

“Medicine is not necessarily [just] science. It’s also art and craft, and we do have some frameworks that we adhere to, guidelines and previous experiences,” he says. “When cases like this come in and they’re outside of normal framework or previous experience or guidelines, you view it as a challenge. Things can

get very emotional. I try to take all the emotions away ... I just do basically a technical calculation: ‘What if I do this? What if I don’t do this?’”

In this case, Drofa’s calculation was straightforward: If he did nothing, the child would die. So, he was determined to try.

“Sometimes you don’t have to think about it. You just have to do it,” he says. “Nobody had done it before. There are no tools available. One had to improvise. It is like sailing across uncharted sea.”

Drofa and his team gathered the smallest devices they had on hand and were able to remove the clot and place a stent. A year after his procedure, Drofa’s young patient was alive and thriving. In an interview with ABC News just after the boy’s first birthday, his father recalled what Drofa said to him before surgery: “He said ... he couldn’t deal with not doing anything.”

#### FROM FARGO TO GHANA, WITH HOPE

**T**his year, Drofa is once again in the news for taking on a seemingly insurmountable challenge. He is part of a team of physicians who will attempt to separate Ghanaian twin babies, who are joined at the head.

Portions of the twins’ brains and vascular systems are intertwined. Drofa, along with a team of international surgeons and specialists, are setting out on a multistep, monthslong process to untangle them.

Jim Slack, vice president of Sanford World Clinic, was the one who first learned of the twins and presented the opportunity to Drofa.

“[Sanford World Clinic] is partnered with and supporting the Ghanaian healthcare team with expertise, strategy, and hands-on participation by Dr. Drofa in completing this multi-staged complex separation of the twins,” he says. “Sanford is the only U.S. entity participating and we are one of approximately four international partner countries participating in different stages of the separation.”

In fact, Drofa is the only U.S. surgeon who will be physically operating on the

twins. This, he says, is partly due to a shared mindset among Sanford World Clinic, the Ghanaian team, and himself.

“The challenge for [the Ghanaian team] was they approached many U.S. institutions ... but then discussion would become, ‘Send this patient to us. We’ll pay for everything. We’ll do it. We don’t want you to get involved,’” he says. “Our mentality here is still very much from scratch, based on we built one of the best stroke programs in the country. ... So this pulls on our mentality to do things locally, make sure we can do it safely. ... So we said, ‘Yeah, you guys should do it there. We’ll come and help you. If you need us, we’ll step in, but you guys should be doing it.’”

Drofa made his first trip to Ghana in December 2021, where he reviewed the case and mapped out the consequences of each surgical action and how to “de-risk this whole process for these particular patients.”

And while Drofa’s involvement as the only U.S. surgeon on the team is notable, and speaks well of his abilities and his institution, he sees himself as “just a part of the team.”

“My part is pretty small, but overall, it’s just an honor to be a part of this.”

It’s this mentality—part of a team that is building something and doing something extraordinary—that drives Drofa in his day-to-day work in Fargo (which he now calls “a hidden gem”).

“That’s what excites me,” he says. “We’re building everything from the ground up, and we are part of a big organization that provides top-of-the-line healthcare for the patients, and that surpasses many, many healthcare systems in the world. That’s very exciting, being a part of this.” **C**

## MD+MBA= UNSTOPPABLE

Why add an MBA on top of an MD and successful career in medicine? For Dr. Alexander Drofa, it’s all about understanding the big picture.

**Carlson Magazine:** What prompted you to get an MBA?

**Alexander Drofa:** I like the challenge. I like to understand the big picture. I like to push things further as much as I can because that’s what drives me. That’s why the Carlson School of Management was the perfect choice because that’s what the executive program does. ... I realized also in my role as a healthcare leader, I’d like to understand the financial aspect of healthcare, the mechanics and revenue structures. I’d like to understand how people who lead the organization think.

**CM:** Why the Carlson School?

**AD:** It’s in the top three programs in the world right now based on the most prestigious ratings. That’s what attracted me. I got into several business schools, but I went into this because of their strong ratings. The teaching there was very hands on, very tailored to my needs, and not only made me a better businessperson, but a better administrator, too.

**CM:** How has your CEMBA experience shown up in your practice?

**AD:** It’s definitely helped me a lot, creating more value for my work and specifically for ... this particular case with Ghana, I think not having this knowledge, I would be just a guy, like a technical guy, like a craftsman, who comes in and helps them out, but I brought so much more value to this by having the business knowledge and having a bird’s-eye view on the whole process, not just a little technical part.



# Call It a Comeback

*Alum Kelly Yang proves perseverance pays dividends.*

BY KATELYN VUE

“I don’t want to just rush back in,” Kelly Yang says. “I don’t know what I’m going to go for, and I’m just gonna be in that same boat that I was [in] before so ... I logged back into my U of M email for the first time in like eight years. I found Anny’s email and I emailed her.”

Despite her reservations, hitting the send button set Yang back on a path she had left six years prior, when she had been a first-generation freshman student at the Carlson School. Anny Lin was Yang’s academic advisor way back then.

Lin’s response was warm, excited, and immediate. She wanted a meeting right away, eager to help reignite Yang’s spark for a degree, and ultimately, a new, fulfilling career.

By the spring of 2021, Yang would walk in her graduation ceremony, with a degree in Management Information Systems in hand. But her journey to achieve it is far from textbook.

#### AN EARLY ACHIEVER

In elementary school, Yang stood apart from her classmates.

In first grade, Yang’s aptitude for numbers catapulted her from her regular math class into ones alongside third-graders. By high school, she was consistently earning top grades in all subjects and scored high on the ACT. Yang says there wasn’t a doubt in her family or herself that college was in her future.

She’d nailed the academics. But there were other struggles. Yang is the youngest of seven siblings, and the daughter of a single mother who was working full-time to make ends meet. Money was tight. And navigating the transition to college was also not rich with resources: Her oldest sibling, 12 years her senior, was the first in her family to graduate from college.

All of this made affordability a major factor in her college search. Yang’s outstanding scholarship earned her a full ride, but living expenses were not covered. Yang narrowed her search to avoid paying out-of-state tuition and taking on too much debt with student loans.

She set her sights on the Carlson School of Management: It checked all her boxes and aligned with her goal to work in finance.

#### A CAMPUS DISCONNECT

Her campus kickoff did not get off to an auspicious start.

Yang says she was extremely overwhelmed. Welcome Week felt chaotic. Being grouped together with students she didn’t know was uncomfortable. And not seeing

“NO ONE EVER DOUBTED THAT I WOULD COME BACK; IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF WHEN.”





many other Hmong students in the Carlson School left her feeling anxious and left out.

She was surprised to find these feelings creeping quickly into her academic performance. She struggled more than she expected.

“I think it was just very confusing. And then what you were kind of led to think what college should be, wasn't really what it was,” Yang says. “Once you got behind, there was no catching up.”

For the first time, she started receiving bad grades. The number of late assignments piled up. Yang says it was difficult for her to find motivation to study and keep up with the amount of school work.

Lin was alerted to Yang's academic slide, so she reached out to strategize and get her back on track. Lin says she remembers that Yang was quiet, and that Yang mentioned that she felt isolated being one of the few Hmong students at the Carlson School.

### YANG'S EVOLUTION

Yang says she didn't take this decision lightly. She'd always been a star student. So she promised herself that she would return to school before she turned 25. It hurt, and some of her family members took it hard as well, especially her mom. In retrospect, Yang says, the break was needed—and it helped her discover her passion in the end.

No longer a student, Yang devoted her time and energy into her current job, which led to career advancement opportunities. Later on, her job would provide financial stability that Yang says many of her friends in college at the time didn't have yet.

She also experienced working in different roles that taught her valuable skills and lessons that sparked a new path for her when she started thinking about returning to school.

a pattern in her roles at work: Business analysts would often come to her for observation and to create new systems to improve operations.

It was a light-bulb moment. Lin told her she had the perfect major in mind: Management Information Systems (MIS).

“It was the Holy Grail calling to me,” Yang says. “[MIS] is literally like managing from the technical people to the business people, and then really getting that mesh in between. That's exactly what I wanted to do.”

### A SECOND CHANCE

With a new direction in hand, the two worked together to get re-enrollment paperwork approved. Lin signed on to be Yang's academic advisor again, supervising her academic probation until Yang earned the right grades.

This time around, Yang was ready. Eight years had passed, and Yang had more confidence, experience, and determination.

Yang says that she wasn't even sure the Carlson School would allow her to leave and return, so a second chance was extremely important to her. But she never gave up on the idea of making it happen.

“I was excited to get back to the Carlson School and to get that chance, but I knew I was always going to come back,” Yang says. “No one ever doubted that I would come back; it was just a matter of when.”

Her family was relieved when she returned, too.

“I really just wanted to come in and make sure that I graduated, because if it didn't work ... I just didn't have a plan C,” she says. “I really was determined.”

So, in fall of 2019, her first semester back, she earned a 3.4 GPA. In spring 2020, she officially declared her major in MIS with a minor in Business Analytics. By her last semester, in spring of 2021, she earned a 3.85 GPA.

### SUPPORT SYSTEM

Even though Yang was consistently doing well in her classes, she continued seeing Lin regularly.

“She demonstrated incredible determination, the whole time after she came back,” Lin says. “I [felt like I] was talking to two different people.”

Lin says Yang's story is a significant one. “In my 20-plus-year career, I have had very few, very few, Hmong American students who graduated from the Carlson School,

one of the top-notch business schools in the country,” says Lin. “Then to be able to really tell a story, and then use their story to encourage our Hmong American students.”

In Fall 2019, Yang met with career coach Rebecca Dordel to prepare for a career fair. Dordel says she sensed Yang's concern that employers may view her gap in enrollment negatively.

“When I looked at Kelly's resumé, and saw this work experience that she had, I immediately reiterated back to her authentically what I believed in terms of skill sets that she uniquely was going to be able to demonstrate to employers that traditional age college students may not be able to demonstrate,” Dordel says. “My goal for that conversation was to show Kelly to believe that to be true, the same way I believed that to be true, and that employers would see it in the same way.”

Along with this shift in mindset, Yang says another major contributing factor to her success this time is that she used Carlson School resources such as career coaching and networking.

Before taking her break, Yang remembers that most of her friends did not go to the Carlson School and oftentimes she felt misunderstood. But when she was at the Carlson School, she also felt like an outsider: In class, teachers frequently and highly encouraged students to use their own networks in assignments and projects—but that world was not accessible to her, either.

“My mom's friends are not directors of big companies or CEOs of little startup companies. I didn't have that, but everyone else apparently did,” Yang says. “From the start, I felt very like ‘OK, it's obviously not what you know, it's who you know;’ and I still stand by that statement, even after all my time.”

But when she returned with almost eight years of experience in finance, Yang says that she had developed a strong network and unwavering perseverance to achieve her goal. Now, Yang works as an information technology business system analyst at Medtronic.

And she wants to be a resource and network for Hmong students looking for their place, so they don't feel like she did then.

“You can reach out to me at any time as Hmong students, because I do feel like there wasn't somebody who already walked my shoes before me,” she says. **C**



## ANNY LIN Celebrates 20 Years of Academic Advising with the Carlson School

Anny Lin received the first LinkedIn message congratulating her upcoming 20-year anniversary as an academic advisor for the Carlson School of Management on November 6, 2021. In the following days, Lin says she kept getting more notifications—almost 90 comments and more than 350 reactions.

It was, perhaps, a reflection of the authentic connections she's made over the last two decades, both with colleagues and alumni.

Lin said the comments she received from her post linked to students she advised several years ago, who still remember the intimate conversations they had together.

One of Lin's past students commented, “Anny I remember meeting you for the first time when I was a first-year student sometime during '99-'00 year ... I still remember some of the advice you gave me and now I pass it along to first-year students that I work with!”

As an academic advisor, Lin said she estimates that she helped more than 1,000 students reach their goals.

Her career has been driven in part by her father's advice and influence: Before leaving Taiwan and moving to the United States, Lin says he told her that she had to work harder to prove that she was worthy to retain her position because she was not one of her American colleagues.

She taught herself how to navigate a predominantly-English world, even though her native language is Mandarin.

“I have always been very interested in attending different workshops, seminars, training beyond academic advising,” Lin says. “I'm still doing it nowadays.”

Going above and beyond played out in her daily work. In 2017, Lin was one of four John Tate Academic Advising award recipients and she said this was an extremely significant achievement to her.

Her influence was felt beyond her office's four walls: Students and alumni found her so integral to their success that she began showing up socially, too: She even attended Yang's wedding.

It's been a lifetime of connection. As she notes in her LinkedIn post: “My boss Jan O'Brien and Jerry Rinehart hired me. My husband, David, has been there supporting me every day since we met in the mid-90's. Our daughter, Eileen, was growing up in front of many Carlson UG folks; eventually she attended Carlson School and graduated in Spring 2021. And, my family in Taiwan have always been loving and supporting me.”

A student texted her—another indication of the personal relationships she cultivates with students—asking her how she felt on her anniversary. She wrote back: “I am truly thankful and grateful for having been able to work with many people like you, who brought stories to me allowing me to be part of your journey. I have been a lucky one and felt I have not disappointed people.”

*“I kept realizing that what I wanted to do wasn't what I was already doing, but I couldn't connect the dots of what I wanted.”*

— KELLY YANG

Meanwhile, Yang was working as a teller at Wells Fargo, earning good money for an 18-year-old. Eventually, she earned a promotion.

During her first semester, Yang held on to a 2.308 GPA, but she failed all of her classes the next two semesters.

Yang says her breaking point was when she took an accounting class her sophomore year.

“I realized that I absolutely hated finance. I hated accounting,” she says. “And I'm in Carlson. It's not like I can just switch my major to psychology or something like that, like you're in a business school, you have to switch.”

Her failing grades meant she would be suspended from the Carlson School for a year. And Yang says she didn't want to continue hurting her GPA, so she made the decision that ultimately changed her life: She took a break.

Lin did not hear from Yang for the next six years.

The pivotal career development point came when she was working as an underwriter.

“It's not that I didn't love my job, it just wasn't exciting. It was a day-to-day grind. I go in and I do my work, I leave. It was very simple to me,” she says. “I kept realizing that what I wanted to do wasn't what I was already doing, but I couldn't connect the dots of what I wanted.”

She could have continued on, advancing her career as an underwriter. There weren't any major obstacles in her way for promotions and success. But something nagged at her: She wasn't sure she wanted to keep doing it indefinitely.

### COURSE CORRECTION

In order to come back to the University, Yang told herself this time would need to be different. And she knew it was important to not throw away what she learned in the finance industry.

Hence, the email to Lin. Yang told Lin in their first meeting that she noticed





# FAIR PLAY

BY WADE RUPARD

THANKS TO A RECENT CHANGE TO THE NCAA RULEBOOK, THE FIRST GENERATION OF STUDENT-ATHLETES ARE BUILDING BRANDS, BUSINESSES—AND BANK ACCOUNTS.

ILLUSTRATION: VALERIE CHIANG



# WEARING A PINK, CROPPED SWEATSHIRT WITH “CARPE DIEM” WRITTEN ACROSS THE FRONT, LEXY RAMLER, '21 BSB, '22 MHRIR, STEPS IN FRONT OF HER PHONE CAMERA.

As the video starts, she steps back, smiles, and gently tugs the sweater down, giving the viewer another look at the message.

Once she posts the one-second video on Instagram for her nearly 8,000 followers, it marks the start of her work as an ambassador for Ozone Leotards. It's the latest partnership for Ramler, a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) all-around silver medalist in gymnastics, who also previously signed with hat company Love Your Melon. It's just one example of the types of projects student-athletes nationwide are pursuing under the NCAA's new Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) rules.

Prior to July 2021, the NCAA prevented student-athletes from accepting outside money. If athletes violated the rules, they could face suspension or lose their athletic

eligibility altogether. Colleges and universities were also at risk of forfeiting games or expulsion from postseason tournaments.

But the new rules allow student-athletes to make money off themselves. They can appear in advertisements, charge for signing autographs, and post about products on social media.



“I THINK PROBABLY THE COOLEST PART MYSELF AND OTHER ATHLETES HAVE HAD IS COMPANIES COME TO US, REACH OUT, AND ASK IF YOU WANT TO BE PART OF IT.”

— LEXY RAMLER, '21 BSB, '22 MHRIR

Changes in NIL rules began to take shape in 2019 when states—California first among them—began passing “Fair Pay to Play” laws, which made it illegal for state schools to prohibit athletes from making money off their name, image, and likeness. The laws overrode NCAA rules.

The NCAA then reversed course on its long-standing “amateurism” concept and now allows college athletes to earn money.

“I wasn't exactly sure what to expect when the new rules were announced,” Ramler says. “This wasn't something I was able to do a year ago, so I'm definitely grateful for the opportunity. I know how fortunate I am to be able to be a student-athlete at this time.”

## NAVIGATING THE UNKNOWN

To help student-athletes navigate the changes, the UMN Athletics Department has created the MINDset program, which educates athletes about NIL. Part of that program is providing student-athletes with photos and videos they can use for content creation on their social media channels or to help grow their brand.

The other side is a partnership with Team Altemus, a consulting company that helps educate and equip athletes on NIL deals. Together with Team Altemus, the University provides training sessions for athletes on financial literacy, contracts, taxes, and other nitty-gritty aspects of NIL.

“I WAS HAPPY FOR THE STUDENT-ATHLETES TO BE ABLE TO MONETIZE THEMSELVES LIKE THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO THE ENTIRE TIME.”

— ANDRE HOLLINS, '22 MBA



“We're really proud of what we've come up with so far,” says Mike Wierzbicki, senior associate athletics director for external affairs. “We don't want to be in the middle of these independent deals, but we want to educate our student-athletes and make sure they have as much information about the positives and negatives that come with this type of entrepreneurial opportunity.”

Former Carlson School student Blaise Andries, '22 MABA, an offensive lineman for the Gophers football team, says despite all of this being so new, he felt well-prepared for navigating NIL, thanks to these resources.

“Obviously, this is all so new and there is so much to think about, whether that's tax implications or what have you,” Andries says. “It was a great learning experience for me and the rest of the guys on the team.”

Periodically, Wierzbicki and others in the athletics department meet with Carlson School professors to explore NIL from a business perspective. The group has discussed how they could potentially expand MINDset and structure opportunities for more advanced opportunities for student-athletes.

One potential way of doing this could be for athletes to participate in some of the Carlson School's experiential learning classes where students are building businesses from the ground up.

“It's so great to sit around the table and get input from someone with a financial services background or someone from a marketing background,”

Wierzbicki says. “Having Carlson School professors there has been vital for us to bounce ideas off of and try to understand what this space might look like in another six, 12, or 18 months.”

## EVALUATING ENDORSEMENTS

The opportunity to partner with companies for monetary gain isn't one weighed lightly by student-athletes.

With offers sliding into her social media direct messages, Ramler says she considers working with each brand individually and endorses those she can support and bring energy to. Ramler's two current sponsorships are largely social-media-based. Her agreement with Love Your Melon was for one post, while her deal with Ozone Leotards is more expansive and involves other gymnasts from across the country.

“I think probably the coolest part myself and other athletes have had is companies come to us, reach out, and ask if you want to be part of it,” she says. “Ozone reached out, and I thought, ‘Wow, this is so cool.’ Basically, everybody wears their apparel, so being a part of that was pretty special.”

A large majority of the NIL deals signed by athletes are on a similar scale to Ramler's, with athletes posting on social media for hundreds to thousands of dollars. But some of the biggest college stars have already signed to partner with some of the most well-known corporations in sports. University of Connecticut basketball player and Hopkins, Minnesota-native Paige Bueckers signed with Gatorade—becoming the first collegiate player ever to partner with the sports drink company—and sneaker and apparel marketplace StockX. Combined,

those endorsements could earn the national player of the year more than \$1 million, according to *Forbes*.

And shortly after winning a gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics, Minnesota wrestler Gable Steveson inked a deal with the WWE, the first-ever such contract between the wrestling organization and a current collegiate wrestler.

## NEW OPPORTUNITIES

For former athletes, such as Andre Hollins, the new rules come too late.

Hollins, '22 MBA, was a four-year starter for the Gophers men's basketball team and is the sixth-leading scorer in program history.

“I was a little jealous, a little unhappy that I missed that opportunity,” Hollins says with a laugh. “But in all seriousness, I thought it was about time that they passed that. I was happy for the student-athletes to be able to monetize themselves like they should have been able to do the entire time.”

After playing at Minnesota from 2011-15, Hollins played professionally in Europe. Following an injury, he retired and returned to the Gophers' basketball program as a graduate assistant.

Hollins is now enrolled in the Carlson School's Full-Time MBA program. Though he's only had a few conversations with players on the current roster, he's already starting to see how this could be a game-changer for athletes, especially those wearing maroon-and-gold, given the campus's location in a major metropolitan area.

“It's one of the biggest markets in the Big Ten and has all of these big corporations, and it's also the only major university in the state. There is a big opportunity there.”

For Ramler, the opportunity to monetize herself isn't just about profit. When the new NIL rules were passed, her first thought was that she could pay it forward by teaching young gymnasts floor routines through camps or private lessons. And ultimately, she sees that as the biggest benefit.

“I've gotten this intrinsic feeling about how I'm able to help young fans and young athletes, and that is huge,” she says. “This has made a big impact on me.” **C**



## Carlson School for Life



The Carlson School has staying power. The school has persevered through a dynamic century of growth and change and has established itself as a leader in business education throughout the world. This past June, we closed a multi-year philanthropic campaign that ensures the school has the resources and funding that will set a higher standard of excellence in business education and cements the school as a top-tier business school. And while we are still navigating through a pandemic, the school has innovated in ways we could not have envisioned two years ago.

These significant accomplishments would not have been possible without you—the alumni, friends, and donors who embrace “Carlson for Life.” Because of your commitment, the school remains strong and resilient through times of both success and adversity. Carlson School alumni and friends are a powerful force throughout the world. And it is crystal clear that your contributions of time, knowledge, and financial support are absolutely integral to our future success.

As we look back, we honor you, the alumni, friends, foundations, and corporate partners, who the school can rely on, year after year, to support priorities and

opportunities for growth. Because of consistent annual donors, the school is positioned to emerge from challenging times in some ways stronger, more adaptable, and better able to meet the changing needs of its students, faculty, and staff.

As the numbers below demonstrate, our community not only values the continued impact the Carlson School has locally and globally, but also understands that reliable annual philanthropy is required to ensure the school has the resources to carry out its mission. I am especially grateful to the 448 donors who have made consistent annual contributions over the past 20 years, and the 293 donors who the school can count among its most loyal and generous benefactors, with consistent contributions over 30 or more years.

We are incredibly grateful for your steadfast generosity and commitment to the school. We honor your commitment by offering meaningful, lifelong engagement to the school. And hope that you think of the Carlson School as your “School for Life.”

Sincerely,

Travis Smith, '21 MBA, Assistant Dean Institutional Advancement

### By the Numbers



**62%**

of donors made contributions for two years running



**43%**

of donors have given in each of the last five years



**22%**

of donors have been loyal annual benefactors for 10 years

# ENGAGE

## Record-breaking Give to the Max Day Raises More Than \$1 Million

In a challenging year, the Carlson School community came together on November 18, 2021 to raise more than double the school's Give to the Max Day goal, with contributions totaling more than \$1 million.

Alumni and friends supported 11 different causes at the school, allowing donors to target their contributions to programs they care about or were important to their own experiences at the Carlson School. Causes included student emergency funding; scholarships; diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; and other areas of current need.

Volunteer leaders contributed an incredible \$142,000 in matching funds to drive participation to their various causes. This included the Gophers of the Last Decade (GOLD) alumni board, which for the first time, challenged fellow recent undergraduate alumni to contribute to a Student Emergency Fund by matching



contributions dollar-for-dollar up to \$2,500. The fund raised more than \$1 1,000—more than double their goal—which will go a long way in supporting students facing unexpected hardships.

Thanks to an increase in total donors—up more than 10 percent from 2020—and

an alumni donor who made a \$450,000 estate commitment, the fundraising total broke the Carlson School's previous Give to the Max Day record by more than \$500,000. These contributions helped the school secure a top three position statewide for 2021 Give to the Max Day campaign fundraising.



Bill and Susan Sands

## Business as a Force for Community Impact, 10 Years On

Using business as a force for good is central to the mission of the Carlson School, and a key reason many students choose to study here. Ten years ago, Bill, '60 BSB, and Susan, '69 BA, Sands established the Sands Family Social Ventures Fellowships to enable emerging leaders to launch their own social ventures or to further the work of community organizations already undertaking projects with social impact goals.

This year, a record 12 current MBA students will join one continuing project from the past academic year as Sands Fellows. These 13 students will exercise the entrepreneurial skills they are exploring in the classroom, while making an impact on their communities with the support of the Carlson School's Gary S. Holmes Center for Entrepreneurship.

The projects they've proposed and launched tackle diverse issues from music education to criminal justice to aiding farmers and supporting small and minority-owned businesses.

Since the program began, 59 Carlson School students and their social ventures have benefitted from the funding provided by the Sands family.

“Each year we are in awe of the way the Sands Fellows take on serious social issues that exist in the community,” says a joint comment from the Sands. “Enabling emerging leaders or entrepreneurs to make a real impact is one of the priorities we had hoped for in establishing the fellowships. We are anxious to see what the next decade of fellows will accomplish.”



# Motivated by Innovation

Avanish Vellanki and his company, Rain Therapeutics, are at the forefront of developing new technologies that may better treat cancer patients.



“I think what gives me, and so many people in this industry, motivation is our work has a very tangible benefit and result. We’re directly developing a drug to help a patient, and that gives us motivation every single day.”

— AVANISH VELLANKI

After working in investment banking in New York City, Vellanki, '04 MBA, has since pivoted to working in the biotechnology field. Vellanki spoke to the Carlson School about what motivates him in his work, how he approaches leading others, and what recent graduates can do to adapt to the changing work environment.

**What drives you in your day-to-day work?**

Rain Therapeutics is a cancer drug development organization, so we are developing therapies for patients with cancer that don't really have other therapies. These patients are dying and dealing with some of the most serious forms of cancer. On a day-to-day basis, we interact with patients and families who have seen a loved one deteriorate.

I think what gives me, and so many people in this industry, motivation is our work has a very tangible benefit and result. We're directly developing a drug to help a patient, and that gives us motivation every single day.

**Are there leadership principles you try to stick to?**

I think you have to articulate your vision. I think many people who come and work for a company want to work for a team that has a shared vision and a leadership team that can show that they will continue to hustle, that they're not removed from the day-to-day grind, and that they're leading by example.

**For Carlson School graduates who are entering the workforce today, what advice would you give them?**

Dream big. There's nothing to be gained from moderating your expectations or your ambitions. Make sure you hustle, be resilient, and are creative in your strategy and how to invest in yourself in a career. **C**

**Avanish Vellanki**  
**'04 MBA**

**OFFICIAL TITLE**  
CEO and co-founder

**YEARS AT RAIN THERAPEUTICS**  
5

Scholarships help provide opportunities for students to attend a leading business school and gain skills, leadership experience, and connections to help them use business as a force for good. Philanthropy from alumni and friends of the Carlson School makes a positive impact, extending far beyond the campus.



“During the summer of 2021, I interned with the New York Yankees organization, where I was able to gain extremely valuable experience in professional baseball that will help me towards my goal of a career in MLB.”

— SADIE KELLER



**Sadie Keller**

'23 BSB

My time at the Carlson School of Management has been everything I've dreamed of and more. Without a doubt, my scholarship plays a key role in achieving my educational and professional dreams. It means I can spend more time on my studies, extracurricular activities, and internships with less time worrying about my finances.

Now in my junior year, I have already gained so much knowledge that has expanded my horizons more than I ever thought possible. I have been able to work with a major corporation for a class project, which was an incredible opportunity to pair lessons in the classroom with leaders in the industry. I was able to study abroad in Havana, Cuba, before the COVID-19 pandemic. During the summer of 2021, I interned with the New York Yankees organization, where I

was able to gain extremely valuable experience in professional baseball that will help me toward my goal of a career in MLB. These experiences would not have been possible for me without the Carlson School.



**Mohamed Zuhier Hammadelniel**

'25 BSB

The scholarship I received is so important to my family and me—not because of its monetary value, but because of what it represents. It represents the fact that no matter what cards you are dealt in the beginning of this beautiful yet difficult thing we call life, you are capable of excellence. For me, the Carlson School and the scholarship I have been awarded represent excellence.

The diversity, inclusiveness, networking opportunities, and adventurous atmosphere at the Carlson School and the University of Minnesota is unmatched. As a Black, first-generation entrepreneur and business owner in today's world, I can think of no better place to grow than the Carlson School of Management.



# Legacy of Learning

Gift from Professor Emeritus establishes new endowments, fellowships, conference

Public education is a core value for Andrew and Martha Van de Ven, and with it comes the need to serve the community, as called for by the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, which helped establish the University of Minnesota, among others.

A professor emeritus in the Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship and the Work and Organizations departments, Andrew has taught at the Carlson School for more than 40 years. An educator herself, Martha was a professor at the Mitchell Hamline School of Law and now serves on the Board of Orono (Minn.) Public Schools.

Now, through a generous gift, they're paying it forward to future educators at the Carlson School. The Van de Vens are supporting an endowed professorship, faculty fellowships, and a new conference focused on engaged scholarship. "The essence of life is to pass it on," Andrew Van de Ven says. "Most of my professional opportunities have been provided by others and now it's time for me to pay it forward to the next generation of faculty and students."

At the Carlson School, Van de Ven was the Vernon H. Heath Professor of Organizational Innovation and Change. He taught courses on the management of organizational innovation and change, and research methods that involved engaged scholarship. His award-winning research focused on nominal group brainstorming techniques, organization design, innovation and change, and engaged scholarship. "One of the ways I judge the quality of my research or teaching is to talk with students 20 years after they graduate," he says. "If they say they still use the knowledge they learned from my course, that's the best compliment they can give me. That makes my day!"

A desire to help solve major business problems and advance scientific knowledge inspired him to develop the engaged scholarship research method. Andrew Van de Ven notes that "many

business problems exceed our limited individual capabilities. Engaged scholarship is a participative form of research for obtaining the viewpoints of key stakeholders (researchers, policy makers, practitioners) to understand a complex problem being studied. By exploring differences in the kinds of knowledge that stakeholders can bring forth on a problem, we can produce knowledge that is more penetrating and insightful than when scholars or practitioners work on the problems alone."

The conference will bring together Carlson School PhD graduates and current students as well as faculty and managers to discuss and learn about critical issues happening in business, such as sustainability, poverty, or the current supply chain issues occurring because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The conference will also invite leading scholars, executives and policy makers to share their insights.

"Engaged scholarship introduces the idea that our research should be

**"If one faculty member can advance his or her work, that in turn, affects thousands of students throughout that faculty's career, then investing in faculty and their development is the seedbed, the generator, for excellence in education."**

— ANDREW VAN DE VEN

To foster the future of business, the endowed professorship and faculty fellowships will help support the Carlson School's faculty members who are early in their careers. "If one faculty member can advance his or her work, that in turn, affects thousands of students throughout that faculty's career, then investing in faculty and their development is the seedbed, the generator, for excellence in education," Andrew Van de Ven explains.

Along with financial support for faculty, the Van de Ven's gift will also help launch a new conference series—the Andrew Van de Ven Conference for Engaged Scholarship. The idea for the conference came to Dean Sri Zaheer who noticed there were few enrichment and networking opportunities for our PhD students and alumni, and no association for the extensive diaspora of Carlson School PhD alumni throughout the world.

problem-focused," Andrew Van de Ven says. "I hope the conference engages academics from different disciplines and practitioners from different functional areas to come together to discuss important managerial problems, and thereby advance knowledge for theory and practice."

He sees his philanthropy as a way to support the intellectual community "from which I benefitted during my time at the Carlson School through teaching, research, publications, seminars, and stimulating engagements with colleagues, students, and managers in the business world." Now, Van de Ven wants to help the next generation of scholars and support the community he has come to love by giving back. "We want to give because we believe public education is so important," he explains. "As Henry Adams said, 'Teachers affect eternity. No one knows where their influence stops.'" **C**





## Looking Toward the Future

Carlson Women Global Connect  
inspires women worldwide



### CARLSON WOMEN GLOBAL CONNECT

ABOVE:  
The 2019 Women's  
Leadership  
Conference at the  
Carlson School  
of Management.

When Julie Gilbert, '93 BSB, '99 MBA, thinks and talks about Carlson Women Global Connect (CWGC) she can't help but think of the future. Though women are beginning to make inroads to narrow the inequality gaps in business, there is still much more that can be done, and Gilbert hopes CWGC can help.

The organization is one of the Carlson School's alumni affinity networks, which seeks to foster a culture of lifelong engagement and build a community of women dedicated to helping one another succeed.

"We really want Carlson Women Global Connect to be a lighthouse for women," Gilbert says. "And not only women who graduated from the University of Minnesota or the Carlson School, but also their daughters, their nieces, and any little girl who has dreams to become something they never could have imagined."

Before the affinity group was formed, much of the female-centric programming offered by the Carlson School focused on networking events in the Twin Cities. CWGC expands that substantially by offering events for women around the world, as well as hosting other programming, such as sponsoring a mentorship program, hosting professional development opportunities throughout the year, and helping current students make connections and advance their careers.

To support some of these initiatives, many in the organization have come together to donate their time and treasure. In November, the group established the Carlson Women Global Connect Alumni Affinity Network Fund to advance initiatives that support gender diversification at the Carlson School and in the workforce, and foster engagement between Carlson School students and Carlson Women

"We really want Carlson Women Global Connect to be a lighthouse for women."

— JULIE GILBERT, '93 BSB, '99 MBA

Global Connect members. The fund launched on Give to the Max Day and raised more than \$16,000.

To help fund some of these initiatives, CWGC created a philanthropy and volunteer committee, which also formed on Give to the Max Day.

"I wanted to find a way to give back and help other students who were in my same shoes and need financial support," says Jill Haspert, '11 MBA, who is the philanthropy and volunteering lead for CWGC. "The Carlson School, and the U of M more broadly, enhanced my life in such an amazing way. So I've felt compelled to give back and keep that spirit going."

With a foundation in place and plans to continue growing, Haspert and others involved with CWGC are already seeing the group shape lives outside of its members.

"A key piece of this group is the impact all of this will have on our children," Gilbert says. "The last two years of all of us working from home provided the opportunity for my 11-year-old son to overhear countless Zoom meetings, including the work we as women do to lead and grow businesses, elevate the financials, and also inspire and engage employees. He's learning a lot through osmosis. So our responsibility is to build the next group of leaders, whether they're male or female, who will help elevate women." **C**

## Decades of Making a Difference

Years of partnership with Augeo  
strengthens Carlson School programs



David Kristal,  
CEO and  
co-chairman of  
Augeo Marketing

For close to two decades, Augeo and its founder and CEO David Kristal, '87 BSB, have been mainstays at the Carlson School. From guest speaking to partnering with the school's Institute of Research in Marketing (IRM) to sponsoring events and providing creative services, Kristal and his colleagues at Augeo have found countless ways to give back.

"We [do so] because our future depends on the next generation of ideas and the people who will create the next great innovations," Kristal says. "From our perspective, we think of it as making an investment in our collective future."

Augeo is a global leader in enterprise engagement and loyalty strategy and platform technology—a natural partner with the Carlson School because of the business expertise they bring to partnerships. For the past 10 years,

Kristal and Augeo have worked with the IRM, which brings together the expertise of the Carlson School's marketing faculty with top marketers and market research professionals from global brands. These partnerships create thought-provoking dialogue and drive the science and practice of marketing forward. This two-way conversation provides greater context for faculty research and encourages real-world adoption of that research, leading to better business strategies and more effective public policies.

In 2017, IRM began hosting the Ignite Conference, an event that expands on its mission and assembles leading researchers and the business community to discuss the latest trends in marketing. Augeo is a main sponsor of the 2021 Ignite Conference and supported the event with production and creative services.

"Our goal is to highlight the power of doing things differently on a global scale."

— DAVID KRISTAL, '87 BSB

"Research is really critical because it's foundational," Kristal says. "Given the pandemic, we wanted to reimagine what Ignite looked like. So we worked with the IRM leadership and board members to put on a virtual conference that brought together a very impressive array of innovative business leaders throughout the country, spanning the fields of retail, healthcare, fintech, and manufacturing, among others. It was a great event."

Augeo and the Carlson School have partnered on events for years. Together, the two developed the Augeo Luminaries Speaker Series, which showcases prominent global leaders at the forefront of disruptive innovation in a broad range of industry, nonprofit, and public sector fields. Distinguished authors, executives, entrepreneurs, investors, and changemakers have taken part in the speaker series, including *The New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman and Valor Equity Partners Founder and CEO Antonio Gracias.

"Our goal is to highlight the power of doing things differently on a global scale," Kristal says. "These types of events are a great way to bring people together, and create a channel where people can share wonderful, imaginative ideas that have a chance to change our world." **C**



## TAKEAWAYS

Every event brings new insights and experiences. Here are some highlights:

### Focusing on Mental Health

Members of the Carlson Alumni Pride Network joined Michael Burson, a licensed clinical mental health counselor, and Nils Rykken, '21 BSB, for an inspiring virtual

session that affirmed the group's and the Carlson School's commitment to support members of the LGBTQ+ community toward personal and professional success.



### Sustaining DEI Efforts

At **Insight to Action**, Professor John Kammeyer-Mueller led a panel discussion on how organizations can incorporate and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Panelists included Joffrey Wilson, '99 BSB, director of DEI at Mortenson; Tawnya Stewart, chief people and culture officer at Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures; and Tonya Hampton, senior vice president and chief people and culture officer at Hennepin Healthcare. See the recording at [z.umn.edu/csomalumniwebinars](https://z.umn.edu/csomalumniwebinars).

### Safely Gathering In-person Once Again

We were excited to safely return to some in-person events in fall 2021, including **1st Tuesday**, the Carlson School's longest running business program, which met in-person in November and December; **Carlson 360 for Alumni of Color** affinity group met at the Carlson School where attendees could network and have updated professional headshots taken; and Ben Wright, '05 MBA, inspired the crowd at the **6th Annual Military & Veterans Celebration** in November.

### Carlson School Day and Tailgate at Gopher Football

Investors Circle members and local alumni volunteers cheered on the Gophers football team at a lively tailgate event in November at the 3M Arena at Mariucci. While the Gophers weren't able to pull off a win against Illinois for the fans, attendees still celebrated Carlson School Day at the game! Learn more about the Investors Circle at [z.umn.edu/investorscircle](https://z.umn.edu/investorscircle).

### MBA Reunion

Carlson School MBA alumni celebrated a reunion in September 2021. The keynote address and lifelong learning opportunities were held virtually and featured Carlson School Dean Sri Zaheer providing a school update, Carlson School faculty speaking about research topics of interest, and an incredible conversation about women of color in the workplace with Linh Peters, '05 MBA. A few classes, including the Class of 2020 (pictured), were also able to gather and celebrate together informally.



## CLASS NOTES

Let your classmates know what you've been up to since graduation. Submit a Class Note for publication in the alumni magazine: [carlsonschool.umn.edu/share](https://carlsonschool.umn.edu/share).

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*Note: While we welcome alumni news, the Carlson School does not verify Class Note submissions and is not responsible for the accuracy of the information contained in Class Notes.*

### 1950s

**Mark Paper**, '54 BSB, recently began his 60th year as president of Lewis Bolt & Nut Company, a 94-year-old family-owned business that employs 275 people. Mark has been married to his wife, Francie, for 63 years, and enjoys walking and biking.

### 1970s

**Harald Borrmann**, '76 BSB, retired from his role as president, CEO, and board chair of Catholic United Financial at Catholic United after 12 years of service and 32 years in the reinsurance industry. He continues his roles on several nonprofit boards of directors and as a member of the Board of Directors of SFM Mutual Insurance Company.

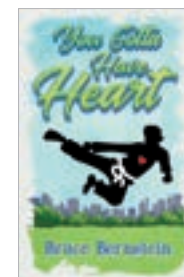
### 1980s

**Garry Lowenthal**, '80 BSB, '83 MBT, started a new role as chief financial officer and director at Elate Moving.

**George Brown**, '81 BSB, was appointed executive director of the Stanford Center for Racial Justice.



**Bruce Bernstein**, '83 MHRIR, a retired employee rights attorney, authored the coming-of-age novel, *You Gotta Have Heart*.



**Beth Kieffer Leonard**, '82 BSB, managing partner of Lurie, was selected as a *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* 2021 Most Admired CEO.

**Christe Singleton**, '82 BSB, started a new role as the vice president of Minnesota gas at CenterPoint Energy.

**John Flood**, '87 BSB, was appointed to CynergisTek, Inc. board of directors. Flood is a founding partner of the Craig-Hallum Capital Group, and he will be a member of the board's audit committee.

**Kathryn "Kit" Matthew**, '88 MBA, was nominated by President Joe Biden to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities.

**Jeff Weirens**, '88 BSB, published a new book, *The Synergy Solution: How Companies Win the Mergers & Acquisitions Game*, earlier this year. Weirens is also a global business leader at Deloitte and serves on the Carlson School Consulting Enterprise Executive Advisory Board.

### 1990s

**Joe Green**, '90 MBA, has joined Faegre Drinker as counsel in the finance and restructuring practice group.

**Carmen Volkart**, '90 MBA, started a new role as a member of the Board of Directors at Antares Pharma, Inc.

**Rahoul Ghose**, '91 MBA, was among the winners of the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* CIO of the Year ORBIE Awards in 2021. Ghose is chief information officer at ECMC Group.

**Mary Zimmer**, '92 MBT, started a new role as a member of the Board of Directors at Alerus Financial Corporation.

**Eric Strauss**, '95 BSB, is now chief growth officer at Connected Logistics, a promotion from director of business development.

**Matthew Carrier**, '96 BSB, earned a 2022 Five Star Wealth Manager award from Five Star Professional. Carrier is a private wealth advisor at Carrier and Varty.

**Jean Guezmir**, '96 MBA, was among the winners of the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* CIO of the Year ORBIE Awards in 2021. Guezmir is senior vice president and chief information officer at St. Catherine University.

**Dave Sauder**, '97 MBA, is the owner of Verum Illic, Inc. a service-disabled, veteran-owned small business focused on helping small businesses succeed through improved design, development, manufacturing, and customer service.

**Sandra Strand**, '97 MBA, was honored by the North Dakota State University Foundation with an Alumni Achievement Award in 2021.

**Garrett E. Black**, '98 MHA, started a new role as the chief operating officer at Equality Health.

**Marc Christopherson**, '98 MHRIR, was promoted to chief human resources officer of the Consumer Solutions segment at Pentair, a promotion from human resources vice president. Christopherson has been with the company since 2020.

**Dawn Hukai**, '98 PhD, started a new role as the acting dean of the UW-River Falls College of Business and Economics.

**Jason Grosz**, '99 BSB, '06 MHRIR, is now vice president of global talent acquisition at Ecolab, a promotion from vice president of global contingent workforce solutions. Grosz has been with the company since 2006.

### 2000s

**Rita Rivard Groneberg**, '00 BSB, realtor with eXp Realty, was awarded the eXp Icon award in November 2021. The eXp Realty ICON Agent Award is reserved for agents who achieve exceptional production goals and positively impact company culture. Groneberg has been providing real estate services with eXp Realty since 2018.

**Dawn Moen**, '00 BSB, started a new role as national director of development operations at the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation.





**Fred Spencer**, '08 MBA, and **Perteeet Spencer**, '06 MBA, launched AYO Foods in 2019, a line of West-African-inspired meals, diversifying the offerings in the frozen foods aisle. In October 2021, they expanded to nationwide distribution when Target joined other major retailers, including Kroger and Whole Foods, in carrying the brand. AYO, which means “joy” in the West African Yoruba language, uses recipes from the Spencer family’s own traditions.

Two alumni, **Brian Slipka**, '00 BSB, CEO & managing general partner at True North Equity Partners, and **Anthony Albanese**, '01 BSB, co-founder of Duke Cannon Supply Co. became co-owners of the Sioux Falls Canaries baseball team in 2021. Slipka, a Sioux Falls native, and his college roommate, Albanese, are excited to bring the community together through America’s pastime.

**Kathy Tune**, '00 MBA, is now a member of the board of directors at Electromed, Inc.

**Jenny Rhodes**, '01 MHRIR, started a new role as managing director and chief human resources officer at PennyMac.

**Matthew Sweeney**, '01 BSB, is now the vice president and chief financial officer at Midwestern University, a promotion from controller. Sweeney has been with the university since 2011.

**Dennis Anding**, '02 BSB, started a new role as a partner at Crowe.

**Kathryn Freytag**, '02 MBA, was among the winners of the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* CIO of the Year ORBIE Awards in 2021. Freytag is vice president and chief information officer at Donaldson Co., Inc.

**Inge Grasdal**, '02 MBA, started a new role as executive vice president corporate development at Graco.

**Sherri Johnson**, '02 BSB, '11 MBA, started a new role as senior director of client services at Ovative Group.

**Jason Lee**, '02 MBA, started a new role as a director, strategy, and operations at Beyond Finance.

**Adam Rowan**, '02 BSB, started a new role as a principal business architect at Medica. Rowan has been with the company since 2012.

**Diane Palmquist**, '03 MBA, started a new role as the group global chief executive officer of Flood.

**Melinda Pavak**, '03 MBA, started a new role as the consul general of the United States of America for the Kolkata Consular District in India. The role is responsible for advancing U.S.-India relations in the region.

**Francesco Redivo**, '04 MBA, started a new role as senior director of business at G42 Healthcare.

**Andy Schornack**, '04 BSB, was recognized as a 40 Under 40 honoree by the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* for his leadership in the community. Schornack is the Flagship Bank CEO and president of Security Bank & Trust Co.

**Wes Strait**, '05 BSB, '10 MBA, started a new role at Best Buy as a director of technology transformation.

**Chris Enstrom**, '06 MBA, is now global marketing manager of aerospace structural adhesives and sealants at 3M, a promotion from marketing manager industrial structural adhesives. Enstrom has been with the company since 2008.

**Koji Miyagi**, '06 MBA, started a new role as head of portfolio management division, business development unit at SoftBank.

**Scott Neils**, '06 BSB, '07 MACC, is now the interim chief financial officer at Xtant Medical Holdings, a promotion from controller. Neils has been with the company since 2019.

**Raj Purmessur**, '06 BSB, started a new role as global head of alternative investment services product development at J.P. Morgan.

**Lindsay Amundson**, '07 BSB, '12 MBA, started a new role as senior brand director at Sabrosura Foods.

**Claudia Drayton**, '07 MBA, was appointed to the Board of Directors of 3D Systems Corporation. Drayton is the chief financial officer of Quantum-Si.

**Stacy Eichenlaub**, '07 MBA, founded Kinetica Consulting.

**Shanna Koenig**, '07 MHRIR, is senior manager, HR business partner, at Ripple.

**Matthew Reck**, '07 BSB, chief financial officer at HelpSystems, was honored by the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* with a CFO of the Year Award in 2021.

**John Sikora**, '07 BSB, started a new role as a chief financial officer at Bremer Bank. Sikora has been with the bank since 2017.

**Na Sun**, '07 MHRIR, is head of compensation programs at Redfin.

**Erika Thiem**, '07 MBA, started a new role as deputy chief supply chain officer at Feeding America.

Merchology.com, co-founded by **Ally Delgado**, '08 BSB, has grown significantly over the past year, including hiring 60 new employees, opening a new headquarters, and a third production facility.

**Terry Haider**, '08 MBA, along with his wife, Colleen, founded the TC Haider Group.

**Maggie Manteuffel**, '08 BSB, '13 MBA, started a new role as product manager at InnoVint.

## 2010s

**Adam Letson**, '10 BSB, is now principal at TT Capital Partners, a promotion from vice president.

**Ashley Johnson**, '10 BSB, started a new role as a senior property accountant at Target. Johnson has been with the company since 2014.

**Rob Klee**, '11 MHRIR, started a new role as director of benefits at Sony.

**Scott Mays**, '11 MBA, is now vice president of government programs commissions and sales incentives at UnitedHealth Group, a promotion from senior director, government programs sales incentives. Mays has been with the company since 2012.

**Asha Sharma**, '11 BSB, was appointed to the Board of Directors for AppLovin. Sharma is the chief operating officer for Instacart.

**Anne Steiner**, '11 MBA, is now chief executive officer at Cprime, a promotion from head of product and technology. Steiner has been with the consulting company since 2017.

**Dino Bilankov**, '11 BSB, is now chief financial officer, E&I Southwest Markets at UnitedHealthcare, a promotion from vice president, corporate strategy, and business development.

**Heidi Aherns**, '12 MBA, is now senior product owner of the medical systems division at 3M, a promotion from U.S. sales, commercial solutions division.

**Dina Goodman**, '12 MBA, is now senior director of sales and strategic extensions for e.l.f. Beauty, a promotion from director of sales.

**Brittany Gowan**, '12 BSB, started a new role as HR director of talent development and training at GardaWorld.

**Amelia Helm**, '12 MBA, started a new role as principal product marketing manager at Blackbaud.



**Monzur Morshed Patwary**, '10 BSB, a senior manager at BRAC, the largest development organization in Bangladesh, has led two COVID-19 response projects in the country. His work has included the distribution of 3.5 million reusable masks, installation of more than 500 handwashing stations, and identification of 8,000 suspected COVID-19 cases. The projects also distributed COVID-related informational materials to half a million people, provided information about accessing telehealth services, raised awareness of vaccinations and preventive measures with 3,400 community religious leaders, and designed comics and murals geared toward creating change agents in school-age children.



At the two-year college I transferred from, I was balancing multiple jobs and my courses—at the expense of making peer connections, and time with my now six-year-old son. With part of my tuition covered by my scholarship, I have been able to build my peer network and model the importance of pursuing higher education to my son.

**KYLE COREY, '23 BSB**

Scholarships have a direct and meaningful impact on the Carlson School experience for countless students. You can support students like Kyle by making a gift today at [umn.edu/aforce](http://umn.edu/aforce)

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FORCE FOR  
CARLSON  
A FORCE FOR  
GOOD**



**Charlie Loes**, '12 MBA, started a new role as senior director, supply chain data and systems, at US Foods.

**Scott Loving**, '12 MBA, started a new role as managing director at JLL Capital Markets.

**Max Robinson**, '12 BSB, '17 MBA, started a new role at Publicis Sapient as a senior manager of customer experience and innovation consulting.

**Bailey Black**, '13 BSB, started a new role as director of merchandising at FabKids.

**Steve Hanson**, '13 MHRIR, is head of employee relations at Google Fiber.

**Blake Holman**, '13 MBA, is now business unit director of Totino's, Dunkaroos, and Pillsbury Snacks at General Mills, a promotion from business unit director, nutrition snack. Holman has been with the company since 2013.

**Karen Martin**, '13 MBA, started a new role as portfolio marketing manager of health information systems at 3M.

**Lucas O'Brien**, '13 MHRIR, is senior compensation business partner at Dropbox.

**Anna Resman**, '13 BSB, is now vice president of strategy and operations at Teamworks, a promotion from senior director of strategy and operations. Resman has been with the company since 2019.

**Megan Singamsetty**, '13 MHRIR, started a new role as a talent acquisition partner at ACV Auctions.

**Razvan Stanici**, '13 BSB, is now general manager at Amazon, a promotion from site leader of AMZL Central Ops.

**Jana Cinnamon**, '14 MHRIR, is now a partner at Abdo. Cinnamon is the first non-CPA partner in the firm's history.

**Nate Condon**, '14 BSB, is now a senior associate at North Sky Capital. Condon is working in the firm's Impact Secondaries practice.

**Blake Corson**, '14 MBA, has started a new role as vice president of institutional trust at Union Bank and Trust Company.

**Anders Gregerson**, '14 MBA, started a new role as an account director at Sinequa.

**Robert Keller**, '14 BSB, was promoted to assistant vice president at Monroe Capital in Chicago, where he evaluates and manages investments in non-investment grade debt.

**Morgan (Landon) Lanzel**, '14 MHRIR, is HR business partner at Compressor Controls Corporation.

**Kari Mykerezi**, '14 BSB, was promoted to director of CPG data analytics at Nielsen, a promotion from senior manager. Mykerezi has been with the company since 2014.

**Justin Nuahn**, '14 MHRIR, is human resources director at Dynatronics.

**Marie Becker**, '15 MBA, is now senior vice president, head of consulting for Americas at Mintel.

**Robert Paulus**, '15 MBA, acquired Hotsy Minnesota, an industrial cleaning product company. Paulus will serve as president and general manager.

**Jessica Bienert**, '15 MHRIR, is HR leader at Cargill.

**Christina Brooks**, '15 MBT, was promoted to director at Redpath and Company, Ltd, a promotion from senior manager. Brooks has been with the firm since 2013.

**Alec Haahr**, '15 BSB, is now a senior financial analyst at Amazon.

**Whitney Heber**, '15 MBA, started a new role as a senior product sales manager at Schwan's. Heber has been with the company since 2016.

**Mitch Jacobson**, '15 BSB, was promoted to senior research analyst at American Industrial Partners, a promotion from associate.

**Catherine Wang Yang**, '08 BSB, '15 MBA, and **Kaizen Yang**, '15 MBA, founded Mama Mimi, a dumpling company. Catherine was also recently promoted to senior market development manager at Medtronic and Kaizen started a new position as director of product management at Nurocor.

**Marc Carlson**, '16 MBA, was among the winners of the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* CIO of the Year ORBIE Awards in 2021. Carlson is vice president and chief information officer for Land O'Lakes Inc.

**Aanchal Kunwar**, '16 MBA, started a new role as managing director of Daraz Nepal.

**Juhyun Kwon**, '17 BSB, started a new role as a business intelligence manager at Publicis Health Media.

**Hannah Poss**, '17 BSB, started a new role as a deals advisory senior associate at PwC. Poss has been with the firm since 2017.

**Adam Rao**, '17 MBA, current Carlson School student **Silas Morgan**, '24 MBA, and the group of local impact investors who make up Third Path Capital, have completed the acquisition of Showcraft, a leading event marketing and exhibit production company.

**Tom Vosbeek**, '17 BSB, started a new role as senior associate at Ares Management Corporation.

**John Wendorf**, '17 BSB, is now a strategy manager at Accenture, a promotion from Strategy Consultant.

**Kaia Anderson**, '18 BSB, is now senior associate communications manager at Post Consumer Brands, a promotion from marketing associate.



**Parker Olson**, '18 BSB, left his consulting job to launch Fôrij, a food brand focused on incorporating the medicinal qualities of functional mushrooms into everyday foods. Fôrij's flagship product is a functional granola, which can be found online or in retail stores primarily in southern California. Olson and Fôrij were recently awarded by *Good Housekeeping Magazine* and *Clean Eating Magazine*. Olson now lives out of a pop-up camper van while he travels around the country promoting Fôrij and introducing consumers to the energizing and anti-inflammatory benefits of these mushrooms.

**John Curry**, '18 MBA, is now the president of Knutson Construction, a 110-year-old family business. Curry retired from the NHL in 2015.

**Hanna Okhrimchuk**, '18 BSB, started a new role as a project coordinator at Dragon's Lake Entertainment.

**Sydney Sturm**, '18 BSB, is now an account manager at Rokt, a promotion from account coordinator. Sturm has been with the company since February 2021.

**Emma Niemela**, '19 BSB, started a new role as an associate at Foresight Associates, LLC.

**James Pierce**, '19 MBA, started a new role as chief information officer at Salo.

**Levi Sheppard**, '19 MHRIR, is talent development manager at Hearst.

## 2020s

**Natalie Kincaid**, '20 BSB, started a new role at Storm Creek as an inside sales and account manager.

**Liz O'Brien Hakes**, '20 MBA, started a new role as manager of capability development at General Mills.

**John Reichert**, '20 MBA, started a new role as a consultant for PA Consulting.

**Elizabeth Ann Ulliyot**, '21 MBA, was recognized as 40 Under 40 honoree by the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* for her leadership in the community. Elizabeth is an associate brand manager of Malt-O-Meal at Post Consumer Brands.

## IN MEMORIAM

### 1940s

**Sue Larson**, '46 BSB, died in December 2021.

**Alphonse Zecca**, '47 BSB, died in November 2021.

### 1950s

**Richard Mundhenk**, '54 BSB, died in August 2021.

**William Paukert**, '55 BSB, died in October 2021.

### 1960s

**Malcom Mahaffey**, '60 BSB, died in November 2021.

**Clayton "Clay"**

**Oosterhuis**, '62 BSB, died in September 2021.

**Brian England**, '64 BSB, died in September 2021.

### 1970s

**Richard Ballintine**, '70 MBA, died in June 2021.

**Jerry Thompson**, '70 BABA, '79 PhD, died in August 2021.

**Jay Hamann**, '72 MBA, '73 PhD, died in November 2021.

**Charlotte Phillips**, '74 MBA, died in December 2021. Born in Vermont in 1931, Phillips education commenced in a one-room schoolhouse but culminated in her MBA from the Carlson School in 1974. Phillips was a Colonel in the U.S. Army, who served her country at stations home and abroad. After retirement, she earned her Master's in Divinity, traveled the world and the U.S. in her RV with her partner and their many pets, and remained active in her local VFW, Army Retirement Center, and Women's Army Corps.

### 1980s

**Marjorie Peterson**, '85 MBA, died in November 2021.

**David "Skip" Smith**, '85 PhD, died in November 2021.

### 1990s

**John M. Carey**, '94 BSB, died in August 2020.

**David A. Merriweather**, '99 MBA, died in October 2021.

## Faculty and Staff

Former Carlson School Professor of Finance **Paul Jessup** died in September 2021. In addition to his time at the University of Minnesota, Jessup served on the faculty at Hamline University, was an economist on the U.S. House Banking Committee in 1963-64, and authored five books.

Lee Skold, '74 BSB, '76 MBA, a former student and advisee of Professor Jessup and an emeritus member of the Carlson School Board of Advisors, remembers him fondly. "Paul was a terrific mentor. I'll always appreciate how he would challenge me and delegate responsibility to me as a teaching assistant. He enabled me to learn more than I was taught—a lesson I treasure and try to pass on to others to this day."



**Christopher Johnson**, '16 MBA, retired from the United States Air Force after 23 years of active duty and has started a new position as education and awareness control officer at Wells Fargo.





## Hollies Winston

Hollies Winston, '13 MBA, is owner of Guaranteed America, LLC, (GA), a firm he founded in 2017. GA offers full services to clients in the arenas of advocacy/government affairs, coalition building, and strategy. Winston also sits on the MN Council of African Heritage, which advises the governor and Legislature on policies that affect communities of African descent. He is married to his wife of 18 years, Latrice, and has three children.

### 1. Make your choice, lose the guilt.

After graduating from the Carlson School in 2013, I took a job with a company that was at the time in the *Fortune* 15. I was miserable after a year. At this time, I also rediscovered my passion for community. I'd often balance dedicating time to my passion with a job that paid the bills, knowing that if I spent more time at that job I'd be promoted quickly. I felt a tremendous amount of guilt as I pursued this path. In 2017 I cut ties, started Guaranteed America LLC, and was off to the races. Had I ignored my passion, I'd still be in that environment and far less successful and fulfilled. The choices made were necessary, the guilt was not.

### 2. Relationships matter.

We're often told growing up to be the hardest-working, smartest person in the room. The reality is, those are just some of the factors. Building relationships with folks who trust your character and your work product gives you access to business opportunities and expertise others won't have access to. Invest in relationships just as much as you invest in your job skills to increase your mid-term and long-term prospects.

### 3. Be humble with pride.

Being humble wasn't always a strength. Over time (life humbles you), I learned its value. By being humble, you don't have the baggage of embarrassment if you overlook minor details and you'll find people will willingly share key information with you. Since people will want to trust you, it makes it easier to maintain key relationships of trust. Still, you must conduct business with a pride that encourages people to believe in the quality of your product, your service and your character.

“Looking at a setback as a temporary adversity to overcome, that you must overcome, is a paradigm that sets you up to achieve eventual greatness.”

— HOLLIES WINSTON, '13 MBA

### 4. Stay grounded.

The rat race of life can be stressful. There's pressure to win and to earn more money and recognition than your coworkers or competing businesses. Taken to its extreme, this encourages focus on the things that matter least. Take time to be thankful for key family and friends and your health. This grounds you in the present, but prepares you for the future. No matter how big your house is, or your retirement, it means little if your family and friends aren't there to enjoy life with you over a meal.

### 5. Let your adversity define you.

I'm aware this may sound similar to saying let your failures define you. There's a key difference, failure is finite. It's complete. Looking at a setback as a temporary adversity to overcome, that you must overcome, is a paradigm that sets you up to achieve eventual greatness. It creates the same bulldog tenacity seen in the likes of a Michael Jordan, a Martin Luther King Jr., or even a Joe Biden—who finally achieved his goal of being president after more than 30 years. This lesson has served me well in my career.



ILLUSTRATION: MICHAEL AUSTIN

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## CARLSON SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

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Alumni Relations  
321 Nineteenth Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455



# MBA CLASS REUNION

**MAY 6-7, 2022**

1972 • 1977 • 1981 • 1982 • 1987 • 1992 • 1997 • 2002  
2006 • 2007 • 2012 • 2017 • 2019 • 2020 • 2021



## Friday, May 6

8:30 a.m.	Class of '72 and '77 Breakfast with the Dean
9:00 a.m.	Registration Opens
10:00 a.m.	Welcome and Keynote
11:30 a.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Women in the Workforce Panel
2:15 p.m.	Faculty Session(s)
3:30 p.m.	Faculty Session(s)
5:00 p.m.	Reception
7:00 p.m.	Informal Class Parties

## Saturday, May 7

8:00 a.m.	Registration Opens
9:00 a.m.	Coffee and Continental Breakfast
10:00 a.m.	Faculty Session(s)
11:15 a.m.	Reunion Alumni Panel
12:30 p.m.	Dean's Address
1:00 p.m.	Family-Friendly BBQ Lunch
3:00 p.m.	Affinity Group Gatherings
7:00 p.m.	Class Dinners

 Register at [z.umn.edu/MBAReunion](https://z.umn.edu/MBAReunion).