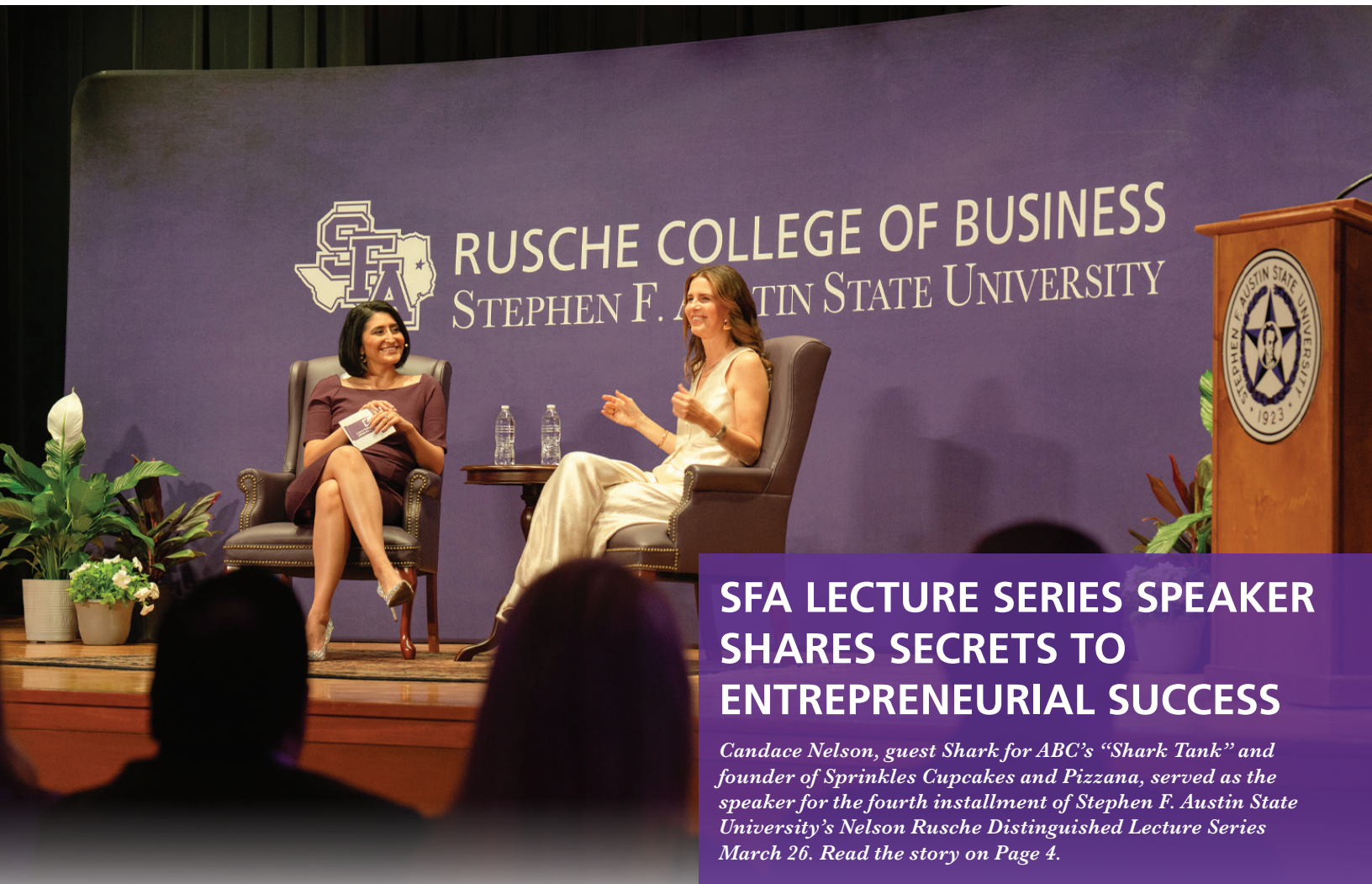


RUSCHE REVIEW



SFA LECTURE SERIES SPEAKER SHARES SECRETS TO ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

Candace Nelson, guest Shark for ABC's "Shark Tank" and founder of Sprinkles Cupcakes and Pizzana, served as the speaker for the fourth installment of Stephen F. Austin State University's Nelson Rusche Distinguished Lecture Series March 26. Read the story on Page 4.

▶ HIGHLIGHTS



Queen thanks MBA
students, Business and
Community Services



Small Business
Resource Hub helps
Huber Gardens grow



Housing market research
earns Rusche
top scholar prize



Smiths establish
endowed professorship
in accounting



FALL 2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS



AUG. 10
**SUMMER
COMMENCEMENT
CEREMONY**



AUG. 26
**FALL CLASSES
BEGIN**



SEPT. 20-22
**FALL 2024
FAMILY WEEKEND**



OCT. 21-26
**HOMECOMING
CELEBRATIONS**



OCT. 25
**EXECUTIVE ADVISORY
BOARD MEETING**



OCT. 26
**HOMECOMING
GAME**
(UTAH TECH TRAILBLAZERS)



DEC. 13-14
**FALL
COMMENCEMENT
CEREMONIES**

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Greetings from the Rusche College of Business!

What a semester to Experience Business! We had a

wonderfully eventful spring semester, and the summer is off to a fantastic start. I hope the same is true for all of our alumni and friends!

In my nine years as dean, I don't believe I have experienced a more engaging and impactful semester than we had this spring. I'm so proud of the work of our students, faculty, staff and alumni that it is hard to decide where to begin. I encourage you to spend some time with this edition of Rusche Review to see exactly what I mean.

When you do, you will notice some important events and milestones achieved by our college, such as our Nelson Rusche Distinguished Lecture Series event featuring Candace Nelson; Coursera being made available for all students, faculty and alumni; the impactful work continually performed by our faculty and staff; and the successful reaffirmation of our AACSB accreditation. Now, just wait to see all of the transformative events we have coming up in the Greg Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship!

In this and other university publications it is easy to see that the support of our alumni and friends is so very essential to our success. With new professorships, scholarships, centers and programs, amazing things are happening, and we are now looking forward to even more accomplishments under the leadership of our new president, Dr. Neal Weaver! I can't wait to tell you all about them in the next Rusche Review.

Axe 'em!

Tim Bisping, Dean

RUSCHE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS CELEBRATES EXTENSION OF PRESTIGIOUS ACCREDITATION

The Rusche College of Business has successfully achieved the extension of its accreditation by AACSB International — the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

Globally, only 6% of business colleges have achieved accreditation by AACSB, which places SFA's Rusche College of Business in an elite category of business colleges worldwide.

"In the world of higher education in business, AACSB accreditation is the highest mark of excellence," said Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the college. "Our exceptional faculty and staff provide our students with business experiences and knowledge rivaling those of the best business schools in the world."

"Maintaining AACSB accreditation affirms what we already know, which is that our students and faculty can successfully compete with anyone, anywhere, any time," he continued. "Whether working on their own business in the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship, engaging in study abroad at locations around the world, or managing a stock portfolio valued at over \$1 million in the Mast Student Investment Roundtable, our students excel."

AACSB guidelines require a business college to show not only continual improvement but also an impact on both students and industry in meaningful ways.



**AACSB
ACCREDITED**

"In the Rusche College of Business, we work hard to ensure that our students have real-world experiences that not only enhance their education but also positively impact our community and the region," Bisping said. "Leveraging the assets of the college to benefit students and industry is central to the mission of the college and what we aim to achieve in terms of our societal impact. Be on the lookout for some exciting new initiatives related to this in the coming months and years."

The Rusche College of Business offers the Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting, banking, business communication and corporate education, economics, entrepreneurship, finance, general business, human resource management, international business, management, marketing, and sports business. It also offers master's degrees in business administration and professional accountancy.

"Amazing things are happening in the Rusche College of Business," Bisping added. "Through the dedication of our faculty and staff, and the help of our alumni and friends, exciting developments are on the horizon!"



CBER JAMMING FOR JOBS

Dr. Mikhail Kouliavtsev, far left, director of the Center for Business and Economic Research (sfasu.edu/cber) and chair of the Department of Economics and Finance, participated in the "Jamming for Jobs" panel discussion at the 18th annual Economic Development Summit in January. The panelists also included economic leaders from the 12 Deep East Texas counties.



Candace Nelson, pictured far left, and Dr. Raymond Jones, director of SFA's entrepreneurship program, pictured far right, check in with contestants at the Sprinkles Showdown baked goods contest hosted by SFA's Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship and organized by students in Jones' "Entrepreneurship: Opportunity Assessment" course.

SFA LECTURE SERIES SPEAKER SHARES SECRETS TO ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

Candace Nelson, guest Shark for ABC's "Shark Tank" and founder of Sprinkles Cupcakes and Pizzana, served as the speaker for the fourth installment of Stephen F. Austin State University's Nelson Rusche Distinguished Lecture Series, which took place March 26.

The series, hosted by SFA's Rusche College of Business, is designed to bring scholars and business leaders to SFA's campus to discuss timely issues and educate the next generation of business leaders while enriching the SFA and Nacogdoches communities.

"Candace Nelson is a proven leader who can show our students how to be successful," said Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the Ruche College of Business. "And these are the types of events that our college wants to continue to support as we work with our Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship to build relationships and help spark that entrepreneurial spirit across campus and the community."

Before the public portion of the evening, Nelson spoke with a select group of business students and answered their questions about starting their own companies and pitching their ideas effectively.

"Candace was engaged and open with the students in answering all of their questions," said Dr. Raymond Jones, director of SFA's entrepreneurship program. "Students were inspired by Candace's willingness to pivot her entire career and take the risk to follow her passion."

Nelson's next stop was the inaugural Sprinkles Showdown baked goods contest hosted by SFA's Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship and organized by students in Jones' "Entrepreneurship:



Erika Bazaldua Holland (left), a 2014 SFA mass media graduate and former anchor of KLTV's "East Texas News" at midday and 5 p.m., interviews Candace Nelson, serial entrepreneur, "Shark Tank" guest Shark and Sprinkles Cupcakes founder, for the fourth installment of Stephen F. Austin State University's Nelson Rusche Distinguished Lecture Series March 26.

Opportunity Assessment" course.

"She stopped and conversed with each of the nearly 30 student contestants," Jones said. "Hearing encouragement from a successful entrepreneur doing what she wants to do is something they will not soon forget."

The center presented more than \$12,000 in scholarships to the Sprinkles Showdown participants.

"We were inspired by you," Matthew Smilor, director of the center, told participating students. "It's not easy to start something from scratch, whisk it up and then pitch your idea to judges and your classmates. We're investors in your future."

After a VIP reception spent signing her book, "Sweet Success:



Candace Nelson spoke with a select group of business students and answered their questions about starting their own companies and pitching their ideas effectively.

A Simple Recipe to Turn your Passion into Profit,” Nelson settled into a chair on the Baker Pattillo Student Center Grand Ballroom stage to be interviewed by Erika Bazaldua Holland, a 2014 SFA mass media graduate who anchors KLTN’s “East Texas News” at midday and 5 p.m. A loyal member of the ABC family, Holland first asked about “Shark Tank.”

“What you see on TV is very much what we’re experiencing,” said Nelson, an investor in other businesses. “There is no room to be polite on ‘Shark Tank.’ You’re working with your own money.”

To pitch successfully, she explained to the crowd, entrepreneurs need to nail the confidence and tell a great story.

However, confidence wasn’t always easy for Nelson, who decided to go to pastry school after being laid off from her job as an investment banker at a tech company when the dot-com bubble burst. Some family members and friends had doubts about Nelson’s pastry pursuit.

“And I had my own self-limiting beliefs, like ‘Who am I to be an entrepreneur?’” Nelson said. “But I decided I’d rather fall flat on my face than regret not taking this risk for the rest of my life.”

She found a partner — her husband, Charles, also an investment banker initially — and she developed the right mindset to become an entrepreneur and start a business.

The Nelsons began “embracing the crazy ideas.” More importantly, they took action on those ideas. In 2005, they opened their



Dr. Tim Bisping, pictured far left, dean, and Matthew Smilor, pictured far right, director of the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship, present Candace Nelson, second from left, and Erika Bazaldua Holland, second from right, with axe handles from the Rusche College of Business.

SPRINKLES SHOWDOWN ULTIMATE BAKING COMPETITION WINNERS

BEST CUPCAKE AND BEST OVERALL

Audrey Krall’s espresso cupcake with lemon mascarpone frosting
Senior hospitality administration major from The Woodlands, \$2,250 scholarship

BEST DECORATED

Annika McClure’s gingerbread cupcake with cranberry curd and eggnog buttercream
Senior hospitality administration major from Tyler, \$1,250 scholarship

BEST BAKED GOOD

Lauren Bailey’s sour cream coffee cake
Sophomore nutrition major from Kemah, \$1,250 scholarship

BEST COOKIE

Lora Poskey’s mini cookie cakes
Sophomore hospitality administration major from Nacogdoches, \$1,250 scholarship

CROWD FAVORITE

Nykia Benit’s banana nut muffin
First-year hospitality administration major from Hutchins, \$1,250 scholarship

Winfrey called asking them to deliver 350 cupcakes for her show’s audience in Chicago by 5 a.m. the next morning.

“Oprah validated the idea we had risked everything for,” Nelson said. “After she gave us a good review, we had people calling from all over the world ordering cupcakes.”

Nelson said she and her husband talk business at the dinner table to help their two sons develop entrepreneurial mindsets.

“We have inoculated our sons against the fear of failure,” she said. “If you’re not afraid of failure, you’re pretty unstoppable.”

Holland ended the interview by asking Nelson for her best advice for SFA students looking to be entrepreneurs.

“Dream big but start small,” Nelson said. “There’s a notion that entrepreneurship is so risky, but it should be much more of a calculated risk. I tested my cupcakes out of my apartment first. Before you put it all on the line, test it on a small scale.”

Look for Nelson as a guest Shark on ABC’s “Shark Tank” and as an executive producer for Netflix’s “Sugar Rush” and Hulu’s “Best in Dough.”

To learn more about SFA’s entrepreneurial academic program and the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship, visit sfasu.edu/ace.

first Sprinkles in a 600-square-foot store in Beverly Hills.

Success really hit the Nelsons when eight months after they opened Sprinkles, Oprah

SFA ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM, CENTER NAMED A TOP EMERGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM IN COUNTRY

SFA's [entrepreneurship academic program](#) and [Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship](#) in the Rusche College of Business were collectively named one of the top three emerging entrepreneurship programs in the nation by the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

This award recognizes colleges and universities for their efforts developing nascent entrepreneurship programs that demonstrate outstanding progress toward becoming comprehensive, bold and innovative educational programs with early records of student impact.

"We introduced the entrepreneurship major in fall 2020 and opened the center in 2023, and it is amazing to see what ACE has accomplished in just a short amount of time and the impact that it is having not only for SFA students but also for the community," said Matthew Smilor, ACE director. "This award validates a



lot of work Rusche College of Business faculty, staff and students, as well as local community members, have done to build this hub for entrepreneurs in East Texas."

Saint Louis University's Chaifetz Center for Entrepreneurship and the University of Buffalo's School of Management were the other two finalists in the category.

"From the Lumberjack Entrepreneurship Competition to the Piney Woods Entrepreneurship Network, ACE plays a central role in the entrepreneurial ecosystem of East Texas and trains students to create, explore, invent, pioneer, imagine and innovate,"

said Dr. Raymond Jones, director of SFA's entrepreneurship program. "Our students and community are the wellspring for the startup of new businesses and the growth of existing enterprises."

Founded in 1981, the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship is an inclusive community of educators, researchers and entrepreneurs advancing entrepreneurship education through bold teaching, scholarship and practice. They are considered the premier entrepreneurship educational organization in the U.S.

ACE and its subunit, the [Small Business Resource Hub](#), are two of four entities launched in recent years by the Rusche College of Business to help bolster local businesses. The others are [Business and Community Services](#) and the [Center for Business and Economic Research](#).

For more information on SFA's entrepreneurial offerings, visit sfasu.edu/ace.

SFA STUDENTS PITCH BUSINESS IDEAS AT THIRD ANNUAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETITION

From recording studios to lobbyist apps, SFA students pitched their business ideas to win the third annual "Shark Tank"-style Lumberjack Entrepreneurship Competition in April.

"It takes a lot of moxie to stand up and say, 'I've got an idea that is worth investing in,'" Matthew Smilor, director of the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship, told contestants. "Year after year, I'm consistently amazed by the creativity and innovation of SFA's students. Their ingenuity, determination and passion are truly inspiring."

Contestants were judged on the market opportunities for their businesses as well as their situational awareness, pitches, business models and go-to-market strategies by three judges: Jenny Meyer, SFA alumna and president and CEO of JEM Advisors in Houston; Kevin Carr, SFA alumnus and owner of Community Beer Co. in Dallas; and Bill McGaughey,

SFA alumnus, certified public accountant and entrepreneur based in Lufkin.

The competition began with the lightning round, during which 12 students pitched their ideas. The judges narrowed down the contestants to five finalists, who presented longer pitches during the final round.

"The competition was really fierce," said Dr. Raymond Jones, associate professor and director of the entrepreneurship program. "Each of the finalists was prepared and handled the tough questions from the judges very well."

The first-place prize of \$10,000 went to Sauce Dudes, an online platform that delivers "only the best gourmet sauce and spice blends to market from southern style recipes," by Brady Dill, a senior history major from Spring. Jordan Gonzales, a senior entrepreneurship major from Nacogdoches, earned the \$5,000 second-

COMPETITION continues on Page 7



SFA's Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship in the Rusche College of Business recently held the third annual Lumberjack Entrepreneurship Competition, inspired by ABC's TV show "Shark Tank."

Pictured, from left, are Brady Dill, a senior history major from Spring, who won the first-place prize of \$10,000 for Sauce Dudes; Jordan Gonzales, a senior entrepreneurship major from Nacogdoches, who earned the \$5,000 second-place prize with Beyond the Vine Cellars; Wyatt Brasher, an entrepreneurship junior from Texas City, who received the \$2,500 third-place prize for Immersify; and Nykia Benit, a first-year hospitality administration major from Hutchins, and Paulina Salazar, a management senior from Center, who earned \$1,250 each for Kingdom Kitchen and JackTrack Parking, respectively.

HUBER GARDENS GROWS WITH HELP FROM SFA'S SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCE HUB

As Bruce Huber neared his retirement after 35 years at communications company RR Donnelley, he and his wife, Tonya, decided to pursue his passion for working the land and hospitality by opening [Huber Gardens](#), an agritourism business six miles west of downtown Nacogdoches. But they needed some help with the “business” part.

While temporarily employed as an administrative assistant at SFA in 2022, Tonya heard about SFA's [Small Business Resource Hub](#) and its director, Larry Cain, in the [Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship](#) at the Rusche College of Business. The Small Business Resource Hub's free services are helping the Hubers turn their passion into profit.

“Larry has taken the time to share business insight and encouragement with us and invite us to business-oriented seminars that gave us access to other helpful advice and resources,” Tonya said.

Cain said that many small businesses, from agritourism and retail shops to event centers and assisted living facilities, can benefit greatly from the Small Business Resource Hub's services.

“At no cost to our clients, our services include loan proposals, marketing, retailing, advertising, budgeting, business planning and personnel management,” Cain said. “We also are able to assist nonprofits, particularly in the areas of budgeting and finance, and organizational issues.”

In June 2023, Huber Gardens opened at 1532 County Road 713 on about 10 acres of land. When in season, naturally



Bruce and Tonya Huber opened Huber Gardens at 1532 County Road 713 on about 10 acres of land six miles west of downtown Nacogdoches in June 2023 with the help of Stephen F. Austin State University's Small Business Resource Hub.

grown gourmet garlic, produce and pick-your-own flowers are available. Woodwork and dried herbs are available year-round.

“For our customers’ enjoyment, we also offer a nature trail, a picnic and sitting area, outdoor games, and a narrated hayride,” Tonya said. “As an agritourism business, we strive to provide a family-friendly country environment for all to enjoy and experience.”

The Hubers continue to reach out to Cain to grow the business.

“We appreciate that Larry has made himself available to us as an ongoing resource when we have questions or need help,” Tonya said.



Huber Gardens offers woodwork and dried herbs year-round, as well as a nature trail, a picnic and sitting area, outdoor games, and a narrated hayride.



When in season, naturally grown gourmet garlic, produce and pick-your-own flowers are available at Huber Gardens.

For more information on Huber Gardens, which is open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays, visit huber-gardens.com. For more information on the Small Business Resource Hub, visit sfasu.edu/ace/sbrh.

COMPETITION from Page 6

place prize with Beyond the Vine Cellars, a mobile wine trailer for events. The \$2,500 third-place prize went to Wyatt Brasher, an entrepreneurship junior from Texas City, for Immersify event-planning software with augmented- and virtual-reality features to help clients truly see

how an event will look.

The two remaining finalists who earned \$1,250 each were hospitality administration first-year student Nykia Benit of Hutchins with Kingdom Kitchen, a junior culinary arts school, and Paulina Salazar, a management senior from Center, with JackTrack Parking, a parking app that highlights open spaces on the SFA campus.

“I am extremely grateful to be awarded the win in this difficult competition,” Dill said. “The other competitors were fantastic, and I am humbled to be selected as the winner. I plan to use my winnings to help grow my business into something profitable for years to come. I’d also like to thank the judges for giving us their valuable time.”

ZULU QUEEN VISITS SFA TO THANK BUSINESS STUDENTS WORKING TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR SOUTH AFRICAN ORPHANS

A Zulu nation queen traveled to Nacogdoches in March to thank graduate students in SFA's Rusche College of Business for helping an orphanage in her home country of South Africa that houses children who have lost their parents to AIDS.

Queen Nompumelelo Zulu met with the students in SFA Associate Professor Dr. Marcus Cox's strategic management course who spent the summer and fall of 2023 analyzing the legal structure of the nonprofit Light for Africa Ministries as well as laws that impact nonprofit and for-profit businesses in South Africa.

They also explored funding opportunities, such as grants from the South African government and international aid agencies, as well as assistance from investment funds that target for-benefit initiatives. In addition, the Master of Business Administration students offered guidance on marketing, social media, fundraising and succession planning for the nonprofit.

"This project gave us a real-world opportunity to use the knowledge we gained from our learning on something that really matters," said Amy Mooneyham, who earned her MBA in May. "Dr. Cox is absolutely the best when it comes to this. I have taken three classes with him during my MBA, and each one always has real-world problems and cases that allow us to have practical application within the course."

Queen Nompumelelo and her late husband, King Zwelithini KaBhekuzulu, shared a passion for education in the Zulu nation, the largest ethnic tribe in South Africa. The queen was even made headmistress of the community's primary school, which has earned awards for academic success. Though the king died in 2021, she continues their mission of providing education for her subjects and job opportunities for all.

The queen's connection to SFA was established through a collaboration



During her visit to SFA, Queen Nompumelelo Zulu, one of the queens of the Zulu nation in South Africa, visited with the Master of Business Administration students who helped an orphanage in the KiwaMashu township of South Africa. Pictured, from left, are Lee Arnold and Amy Mooneyham, two MBA students who worked on the Light for Africa Ministries project; Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the Rusche College of Business; Gina Oglesbee, interim president of SFA; Queen Nompumelelo; Bob Flournoy, a Lufkin attorney; the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Mdlalose, director of Light for Africa Ministries; and Dr. Marcus Cox, coordinator for SFA's Business and Community Services office and the associate professor who teaches the strategic management course assisting the Light for Africa Ministries project.

between Robert "Bob" Flournoy, a Lufkin attorney; Cox, SFA associate professor of management and Business Community Services office coordinator; and the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Mdlalose, Light for Africa Ministries director.

"Bob and Jeremiah have been working for over 20 years to raise funds to support the orphanage," Cox said. "Bob contacted me about a year ago and asked if SFA might be able to assist the nonprofit by leveraging our students' business knowledge and skills to help a great cause."

Prior to the SFA partnership, Flournoy and Mdlalose developed ideas, with the support of the Zulu royal family, to raise funds for the orphanage, including a project that would employ local citizens to sew school uniforms. Knowing Cox is coordinator for SFA's Business and Community Services office, which was created in fall 2022 to connect businesses, nonprofits and government agencies with SFA resources, they approached him about leveraging student knowledge for

the project.

"Mr. Flournoy and Rev. Jeremiah asked me if we could help them analyze this business opportunity and make recommendations on how to proceed," Cox said. "Because our students have previously worked with other nonprofits in East Texas, I saw this as a wonderful opportunity for a win-win collaboration, even if the parties were halfway around the world. It was a great way for students in our MBA program to get acquainted with the complexities of doing business in an international context."

Two of the students, Lee Arnold, who will earn his MBA in August, and Mooneyham, were in groups that recommended Flournoy and Mdlalose maintain the nonprofit status of the ministry and orphanage but spin off the sewing project as a for-profit entity to facilitate capital infusions. Creating a public corporation could help them reap the benefits of being a for-profit business while gaining some nonprofit tax exceptions.

ZULU QUEEN continues on Page 9

GRADUATE STUDENTS WORK TO HELP LOCAL NONPROFIT SUPPORT THOSE WITH CANCER

Graduate students in the Rusche College of Business are gaining real-world experience by helping the [East Texas Alliance of Hope](#) increase its visibility as the go-to local resource for those who are battling cancer.

Ashley Berry, the founder of the 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Lufkin, is about to mark a decade without cancer herself. To celebrate, she wants to help more East Texans impacted by cancer by increasing awareness of the nonprofit and its services in Nacogdoches.

“We have a few clients here, but we know the need is greater,” Berry said. “We want to get the word out, especially since American Cancer Society assistance here has stopped. We want to fill that gap.”

East Texas Alliance of Hope’s services include financial assistance to cover bills; transportation services, including gas vouchers to cover travel for treatment; and help navigating complex medical systems and social services, such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Social Security and unemployment benefits.

Berry turned to Dr. Marcus Cox, coordinator for [SFA’s Business and Community Services office](#), which was created in fall 2022 to connect businesses, nonprofits and government agencies with SFA resources at no cost. Cox, associate professor of management and marketing at SFA, then assigned the project to his



Graduate students in the Rusche College of Business are gaining real-world experience by helping the East Texas Alliance of Hope increase its visibility as the go-to local resource for those who are battling cancer. Pictured, front row from left, are DaRyan Williams of Nacogdoches; Ashley Berry, founder of East Texas Alliance of Hope based in Lufkin; and Kaitlyn Bottles of Driftwood. Pictured, back row from left, are Jackson Pickard of Georgetown, Bryson Harris of Texarkana, Alexandra Thornley of Nacogdoches, and Samuel Reeves of Terrell.

strategic management students.

“Our Master of Business Administration students analyzed the nonprofit’s strategy and examined its operations to offer suggestions on how the organization could increase its impact in the region,” Cox said. “The students really enjoy these types of projects because they are able to use their business skills to assist the local community and make a difference in other people’s lives.”

MBA students offered recommendations that can be implemented over the next six months,

including increasing the nonprofit’s social media presence, optimizing its website, and creating partnerships with SFA athletic and student organizations to help with fundraising.

They also presented ideas to promote the nonprofit’s annual fundraiser, [Race for Hope](#), an event runners use to qualify for the Boston Marathon. In addition, the event features a half marathon, 5K run, 5K walk and kid’s one-mile fun run. MBA students also suggested the nonprofit host pop-up stores during Nacogdoches events featuring clothing from [Just Kiddin’ Around](#), a resale store for children in Lufkin that generates funds for the nonprofit’s clients.

Berry said all the students’ ideas are solid and doable.

“I knew they’d have good recommendations because they’ve been asking the right questions throughout this process,” Berry said. “My next step is to take these ideas to our board of directors.”

Cox and several of the students want to continue to help beyond this semester.

“We all feel passionate about this nonprofit’s vision and purpose,” said Jackson Pickard, an MBA student from Georgetown. “I lost my dad to cancer. We could’ve really used an organization like this.”

To learn more about [East Texas Alliance of Hope](#), visit [etxallianceofhope.org](#). To learn more about Business and Community Services, visit [sfasu.edu/cob/services/bcs](#).

ZULU QUEEN from Page 8

“We suggested how this newly formed entity could establish its operations through a mix of traditional funding and angel and private investors,” Arnold said. “We also shared our thoughts on creating a secondary product line that would generate a separate income stream that could keep operations stable throughout the year.”

Mooneyham assessed the financial implications and helped pinpoint the amount of funds needed to support production along with revenue streams

through the first three years of business.

The Rusche College of Business focuses on providing experiential learning projects to its students because of the impact these projects have on students and their future careers.

“We extend our gratitude to Queen Nompumelelo for giving us this opportunity for real-world learning and trusting us with this critical project,” said Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the Rusche College of Business.

In return, Queen Nompumelelo extended her appreciation.

“You established the relationship to

pursue the vision of his majesty, the king. Thank you,” she told the students.

While at SFA, Queen Nompumelelo also toured the Cole STEM Building, Janice A. Pattillo Early Childhood Research Center, Office of International Programs, Rusche College of Business and Department of Agriculture.

For more information on the Light for Africa Ministries sewing project, visit [lightforafrica.org/projects](#). To learn more about SFA’s Business and Community Services office, visit [sfasu.edu/cob/services/bcs](#).



BETA GAMMA SIGMA

The SFA chapter of Beta Gamma Sigma, the international honor society serving business programs accredited by AACSB International, inducted 43 members in an April ceremony. Membership in Beta Gamma Sigma is the highest recognition a business student anywhere in the world can receive in a business program accredited by AACSB International.



Wendy Buchanan, SFA alumna and owner of Buchanan Wealth Management in Nacogdoches, was selected for honorary membership in Beta Gamma Sigma and presented with a certificate by Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the Rusche College of Business, in an April ceremony.

BUSINESS STUDENTS REAP BENEFITS OF COURSERA CAREER ACADEMY

Students in the spring 2024 strategic human resource management course taught by Dr. Marcus Cox, associate professor, gained both credentials and class credit for participating in the Coursera Career Academy.

They completed two certifications outside class: Risk Management by the HR Certification Institute and People Analytics by the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton College of Business.

Students still attended class, had a textbook and took exams, but they also received a grade for successfully completing the certifications, Cox said.

Each week in class, students reviewed the content covered in the training module as well as examples they may encounter in the workplace. When they completed the programs, the students received a certificate that they listed on their résumés and on networking sites such as LinkedIn.

"It gives me a competitive edge," said Amber Wilburn, a business major from Shelbyville "I'll stand out among other job applicants."

Greg Hill of Lufkin works full time at Elliott Electric Supply while finishing his Master of Business Administration. He said the certifications are already helping him get ahead in his job.

"I just had my 90-day evaluation at work, and they asked if I had completed any certifications, and I could say yes," he said.

MICROCREDENTIAL PROGRAM NOW AVAILABLE FOR SFA STUDENTS, ALUMNI AND EMPLOYEES

A new partnership with Coursera, a global online learning platform, gives SFA students, alumni and employees the opportunity to earn more than 40 professional certifications and develop a competitive edge in their current and future careers.

Made possible by SFA's affiliation with The University of Texas System, the partnership gives Lumberjacks free access to Career Academy, which features more than 300 short courses taught by leading companies, including Google, IBM and Meta.

University students and employees who already have a Coursera account can create another with their SFA email addresses to access Career Academy for free.

SFA alumni who would like to take advantage of their Career Academy benefit can contact the Office of Alumni Relations at (936) 468-3407.

Hill said the flexibility of the platform also is a benefit.

"Along with my full-time job, I take three classes, so I can fit in these shorter, 4- to 5-minute videos in my schedule whenever I have a moment to get online. Very convenient."

Peyton Cloyd, a human resources major from Hudson, said she also enjoys the flexibility.

"I like to work in the early hours of the morning, so the 24-hour availability helps me."

Cloyd said listing the certifications on her résumé will show future employers she has initiative.

"Completing these certificates shows

I'm prepared," she said. "I was given the opportunity to better myself and I did."

Christian Rivera of Lufkin said he likes the Career Academy formats as well.

"The presentation of the information is structured in a way that's easy to remember," he said. "And you can take notes in the platform and go back and review them."

Cox said another benefit is that students receive the material from other perspectives.

"They don't just hear the material from me," Cox said. "They get other voices in the mix. Then I can apply the material to businesses. Career Academy is a tool that can be taken a step further with a human connection in the classroom."

Dr. Mikhail Kouliavtsev, chair of the Department of Economics and Finance, presents students with monetary awards — many donated by Nacogdoches-area financial institutions — during an April ceremony.



ECONOMICS AND FINANCE STUDENTS RECEIVE AWARDS

Economics and finance students received monetary awards — many donated by Nacogdoches-area financial institutions — during an April ceremony.

Award recipients were chosen by faculty members from the Department of Economics and Finance.

“Students were selected based on their academic achievement in their coursework, engagement in research projects, participation in conferences, and pursuit of their future career goals — whether employment, entrepreneurship or graduate study,” said Dr. Mikhail Kouliavtsev, chair of the department.

William King, finance senior from Nacogdoches, received the Entrepreneurship Award, and Ngoc Hoang, finance junior from Vietnam, received the Portfolio Management Award. Both awards were sponsored by Buchanan Wealth Management.

Other achievement award recipients included Brent Pigg, a finance senior from Lufkin, who received the Asset Liability Management Award sponsored by Citizens 1st Bank, and Hudson Heim, banking senior from Henderson, who received the Financial Institutions Award sponsored by Cadence Bank.

The Economics Reading Group presented Jessica Frasier, general business junior from Bay City, with the Economic Pursuits Award, and Nashally Arellano, first-year marketing major from Houston, with the Economic Interest Award. Both awards were sponsored by the Charles

Koch Foundation.

The High-Ranking Economics Major Award, sponsored by the Charles Koch Foundation, went to senior Clay Patrick of Livingston. The High-Ranking Finance Junior and High-Ranking Finance Senior awards, both sponsored by Southside Bank, went to Cole Lemons of Gunter and Ethan Johnston of Montgomery, respectively. Tina Packard, finance and banking senior from Nacogdoches, received the High-Ranking Banking Major Award from SFA’s Chadwick Banking Program.

Dan Nguyen of Vietnam received the Outstanding Economics/Finance Graduate Award sponsored by Austin Bank. Hana Roers, sports business junior from Maple Grove, Minnesota, and Toby Sherman, economics junior from Gilbert, Arizona, received the Undergraduate Scholar Award. Those awards were sponsored by the ECON 3339 Packet Fund.

The Finance Club Award, sponsored by Commercial Bank of Texas, went to Whitton Malone, finance junior from Carthage, and David Kaiser, lecturer and director of the Chadwick Banking Program, was named Favorite Professor by the Finance Club.

“It is an honor to work with this great group of students, and I am so very appreciative of this recognition,” Kaiser said.

For more information on these awards and SFA’s Department of Economics and Finance, visit sfasu.edu/ecofin.

PASSPORT SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Spring [Career Success Passport program](#) scholarship winners received \$1,250 and runners up received \$500.

FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

Joseph Norman, winner
Gideon Kiplimo Mengich, runner up

SOPHOMORES

Rory Price, winner
Iris Cordova, Tatianna Green, Kara Kay and Evan McDaniel, runners up

JUNIORS

Meghan Townsend, winner
Wyatt Brasher, Nicole Cant, Jessica Frasier, Ngoc Hoang, Linh Anh Nguyen, Bailey Parker, Hannah Rowell, Alexander Van Rijn and Brittany Whitehead, runners up

SENIORS

Mia Folger, winner
Bridget Cost, Ngoc Dang, Roman Farias, Anaya Freeman, Shelby Lindsey and Nhu Dan Nguyen, runners up



SFA SAM CHAPTER EARNS AWARDS

The SFA chapter of the Society for Advancement of Management brought home awards from the SAM International Business Conference in Orlando, Florida. Pictured, from left, Seth Rigby, senior management major; Will King, Master of Business Administration student; and Andrew Mares, senior management major; accepted the award for Campus Chapter Performance. Rigby also was named National Outstanding Student, and Mares received the Regional Outstanding Student award along with first place in the business pitch competition.



STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

Arnold Center for
Entrepreneurship

Take ownership and be the boss of your future *at the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship*

The Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship offers new avenues for partnership with businesses and industry throughout the state. ACE helps SFA students develop the skills to create successful businesses of their own while also assisting East Texans and SFA alumni in building and sustaining their businesses.

- ✓ Major and minor to help you build your own business
- ✓ Internships and scholarships
- ✓ Pitch competitions with cash prizes
- ✓ Society for Entrepreneurial Advancement student club
- ✓ Small Business Resource Hub to help you network locally





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Seasonings

Specialty Items (Pickles,
Salsas, etc.)



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ACE.





Elena Bleicher
May MBA graduate
and 2024 Paris Olympics
torch relay tour service
operator team assistant
coordinator

My journey to the Summer Games in Paris is deeply intertwined with my passion for international sports events. Eight years ago, I had the privilege of serving as a ballkid at the French Open under the mentorship of my current manager. When the opportunity arose to be part of the [Olympics torch relay](#), I seized it with gratitude and determination. Joining the tour service operator team in March of this year, I embarked on a journey that exceeded all expectations.

As part of a dynamic team of 15 individuals, our mission is clear: to ensure the seamless execution of every logistical aspect of the Olympics torch relay. From coordinating accommodations and meals to managing transportation and logistics for the 300 to 400 staff members traveling alongside the flame, our goal is to create an unforgettable experience for all involved.

What excites me most about my role is the opportunity to be part of something truly extraordinary. The Olympics torch relay is more than a sporting event; it is a symbol of hope, resilience and human achievement. To play a small yet significant role in shaping the memories of those who witness the relay firsthand is an honor beyond measure.

On May 8 in Marseille, I set off on a three-month adventure. Every day promises to be an exciting journey, filled with everything from the excitement of planning logistics to the delight of seeing the torch light up the night sky. The culmination of this extraordinary journey will take place July 26, as the flame arrives in Paris, marking the beginning of the Summer Games. It will be a moment of celebration, and I hope to be able to attend the opening ceremony.

I encourage you to take a moment to turn on your TV and witness the extraordinary 2024 Paris Games!

SAC FOCUSES ON FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

The Rusche College of Business Student Advisory Council has big plans for business students this fall.

The council's members, Diego Barahona, Jason Madden, Maya Tipton and Barret Williams, are working with Dr. Laurie Rogers, assistant dean for academic and career success, to create a supportive environment for business students.

For this issue of Rusche Review, we checked in with Madden and Williams, who are focusing their efforts on welcoming first-year students this fall.

"One of the most important events we'll hold this fall gives first-year business students an opportunity to visit the Rusche College of Business, interact with one another, and begin to bond and build friendships early on that last throughout their college careers and beyond," said Madden, a marketing and sports business sophomore from Kilgore. "It also is an opportunity for these students to familiarize themselves with the McGee Business Building and start settling into the environment we have created for students to learn, launch and lead."

Williams, a business economics junior from Wake Forest, North Carolina, said business students sometimes make it to their sophomore years before hanging out with their Rusche family.

"Despite being business students, they might never even step foot in the business building until their second year because they're busy taking core classes," Williams said. "We were able to bring this issue to the attention of the right people, who empowered us to create a solution. Now we have a game night and other events to help incoming students build connections with students, faculty and staff."

As part of their SAC service, Madden and Williams assist with the college's corporate career days,



Barret Williams and Jason Madden

College to Career conference and Career Success Passport program. They also promote the college at university-wide events, including first-generation student celebrations and Showcase Saturdays. In addition, they represent SFA business students during gatherings of universities accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

"Joining the council has allowed me to finally give back to the college of business, which has provided me with so many different opportunities," Williams said. "I moved around a lot during my childhood, but SFA and Rusche have given me a place where I've been able to develop a real community. I want to help incoming students do that, too."

Madden shares these sentiments.

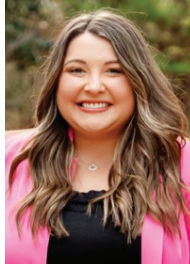
"Being away from home and beginning to establish independence as you become an adult can be tough," he said. "But having the support and community around you that you get to experience every day at SFA and in the college of business help motivate you and many others to grow and take advantage of different opportunities."

This is part one of a two-part series. Meet Diego Barahona and Maya Tipton in the next issue of Rusche Review.

BUSINESS STUDENTS GET ASSIST FROM SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

When the Rusche College of Business Office of Student Services launched Rusche Reboot, a program that assisted early alert, probation and suspension students, it didn't have to look very far for its first intern to support the college's students.

Loran Ashley Rhodes, a Master of Social Work graduate from Apple Springs, was working as a graduate assistant for SFA's School of Social



Loran Rhodes

Work last fall when Dr. Laurie Rogers, assistant dean for academic and career success, approached her with the Rusche Reboot internship. Rhodes canceled a previously scheduled interview with another agency to take the internship for the spring 2024 semester.

"I have always enjoyed pioneering new ideas, and Rusche Reboot allowed me to be innovative and think outside the box," she said.

The new role gave Rhodes the opportunity to listen to business students' goals and dispel misconceptions.

"Students in the college of business are go-getters," she said. "One of the biggest difficulties to overcome is the prevalent and erroneous assumption that students on academic probation or suspension are not adequately prepared for college.

"In reality, many of these students were quite successful in high school," Rhodes continued. "The issue was often that they didn't use available resources or recognize how these resources could greatly contribute to their college success."

When she met with students one on one, Rhodes collaborated with them to create a plan that would help them achieve their objectives.

"If students required additional resources, I connected them with the appropriate services," she said. "For example, I had the privilege of meeting

with an incoming first-generation student to provide guidance on being a student at SFA and offer assistance with the disability services application process."

More than 40% of SFA students are first-generation college students. Rhodes said she saw several other general themes during her discussions with students who participated in the Rusche Reboot program.

"Transfer shock is real, minorities struggle significantly, and students are lacking a sense of time management and are unlikely to ask for help or utilize resources," she said.

In February, Rusche Reboot conducted a participatory action self-report for all academic probationary and enrolled suspended students. The survey gathered information on how often students attend class, participate in study and tutoring sessions, take notes, read the assigned text, study or rework material to prepare for exams, and use resources such as the Academic Assistance and Resource Center, the Center for Career and Professional Development, and office hours (self-learning).

It also asked students how much they believe in their abilities to accomplish assigned tasks; control their study environment, time and location (executive function); engage in social interaction and pursue friendships; get enough sleep; eat healthily; acknowledge their thoughts, feelings and actions while performing tasks; and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies they use to complete tasks (self-efficacy).

"Although this data is confidential, it is impressive," Rhodes said.

Rhodes completed her Rusche Reboot internship and graduated in May, but she wants to continue working with students in a higher education setting.

"I am passionate about helping students, and I am optimistic about staying in a higher education role upon graduation," she said. "I love SFA, and I love our students, faculty and staff."

SUCCESS IN 60 SECONDS

Think you can describe how to be a successful SFA student in 60 seconds? Then email caallen@sfasu.edu about a possible segment during Rusche Radio's "Success in 60 Seconds" series. To listen, visit gosfa.com/rusche-radio.



URC TOP SCHOLARS

Pictured, from left, Toby Sherman, business economics junior, and Hana Roers, sports business junior, were named the [SFA Undergraduate Research Conference](#) top scholars for the Rusche College of Business for their project, "2021 American Housing." Dr. Rebecca Davis, assistant professor of economics, was their faculty sponsor.



AAF COMPETITION

Among the SFA representatives participating in the District 10 American Advertising Federation National Student Advertising Competition held in April in Dallas were, pictured front row, from left, Mady Hill, graphic design major; Dr. Marlene Kahla, marketing professor; Isabel Jedmeers, marketing major; and Miguel Ortiz, graphic design major. AAF competitions require students in SFA's School of Art, Department of Mass Communication, and Department of Management and Marketing to work together and alongside their peers from other universities to present an advertising campaign.

I TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS STUDENTS

Rusche Review caught up with Laurel Bleil, Dr. Jennifer Goddard, Emily Keller and Gina Small, the college's academic advisors, as they supported students through their finals and guided seniors to graduation in May. We asked them to reflect back on their college days.

"My own college experience is what motivated me to enter this career," said Small, who advises entrepreneurship, international business, marketing and sports business majors. "I was a first-generation college student, and I had an advisor who helped me understand and navigate my degree path. That made a big impact on me."

Keller, who advises general business, management and human resource management majors, uses her college experience daily in her advising role.

"I always tell students that 'I have been on both sides of the coin,'" she said. "I have been a struggling student barely hanging on,



Laurel Bleil, Gina Small, Emily Keller and Dr. Jennifer Goddard

and I have been a very successful student. When students have a difficult semester, I always remind them that one semester does not define them. Rather, it serves as an opportunity for improvement going forward. I'm a living example."

Bleil, who advises students in the college's online degree programs as well as the economics, finance, banking, and business communication and corporate education programs, tries to help students

start off on the right foot.

"The best advice I have ever received is earn good grades your first year of college so you don't struggle and stress the rest of your college career trying to raise your cumulative GPA," she said. "It also forces students to create good time management skills that will help them succeed in everything. My college GPA has been one of my greatest assets in life!"

In her role as director of advising for the college, Dr. Jennifer Goddard balances guiding advisors as well as accounting and undecided students.

"The best advice I received was to do what makes you happy," Goddard said. "I changed my major several times before I finally went with my passion. The best advice I ever gave is to find a career that you want to do and then figure out your major. Your future career is what you will

TAKING CARE continues on Page 17

I MENTORSHIP PROGRAM STARTS STRONG

Sit down for a chat with Chloe Thompson and Dr. Marlene Kahla and you'd think they'd been working with each other for years instead of a couple semesters.

Thompson, who graduated with a BBA in marketing in May and now works as a marketing coordinator for Strike USA in Spring, Texas, and Kahla, professor of management and marketing, were paired during the fall 2023 launch of the new Faculty Career Mentor Program in the Rusche College of Business.

"The Faculty Career Mentoring Program is another career-building tool the Rusche College of Business has initiated to further assist our business students with their professional career goals," said Dr. Laurie Rogers, assistant dean for academic and career success.

In its first semester, the program matched over 700 business juniors and seniors to faculty career mentors. Students who have earned more than 60 hours and who aren't



Chloe Thompson and Dr. Marlene Kahla

on probation are highly encouraged to engage.

"I think the program has been very helpful," Thompson said. "I highly recommend students utilize their mentors and this program."

Kahla, who mentored 20 students during the 2023-24 school year, helped Thompson obtain an internship at Alto Florists and Gifts.

"Chloe has a personality that can work with all kinds of people," Kahla said.

"She has a great sense of patience, class and creativity that were perfect for this internship."

Thompson worked with Kahla to create a marketing campaign for Alto Florists and Gifts, which the business owner loved, Kahla said.

From the internship, mentorship and Kahla's marketing classes, Thompson said she has gained valuable knowledge she plans to put toward promoting her own growing business, Chloe Lynn Photography.

And Kahla has gained another student in her mentee family. She said her family likes to stay in touch.

"We keep up with each other in case we need each other," Kahla said. "I help review résumés and build leadership and problem-solving skills among my mentees, but I also sense a quality in others that helps me connect students with each other and business professionals. That's the key to being a good mentor."

WILLIAMS RETURNS TO IOWA WITH HAJOCA SKILLS

Dylan Williams '21 loved his hometown of Neola, Iowa (population 913), so much that he wouldn't have left if his parents hadn't made him.

"When it came time for me to look into colleges, my family told me to go three states away at least," he said. "They wanted me to go get some life experiences."

Williams knew he wanted to go to school in Texas, so he started Googling. He narrowed his choices down to Sam Houston State University and SFA.

"It took less than three minutes on the Sam Houston campus in Huntsville for me to realize I did not belong," he said. "The following day, we visited Nacogdoches on a Homecoming Friday, and it took even less time for me to realize SFA was where I was meant to be."

Williams met his wife, sports business alumna Jennifer Stricklin Williams '21 from Tomball, Texas, at Orientation and settled into the business management program in the Rusche College of Business.

During his sales management class in 2020, Williams heard from Rusche alumnus and guest speaker Blake Westmoreland '94, general manager for Moore Supply Co. plumbing wholesaler, which is part of Hajoca Corporation. Westmoreland recruits future Hajoca employees from SFA as part of the corporation's partnership with the



Dylan Williams '21 and Blake Westmoreland '94

Rusche College of Business, and he could tell Williams "had the passion, ethics and intellect we were looking for," Westmoreland said.

Williams received the job offer during his graduation week when his family was in town from Iowa.

"It was just a special moment, a proud moment," Williams said. "It made me look back at the history of my family and the sacrifices that were made for me."

Though he loved his new job, Williams kept thinking of his family back in Iowa, so he accepted an opportunity in Dow City, Iowa, about 45 minutes north of Neola. With his new wife, Williams returned to Iowa to join Garrett Land & Cattle Beef, a direct-to-consumer beef farm, in December.

After some moments of "despair" upon learning about Williams' decision to move back home, Westmoreland said, "It's OK. I'll just hire another Lumberjack."

FACULTY EARN BEST PAPER AWARD

Rusche College of Business faculty members were recognized as Best Paper Award winners at the Academy of Business Research Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, in March.

Dr. Raymond Jones, assistant professor of management and marketing and director of the entrepreneurship program; Dr. Jason Reese, associate professor of marketing and associate dean for faculty

and administration; Dr. Amy Mehaffey, lecturer of marketing; and Dr. Janet Jones, associate professor of accounting, received the award for "Pleasing Everyone: Strategic Market Segmentation of CrossFit."

The paper explored the dilemma small fitness business owners often face: how to strategically attract diverse customers while providing each with a unique experience.

TAKING CARE from Page 16

wake up to every day, and it is something you should be happy with, rather than a major choice, which is something short term while you are in college."

Keller offers firsthand Rusche College of Business experience to new students.

"Having earned my BBA and MBA here, I am a huge SFA business program advocate!" Keller said. "I love my job and helping students, and the college of business is home to me."

Bleil also loves working with students earning business degrees.

"The Bachelor of Business Administration with any of our majors is a strong problem-solving degree that employers look highly upon when seeking out employees," she said. "A business degree is very versatile, and I am confident our students will eventually find their passion in the business world."

Goddard, who earned her doctoral degree in educational leadership with a concentration in higher education from SFA in May, is laser-focused on the student experience.

"I am passionate about student success and enjoy researching ways to support students throughout their academic careers," she said. "I also enjoy presenting at conferences and learning more about ways we can support students in higher education."

Small's SFA education continues to shape not only her life but also her family members' futures.

"My immediate family has four SFA degrees among us," she said. "My husband and I met at SFA and, after a few detours, ended up making Nacogdoches our home."

But the advisors' advice is not all business and SFA. Bleil can tell you everything you need to know about Lake of the Ozarks. Goddard has you covered on cooking and art. Small's gardening and beach destination knowledge is priceless, and if you have a 5-year-old, Keller is your expert.

To all the new SFA graduates out there, the advisors collectively offer one last piece of advice: "Find your passion in the workforce and do great things, enjoy the small things in life and try not to worry, and remember forever the connections you made at SFA."

ACCOUNTING ALUMNI ESTABLISH PROFESSORSHIP FOR ENGAGING FACULTY MEMBERS DEDICATED TO STUDENT SUCCESS

Accounting alumni Michelle and Harmon Smith have endowed a new professorship in the Rusche College of Business' Schlieff School of Accountancy.

The Smiths, both of whom graduated from SFA in 1985, know how important faculty members are to a student's college experience and career launch.

"We firmly believe that the faculty of a university is critical to student success," Michelle said. "Those faculty members who actively engage with students and challenge their critical thinking make a lasting impact."

The Michelle and Harmon Smith Endowed Professorship is the seventh professorship for the Rusche College of Business and the fourth for the Schlieff School of Accountancy. The faculty member chosen for this professorship will be committed to engaging students in meaningful learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom, said Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the Rusche College of Business.

"Attracting and retaining innovative faculty members who seek new and creative methods to best prepare students for rewarding careers and success in life is essential to the mission of our college," said Bisping, who will oversee the selection of the professorship recipient. "The Michelle and Harmon Smith Endowed Professorship will help ensure we continue to attract exceptional faculty members to benefit students for years to come."

Michelle was born in Michigan and moved many times with her family, eventually ending up in Waco when her family settled there during her senior year of high school. Harmon, who grew up in Hughes Springs, was the first in his family to graduate from college. Both visited bigger universities but decided SFA was the right fit for them.



Stephen F. Austin State University alumni Michelle and Harmon Smith, both 1985 accounting graduates, have endowed a new professorship at the Schlieff School of Accountancy in the Rusche College of Business.

Harmon remembers how much SFA faculty members helped him prepare for a future beyond East Texas.

"My freshman English composition teacher, Dr. Diane Corbin, instilled confidence in me that, despite being from a small town and having a modest upbringing, I could achieve anything I wanted," Harmon said. "My world history teacher, Dr. William Brophy, taught me to 'live' history instead of just reading about it. His personal interactions with Dr. Martin Luther King made a huge impression on me."

SFA faculty members also shaped the way he thought about accounting, which would become his future career.

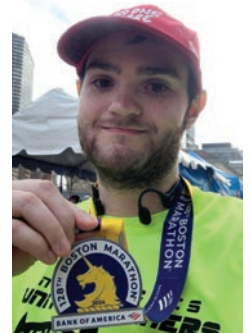
"My intermediate accounting instructor, Sharron Graves, taught me how accounting could influence key business decisions instead of just reporting the numbers," Harmon said. "She also demonstrated a belief in my

PROFESSORSHIP continues on Page 19

BAKER CONQUERS BOSTON

David Baker, a May marketing graduate, managed to train for the Boston Marathon while working toward his college finish line.

"It was my favorite and most memorable marathon experience ever," said Baker, a veteran of eight marathons. "The whole weekend made me realize the power of hard work and dedication."



David Baker

Baker qualified for the April 15 Boston Marathon by pledging to raise \$10K for a local charity, The New England Center for Children, which helps students with autism learn social skills.

"My sister, Tiffany, has autism," he said. "This particular run meant so much more to me because I was given an opportunity to also raise money and awareness for autism."

Baker reached not only the finish line but also his fundraising goal.

"Staff from the school I was raising money for were on the sidelines cheering on the runners, and some of the students were out there as well, which was amazing," he said. "I also ran a few miles in the middle of the race with one of the teachers from the school."

Running the race was similar to earning his degree, Baker said.

"I worked hard to raise money and earned my spot on the starting line of Boston — just like I worked hard putting time and dedication into my education at SFA."

RUSCHE FACULTY SCHOLARS

Dr. Brandon Ater
Dr. Justin Blount
Dr. Marice Kelly
Dr. Suhyung Lee
Dr. Wenjing Li
Dr. Juliana Lilly

Dr. Chris McKenna
Dr. Beverly Mendoza
Dr. Rajat Mishra
Dr. Drew Thornley
Dr. Jay Vega
Dr. Carol Wright

SUMMIT OFFERS PREVIEW OF NEW SPORTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP CERTIFICATE

Students attending the inaugural Sports Innovation Summit hosted by the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship in April discovered how sports, entrepreneurship and innovation intersect. They also got a preview of the new Sports Innovation Entrepreneurship Certificate that the Rusche College of Business will offer this fall.

“To better prepare our students to launch their careers, and to provide them with the skills desired by sport organizations, the Sports Innovation Entrepreneurship Certificate will begin in fall 2024,” said Dr. Jason Reese, associate dean of the Rusche College of Business. “Any student at SFA can take part in this 12-hour academic certificate and enhance their understanding of sports entrepreneurship and innovation”

The summit featured speakers from a variety of sports industry sectors, including professional and collegiate athletics and multiple startups. The panel discussions focused on emerging technologies in the sports business and personal branding, including name, image and likeness issues.

“We are experiencing a rapid generational shift in one of the key components that makes up the identity of the United States — sports,” said Antonio Banos, summit panelist and associate director of the Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Texas Christian University.



Dr. Jason Reese, associate dean of the Rusche College of Business, welcomes panelists and attendees to the inaugural Sports Innovation Summit in April.

“The current state of NIL in sports impacts not just collegiate athletics but also high school and professional sports. It is imperative that universities create and offer programs and opportunities for students to take advantage of all the new and exciting opportunities.”

Chris Wilkerson, summit panelist, CEO of The Sideline Design and SFA kinesiology and exercise science graduate, said events like the summit are key for the growth of the university as a whole and for sparking ideas among students.

“Establishing a foundation on which students can explore, be inspired by new concepts and witness innovative offerings is crucial in guiding them toward success, including the entrepreneurial journey,” he said. “Sometimes, all it takes is something as simple as the summit and hearing from

other people that there is no definitive roadmap to entrepreneurship.”

Norman Schippers, summit panelist, founder and president of Alodia Basketball Academy, SFA accounting graduate, and chair of the college’s Executive Advisory Board, said, “Universities must offer programs for students to seize new opportunities, and I am excited about the future of SFA’s sports business and entrepreneurship programs.”

Overall, the summit highlighted the transformative ideas shaping the future of athletics, said Matthew Smilor, director of the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship.

“We ignited the spark for groundbreaking advancements, pushed boundaries, explored new technologies and redefined what’s possible in the sports industry,” he said.

PROFESSORSHIP from Page 18

potential through her role as our Beta Alpha Psi sponsor.”

Beta Alpha Psi, the international honor organization for financial information students and professionals, contributed not only to Harmon’s professional life but also to his personal life. Despite having the same major, the Smiths didn’t meet until their senior year, when they were both members of the honor society and played softball on opposite teams at a Beta Alpha Psi event on SFA’s Intramural Fields.

“I knew when Michelle made a huge

deal out of catching my hard-hit fly ball that she had some interest in me,” Harmon said. “While it took some convincing, she finally agreed to go on a date with me, and the rest is history.”

Michelle added, “Well, Harmon’s side of the story is mostly true. He had been flirting with me during the game and had boasted that there was no way I could get him out. When I did, it presented an opportunity for us to get to know each other better. We have been on the same ‘team’ ever since!”

Exactly one year after their first date, Harmon proposed to Michelle at

Pecan Park, across the street from the Intramural Fields.

After graduating, they moved to Houston, where they got married, worked at small public accounting firms and had their first of three children. Job opportunities for Harmon at PulteGroup led the family to Michigan and several other states. Harmon retired as PulteGroup’s chief operating officer and executive vice president in 2019, and Michelle and he now live in Tequesta, Florida.

For more information on SFA’s Schlieff School of Accountancy, visit fsu.edu/acct.

FACULTY MEMBERS EARN SCHOLARLY, SERVICE AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Four Rusche College of Business faculty members earned university-level excellence awards this year.

SCHOLARLY EXCELLENCE AWARD

Dr. Justin Blount is an associate professor of business communication and legal studies who joined SFA in 2013.

"It is always flattering to be recognized for your research," he said. "I was pleased to learn of the award."

Blount researches the area of business law, covering corporate governance, ethics and financial regulation. He teaches business law, business, ethics and society, employment law, and negotiation and dispute resolution.

He says what excites him most about teaching is helping students become better critical thinkers to learn how to think for themselves rather than only trust others.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARD

Dr. Ryan Phelps is an associate professor of economics and finance and has been an educator at SFA since 2007.

A native of Oxford, Michigan, Phelps has played an integral role in services at the university and community levels.

Along with raising external funds of more than \$100,000 for various scholar programs, awards and reading groups, he has initiated student engagement programs, created study abroad opportunities and served as a board member for the Regional East Texas Health Network in Nacogdoches, among many other initiatives.

"I am both humbled and encouraged by this recognition," Phelps said. "I am humbled to have my efforts singled out because of all of the great things happening at the Rusche College of Business. Also, the most impressive initiatives that I have touched on required the efforts and talents of many others — faculty, staff, donors and students have all pitched in. Finally, none of it would matter without student buy-in.



I want everyone who contributed to my recent service efforts to know that I am perpetually grateful for them."

Phelps teaches macroeconomics and applied statistics courses, and he co-created and co-leads the Discovering Business Abroad course. In his time as an educator, he has learned the best results stem from student interest.

"I am constantly trying to gauge students' level of understanding," Phelps said. "They often find this process annoying, but I am a big believer in learning through effort. Active learning and learning by doing loom large in my courses."

TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

Dr. Gina Harden is an associate professor of management and marketing who joined SFA in 2013.

"This is the highest honor to me, as working with the students is my favorite part of being a faculty member," she said. "I love getting to meet a new group of young adults each semester and see how the future will be shaped by them."

Harden, who earned her bachelor's degree in management at SFA, said, "teaching at SFA is a dream job for me. I spent four of the best years of my life here as a student, and being back here all these years later as a faculty member is a big honor in and of itself."

Two of her former students are members of the Rusche Alumni Business Advisory Council, and two are national board members for the Society for Advancement of Management. Harden serves as faculty advisor for SFA's SAM chapter and was named Outstanding Faculty Advisor at the national level in 2023.

"I am truly blessed to have former students who still call, text, email, visit and even invite me to their weddings," Harden said. "We discuss our personal lives as well as promotional opportunities in their profession and their giving back to their school, their profession and society."

Harden said she is thankful to be at SFA

for many reasons.

"It has enriched my life in so many ways from all the opportunities to develop the relationships I have with so many outstanding students," she said.

TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD – FACULTY SENATE REPRESENTATIVE

Jamie Derrick is a lecturer of management and human resources management who joined SFA as an HR representative in 2009 and began serving as a faculty member in the Rusche College of Business in 2015.

"This award is a testament to the dedication and passion I bring to the classroom each day, striving to empower students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed," she said.

After more than 15 years of working as a human resources professional, Derrick was ready to teach what she had learned.

"Working as an HR professional, I can help one organization become great," she said. "But by educating the next generation of HR and business managers, I have a much broader societal impact and bigger impact on the future of a variety of workplaces."

Derrick says one of the qualities she cherishes about SFA the most is its vibrant community of students and faculty.

"The supportive environment fostered by SFA enables me to engage with students on a deeper level, facilitating their growth not only academically but also personally and professionally," she said.

A subject matter expert for the Society for Human Resource Management, Derrick is a firm believer in ongoing professional development to enhance her students' learning experience.

"I continuously seek opportunities to expand my knowledge and refine my teaching strategies," she said. "I am grateful for the support of the SFA community and look forward to continuing my journey of teaching excellence."



STUDENTS EXPLORE HOW TO HELP OTHERS IMPROVE THEIR FINANCIAL HEALTH

SFA students who attended the Rusche College of Business banking and wealth management career exploration day in March don't necessarily know what they want to do yet, but they do know they want to help people.

"Many of this generation's students want to know how to make a difference in their communities," said David Kaiser, director of SFA's Chadwick Banking Program and moderator for the event's panel discussion. "Like physicians help their patients manage their physical health, banking and wealth management professionals help their clients manage their financial health. This assistance extends to businesses and whole communities."

For the event, four panelists spoke to students about the diverse career opportunities available in the banking and wealth management industries, as well as how the companies for which they work contribute to community growth and support.

Two of the panelists, Francis Spruiell, executive vice president of Austin Bank in Nacogdoches and president of Austin Bank's piney woods region, and Weston Reynolds, wealth management and trust manager at Commercial Bank of Texas in Nacogdoches, work for community banks that have each served the region for more than a century. Their banks support community efforts, from teaching local eighth graders financial literacy to helping with the Angelina County Fair.

"Our employers encourage us to do this, and there's nothing more rewarding," Spruiell said.

Panelist Gregg Nichols, a financial advisor with Edward Jones who worked as a banker for 15 years, said those in the field are "always looking to help people by building relationships with them and solving their financial puzzles through those relationships."

Dr. Matthew Jaramillo, SFA lecturer of finance, was in the audience and added, "Studies have shown that career satisfaction scores range from high to very high in the



Pictured, from left, Francis Spruiell, executive vice president of Austin Bank in Nacogdoches and president of Austin Bank's piney woods region; Tom Heslep, a 1981 SFA graduate and chief lending officer of Texas Republic Bank in Dallas; Weston Reynolds, wealth management and trust manager at Commercial Bank of Texas in Nacogdoches; and Gregg Nichols, a financial advisor with Edward Jones in Nacogdoches, discussed the variety of careers available in banking and wealth management during Stephen F. Austin State University's banking and wealth management career exploration day in March.

financial advising field, particularly driven by working closely with individuals on achieving client goals. SFA students who complete the financial planning minor are industry ready immediately upon entering the workforce."

Part of establishing the long-term relationships needed to achieve financial planning goals is building trust over generations of a family and through the right education and credentials, said Nichols, who just completed the Certified Financial Planner exam.

The Rusche College of Business offers courses to help students prepare for the CFP, which ensures financial professionals are highly qualified to develop a holistic plan for their clients' finances.

In addition to working with wealth managers, registered investment advisors and holistic financial planners, almost every bank has at least one department that is impacted by the financial planning process, Jaramillo said.

Tom Heslep, a 1981 SFA graduate and the chief lending officer of Texas Republic Bank in Dallas, added that patience and

listening skills are keys to success in this career.

"You have to care," Heslep said. "The conversations you have with your clients are not always easy. It takes a certain character to get through those conversations."

An individual does not necessarily have to be a numbers person or a people person to thrive in a banking career, said Spruiell, who majored in computer science in college.

"If you're not an extrovert, you still have opportunities in banking such as attorneys and accountants," Spruiell said. "There are also human resources positions and training positions. You just need to get your feet wet and start somewhere so you can see what you like."

Heslep added, "Banking is probably the most diverse industry today. It's not just loaning and collecting money. By connecting with industry professionals through your professors and completing internships, you can showcase your potential, interests and skills."

For more information on SFA's Chadwick Banking Program, visit sfasu.edu/banking.

PANEL FOCUSES ON ANIMAL WELFARE IN BUSINESS

SFA students learned about the humane treatment of animals in the food chain during an early March panel discussion hosted by the Rusche College of Business Department of Business Communication and Legal Studies.

Panelists Jim Lanier, fresh quality assurance director for HEB, and David Alders, former SFA regent and president of Carrizo Creek Corporation in Nacogdoches, first asked students how many of them grew up on farms and ranches. A few hands went up, but as Alders asked whose grandparents grew up in a farming environment, nearly all the students raised their hands.

“We’re two or more generations removed from the time when cattle and poultry were raised mostly on family farms,” Alders said. “Your generation is very concerned about the ethics of animal agriculture and whether the food was produced locally.”

HEB, a Texas-based independently owned food retailer, serves 6.4 million out of the state’s 10.8 million families, Lanier said.

“Because we’re private, we can control where the money goes, and we are able to keep our costs low and provide customers with a range of choices, like 16 lines of beef to meet different economic needs and consumer preferences,” he said. “People want to feel good about the food they eat. People trust HEB. We’ve built that trust over time.”

Alders, who raises 130,000 chickens on his cattle and poultry farm, is one of HEB’s food producers.

“I do my best to enhance my animals’ welfare every day and minimize their stress,” Alders said. “If I don’t, they’re not going to prosper and gain weight efficiently.”

He ensures his conditions are optimal for his chickens by housing them in structures where they’re protected from predators, and they have good ventilation and plenty of food and water.

“I believe I personally have a moral obligation — not just a profit motivation — to protect my herd of cattle and flock of poultry and know what they’re doing, so



Jim Lanier, fresh quality assurance director for HEB, and David Alders, former Stephen F. Austin State University regent and president of Carrizo Creek Corporation in Nacogdoches, answer SFA students’ questions at an early March panel discussion on animal welfare in business hosted by the Rusche College of Business Department of Business Communication and Legal Studies.

I’m constantly checking on them,” Alders said.

His animal care, which includes not using antibiotics, aligns with HEB’s quality assurance policies.

“We’re relatively unique at HEB in that we don’t write the animal welfare policies we enforce on our own,” Lanier said. “We work with industry, academia and production experts to do that.”

Both Alders and Lanier said educating consumers on terms used to market the poultry sold in grocery stores is challenging. “Grass fed,” “cage free” and “hormone free” are some of those terms.

“No poultry producers have ever used hormones,” Alders said. “It’s against the law. Calling meat or poultry ‘hormone free’ is like calling water ‘gluten free.’ Water has never had gluten.”

Alders believes climate-controlled chicken houses that contain individual nipples for water access and allow waste to drop below the cages so chickens don’t walk through and lay their eggs in it is chicken paradise in an egg farm context.

“I find my broiler (meat) chickens also are far less stressed in a climate-controlled environment,” he said.

At the end of the discussion, Lanier and Alders advised students to complete internships to prepare for their future careers.

“We value experience almost as much as we value education,” Lanier said. “By interning, you become a known commodity to the people hiring, and you get a chance to evaluate whether a company has the same principles as you do.”

Alders added that networking with the right people is key.

“Choosing your friends and the peers you look up to wisely is important,” he said. “You’ll have those relationships for years to come.”

Dr. Kristen Waddell, assistant professor of business communication and legal studies, said panel discussions like this help students see how concepts from SFA’s business ethics courses apply to real businesses.

“Our goal is for these concepts to stay with students beyond the classroom as they start their own careers,” Waddell said.

For more information on SFA’s Department of Business Communication and Legal Studies, visit sfasu.edu/bcls.

SFA FINANCE ALUM BUILDS COMMUNITY AROUND BEER

Kevin Carr, a 1992 SFA finance graduate and owner of Community Beer Co. in Dallas, headed back to campus to deliver the keynote presentation at the Rusche College of Business College to Career Conference in April.

The event brings together students, business professionals, alumni and corporate partners to share experiences and advice as well as to assist students in transitioning to their full-time careers.

Carr shared the story of how he built Community Beer Co., which opened 11 years ago and has grown into the third largest independently owned brewery in Texas.

"I saw a window of opportunity, and I took it," Carr said. "You have to be ready and educated on trends in products and consumer behavior and jump in before the window closes. Go where the puck will be,



Kevin Carr, a 1992 SFA finance graduate and owner of Community Beer Co. in Dallas, brainstorms business ideas with students after his College to Career Conference keynote presentation.

as Wayne Gretzky says."

As the brewery name suggests, Carr believes in building community around his beer and other products as well as giving back to his community. He has created a "database of do-gooders" filled with customers and friends of Community Beer

Co. who provide fast help when needed, such as plumbing assistance to low-income families during big freezes.

"If you own your own company, it's really important to give back to your community," Carr said. "The No. 1 thing we do is use our platform to get people to raise their hand and say, 'Yes, I want to help.'"

He emphasized integrity, quality, service, passion, creativity, networking and resilience in the face of setbacks and failure as key to being an entrepreneur. Carr also recommended building a team of smart, motivated people — they don't necessarily need industry experience. Lastly, he said, when leading, don't be a "taskmaster" to employees.

"People don't respond to that," he said. "Create an entrepreneurial environment and empower them to work on their own."



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EAB TREE

Members of the Rusche College of Business Executive Advisory Board celebrated SFA's centennial by planting a tree in April. Learn more about EAB at gosfa.com/rusche-eab.



BCLS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Business Communication and Legal Studies Advisory Council met in April at SFA. Pictured, front row from left, are Gary Lopez, Monica Piña, Debbie DuFrene, Tim Clipson, Megan Dupuis, Amy Murphy-Ulloa, Carol Wright (faculty member) and Cole Tomberlain. Pictured, back row from left, are Micah Love, Sean Kennedy, Ann Wilson, Ron Smith, Zach Rice, Jason Wright, Rick Lowry, Lawton Rikel (MBA student representative) and Paul Smith.

SFA STUDENTS GO ABROAD TO EXPLORE BUSINESSES IN IRELAND AND SCOTLAND

Fifty students from Stephen F. Austin State University's Rusche College of Business traveled to Ireland and Scotland May 11 through 21 to explore businesses, including a smokehouse near the Cliffs of Moher, the home of Guinness beer in Dublin and a kiltmaker on Edinburgh's historic Royal Mile.

"For many of the students, it was their first opportunity to experience another culture and learn the fine art of international travel," said Dr. Matt Lindsey, chair of the Department of Management and Marketing, who led the trip with Dr. Mikhail Kouliavtsev, chair of the Department of Economics and Finance. "Students who attend SFA have opportunities to take their learning beyond the classroom to help them think more globally."

Ian Lahera, a management junior from Katy, said he gained a better understanding of why companies value international trade and how they build awareness about their products abroad.

"Traveling to countries to learn about foreign businesses and interacting with them to understand their processes is a lot more valuable than simply learning about them in class," he added. "There's a big difference in seeing in person how different businesses run things and what obstacles they may face than just reading about it in a textbook."

One of the students' stops, the Burren Smokehouse, was established in 1989 in Lisdoonvarna, Ireland, and locally sources its fish, salt and smoking process materials, including oak shavings. The business prospered because it quickly embraced such trends as online sales, sustainability and creating a hub for tourists visiting the Cliffs of Moher. The company then gave back to its community by helping to establish the Burren Ecotourism Network and working with other local companies to promote sustainable practices.

Holland Davis, senior marketing major from Kingwood, appreciated the business



Students from Stephen F. Austin State University's Rusche College of Business traveled to Ireland and Scotland to explore businesses in the countries in May. They also stopped by the Burren in southwest Ireland, which is famous for its cracked pavement of glacial-era limestone, as well as cliffs and caves, fossils, rock formations, and archaeological sites.

benefits of sustainability and said she's ready to work abroad.

"Professionally, I was educated on the benefits and mechanisms of sustainable business; but, personally, I realized how important it is to expand my horizons and how international business can help me achieve this goal," she said. "If I was given the opportunity to work internationally, I would in a heartbeat. This trip was an eye-opening experience that gave me an incredible opportunity to grow not only as a business student but as a human being."

The students also explored market competition, branding, supply chains and the history of tartans at the countries' more traditional businesses, including Galway Hooker Craft Brewing Co. and Guinness Storehouse in Ireland and Glengoyne Distillery and Gordon Nicolson Kiltmakers in Scotland.

At a meeting with two board members of the British American Business Council, the students discussed immigration law with Grace McGill, a partner at the Burness Paull law firm, as well as running a Scottish business with 100% U.S. clients

with Jim Rae, CEO of docs24.

The trip wasn't all business. The students literally herded sheep at the Dingle Peninsula, dipped a toe in the Atlantic Ocean at Inch Beach, visited the bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond, and walked carefully along the Burren in southwest Ireland, which is famous for its cracked pavement of glacial-era limestone, as well as cliffs and caves, fossils, rock formations, and archaeological sites.

Some of the students' best discoveries during the trip were about themselves.

"When we would gather for class, I didn't meet many people and I was kind of nervous about going on the trip," said Katie Newman, accounting junior from Kirbyville. "On the very first day of our trip, I found my group, and I flourished in Ireland and Scotland. I learned that I could meet new people, step outside of my box and take a chance. That will be helpful to me not only in life but also in my future career."

For more information on the business college, visit sfau.edu/cob.