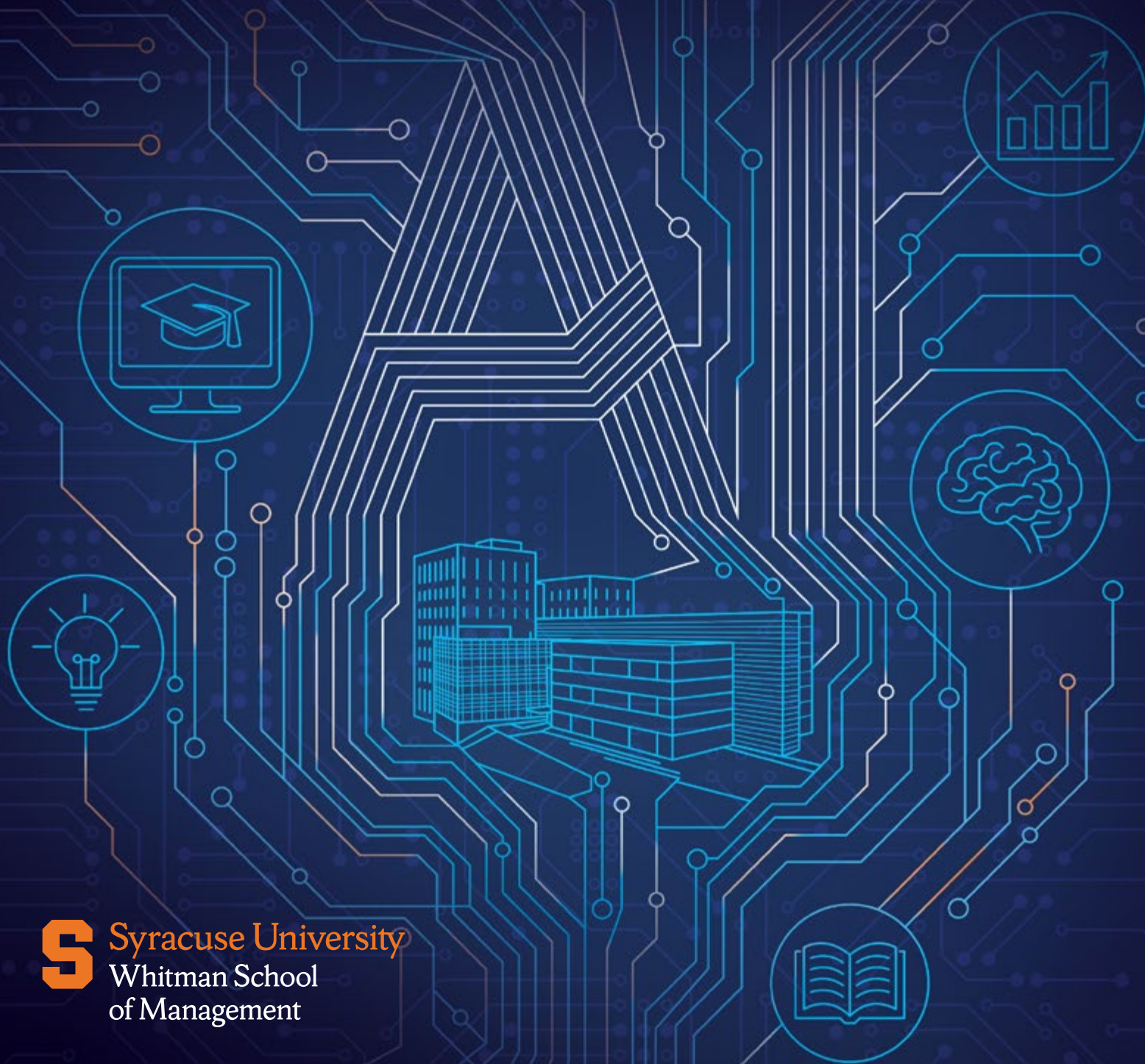


Spring 2025

Whitman

*Weaving AI into Every
Fiber of Business Education*



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Whitman School
of Management



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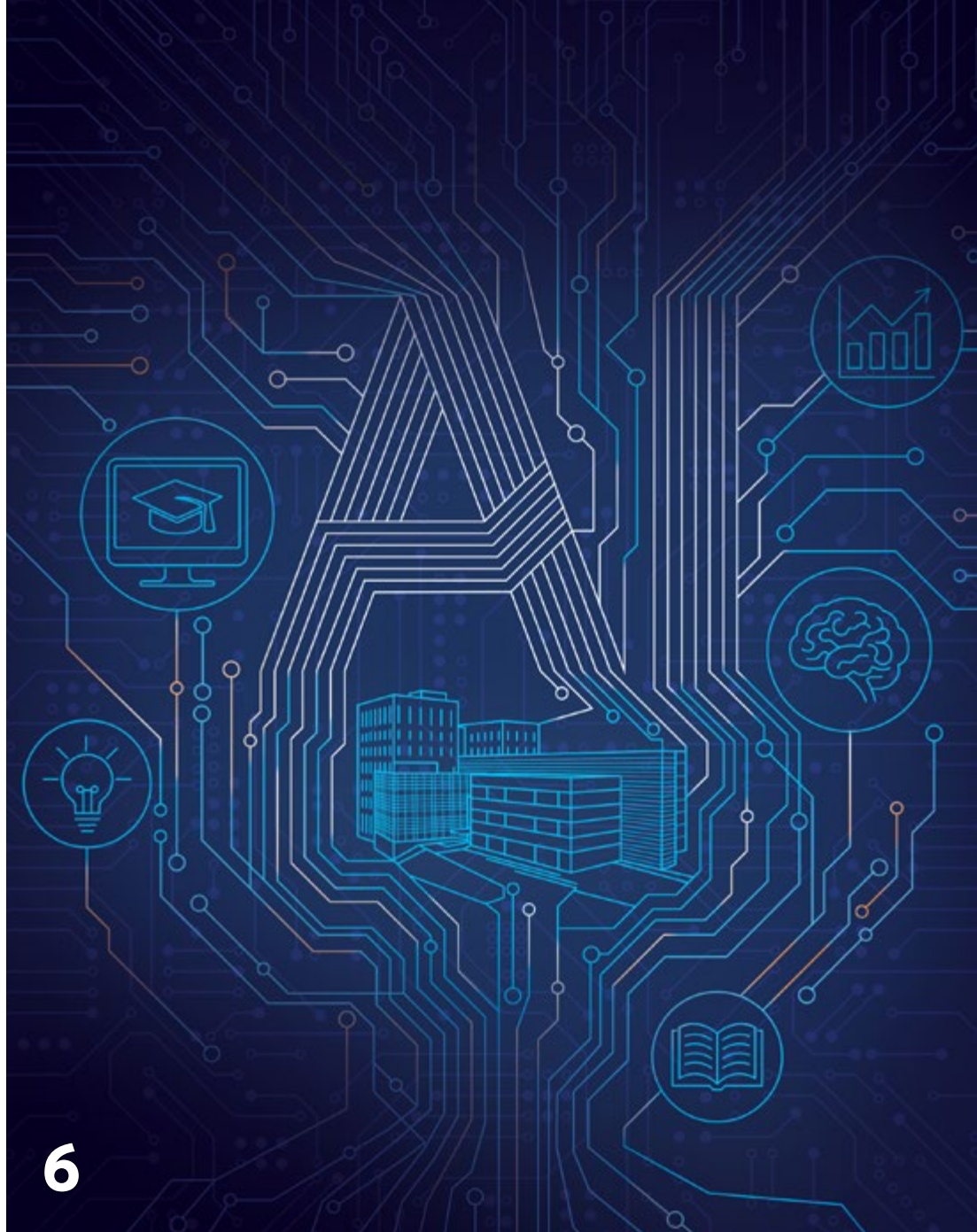
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Letter from the Dean

**Whitman MBA Program
Ranks #54 in
U.S. News & World Report,
highest in 25 Years!**

As we conclude another academic year at the Whitman School of Management, I am excited to share more of the stories of success that underscore our commitment to offering cutting-edge education that prepares students for the dynamic world that awaits, our continued innovation and an unwavering emphasis on excellence.

Unsurprisingly, over the last year we've kept pace with one of the most important technological advancements facing society—that of artificial intelligence. Over the last year, we've trained our faculty, staff and students to become more comfortable with AI, and it's become increasingly pervasive throughout our curriculum. We even hosted a live case competition where students developed AI strategy for an alumni-run business, the Chocolate Pizza Company. Our faculty has been monitoring the development of AI and are carrying out research on how AI is impacting corporations and industries across a variety of fronts, and many of our alumni have taken on leadership roles in a variety of AI-related positions in their professional careers. Whitman is expecting AI to have a deep and broad impact on business, and our students are already being expected to use AI with great levels of comfort as part of their internships. This is truly a technological advancement that will profoundly impact how we work in the future.

Whitman has also endeavored to keep close ties with industry. As part of this, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Salzberg program. This program brings together experts in supply chain management from academia and industry. Our long-standing supply chain management program is one of the areas where Whitman has distinguished itself—and Salzberg is perhaps the crown jewel in that program. Further, we brought in an exemplary set of leaders to be part of our IMPACT Speaker Series to discuss AI at a global scale, transforming culture, managing difficult situations and team building, among other topics. Our globally top-ranked entrepreneurship program celebrated a milestone 10th anniversary for our Orange Tank competition and our second anniversary of our 'CUSE50 event recognizing the 50 fastest growing alumni-founded businesses. These are just a few of the ways that we connect students to amazing entrepreneurs and business leaders.

At the heart of our work are our students. In this issue of the magazine, we highlight some of our most impressive students. These students are exemplary in their own ways—including dedicated student entrepreneurs, highly engaged students supporting others and students who are balancing their studies with exciting work experience, to name just a few ways our students excel. This year we had not one but two seniors recognized by *Poets&Quants* as two of the best and brightest students in the country. Their accomplishments reflect the high caliber of our students and the quality of education at Whitman.

Many of these initiatives and others—such as our work with donors and parents—exemplify our dedication to fostering a learning environment that is among the best in the nation. Some of the performance metrics that we follow—such as job placement for graduating seniors and national rankings, remain very high. We saw our undergraduate placement rate reach its highest yet—98.7% among those actively seeking jobs. We also saw record-breaking starting salaries for both our undergraduate and MBA programs. We received a No. 1 ranking in the country for private schools based on return on investment, according to *Bloomberg Businessweek*, and we recently received our highest rankings for our MBA in 25 years.

As we continue to evolve our school, we remain committed to providing our students with the tools and knowledge necessary to lead and innovate in their future careers. Thank you for being an integral part of the Whitman community for an eventful and productive year. We welcome your support and engagement—and we've highlighted a few ways to be involved in this magazine. I look forward to continued success for the Whitman community in the time ahead.

Best wishes,

Alex McKelvie
Interim Dean

Syracuse University's Second Annual 'CUSE50 Summit



The Whitman School had nearly 350 students in attendance for the 2024 'CUSE50 Summit held Nov. 15, 2024.

Students from across campus chose from 10 sessions focusing on various areas of business and industries. Each session was moderated by a student startup founder who interviewed 'CUSE50 awardees on many topics.

The afternoon kicked off a lively "Six for Six" Pitch Competition, where six student ventures vied for a winner-take-all \$6,000 prize. Competitors for the competition included:

Gymin presented by Antonio Goncalves '27 (ECS), Balance AI presented by Syed Haque '25 M.S., PapeX presented by Nicolas Courbage '26, GrownBy presented by Michael Parker L'27 (LAW), Phlaot presented by Nathan Brekke '26 (ECS), '27 MBA, and ConnectUp presented by Laurene Yomi Mvete '25 and Maya Layton '25.

Judges awarded Courbage and his company, PapeX, the \$6,000 prize. PapeX is a digital solution to enhance receipt and loyalty programs by eliminating confusion at retail checkouts.

Orange Tank Competition Marks 10 Years of Driving Entrepreneurial Success



The ideas showcased at the Annual Orange Tank competition definitely did not disappoint as the Whitman School marked 10 years of the competition on Nov. 1, 2024. Serving as emcee was former Syracuse University and NFL football player Derrell Smith '10 (IST), G'13 (NEW), CEO of 99EATS LLC.

The competition showcased the innovative thinking of students and alumni, as they competed for cash prizes and valuable feedback. Twenty-one ventures were submitted to the initial round of this year's Orange Tank with five selected to pitch at finals. Thirty-five thousand dollars in cash prizes were awarded, thanks to the continued generosity of John Couri '63 (A&S), H'08.

The finalist judges were Buddy Valastro, celebrity baker; Vinny Lobdell Jr., founder of VinnyLobdell.com; and Stacey Tank '02 (WSM/NEW), CEO of Bespoke Beauty Brands.

The winner of first place was Tosin Alabi '25 MBA with a cash prize of \$25,000 for DiabeTech, an innovative mobile solution for diabetic patients that uses AI analytics to manage foot ulcers.

Second place (\$7,500) was awarded to Angelo Niforatos G'20 (ECS), '25 MBA, of Niffy Drone Solutions, LLC.; and third place (\$2,500) was awarded to Natasha Brao '22 (VPA), '23 M.S., '24 MBA, founder of Shooka Sauce.

Vinny Lobdell Jr. surprised the other finalists with awards of \$1,500 each: Waqar Hussain '25 MBA for Iconnic.cloud and Emeka Ossai '25 MBA for CampusLabs.

75th Annual Whitman Salzberg Awards



The Whitman School held the 75th Annual Harry E. Salzberg Memorial Lecture Program on Oct. 3, 2024. The Salzberg Medallion is one of the most prestigious awards in transportation and supply chain management.


This year's recipients of the Salzberg Industry Medallion was Toyota Motor Corp. Steve Brown, vice president of parts and logistics and operations, accepted the award on behalf of the company.

The Salzberg Academic Medallion was presented to Charles Corbett, the IBM Chair in Management and professor of operation and management and sustainability at UCLA.

Five awards were also given to Whitman undergraduate students.

- **Taylor Nicole Feiden '25** received the \$10,000 Brethen Scholarship.
- **Gabrielle Goldman '25 (WSM/IST)** received the \$10,000 Brethen Scholarship.
- **Connor McHugh '25** received a \$5,000 Recognition Award.
- **Odette A. Sherk '26 (WSM/MAX)** received the \$1,000 Empowering Women in Supply Chain Award, presented on behalf of the Didier family.
- **Amelia K. Thorn '25 (WSM/MAX)** received the \$1,000 Zinsmeister Award.

Industry presentations included:

- Toyota's Brown and Jeff Cawyer, group manager, Toyota Motor North America, outlined the history and methods of the Toyota Production System, which has become the standard for the auto manufacturing industry.
- Charles Corbett presented "The Operations of Well-Being: An Operational Take on Happiness, Equity and Sustainability."
- Adam B. Cunha, head of global key client sales-North America, for A.P. Moller-Maersk, addressed global logistic challenges due to political conflicts and environmental activities surrounding key shipping areas.
- Sarah Day Kalloch, co-founder and executive director for the Good Jobs Institute, presented "Help Companies Thrive by Creating Good Jobs," based on 20 years of research from The Good Job Strategy. 

IMPACT Speaker Series

The Whitman School hosted the second year of its IMPACT Speaker Series, bringing in global business leaders who shared their experiences and insights with the Whitman community on real issues happening in the business world today. The speakers series is a unique opportunity for Whitman students to hear directly from high-profile individuals who demonstrate the connection between success and the vital skills and information students are learning at Whitman to prepare them for the ever evolving business world.



Neeraj Tolmare The Coca-Cola Company

One-third of the world's population touches a Coca-Cola product every day. Neeraj Tolmare, senior vice president and chief information officer of The Coca-Cola Company, joined the Whitman community for its IMPACT Speaker Series in November 2024 to share how the beverage giant is making this happen through its proactive approach to AI. Joining the company in 2018, Tolmare oversees Coca-Cola information, cyber data and digital organizations, and serves as chair of the company's IT board. Previously, he worked in executive positions at Fortune 100 companies, including HP Inc., Cisco Systems and Palm Inc. Tolmare explained how Coca-Cola is embracing technology, particularly generative AI, and has intentionally become 100% cloud-based to seamlessly move its massive amount of data and has developed one of the most robust cybersecurity systems in the business world.

Jim Boeheim Syracuse University Athletics

The Whitman School started its first IMPACT Speaker Series of the academic year with a slam dunk with former Syracuse University men's basketball Coach Jim Boeheim '66 (A&S/MAX), G'73 (MAX), H'24. An icon of college basketball, Boeheim shared many stories of his connection with Syracuse University dating back to 1962 when he was a walk-on for the basketball team. He stayed for more than 60 years, enjoying a remarkable career as head basketball coach for the Orange, leading the team to 10 Big East Conference regular season championships, five Big East Tournament championships, 35 NCAA Tournament appearances—including five Final Four appearances, three of which were the national title game. And, in 2004, the Syracuse men's basketball team won the NCAA National Championship. Boeheim was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2005. He retired as coach of the Orange in 2023 and today serves as special assistant to the Syracuse University athletic director. During the IMPACT event, Boeheim shared advice stemming from his coaching career, equating themes of leadership and winning to success in business.



fiserv.



Frank Bisignano Fiserv Inc.

In February, Frank Bisignano P'11, H'17 participated in the IMPACT Speaker Series to share his experience as CEO and chairman of the board for Fiserv Inc., a Fortune 500 leader in payments and financial technology that processes 25,000 transactions per second as the company delivers high-tech solutions to financial institutions, businesses large and small and consumers worldwide. Bisignano has three decades of experience in banking and global financial institutions, including working at JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Citigroup. In 2013, he joined First Data as chairman and CEO, transforming the world's largest traditional payment processor into a technology innovator, industry collaborator and commerce enabler. In 2019, he merged First Data with Fiserv, and today Fiserv leads the IDC FinTech Top 100 ranking of global financial technology providers and has been recognized as one of *Fortune's* World's Most Admired Companies. At the speaker series, he shared his values of hard work, gathering wisdom and focusing on making the most of one's time. Bisignano is set to leave Fiserv this June, as he was recently nominated by President Donald J. Trump to serve as the next commissioner of the Social Security Administration.

Savneet Singh PAR Technology Corp.

Savneet Singh has found success in everything from venture capitalism, fintech, entrepreneurship, precious metals and software. Today he is president and CEO of PAR Technology Corp., a leading provider of software systems and service solutions for the restaurant industry. Singh took part in the IMPACT Speaker Series this April, sharing his nonlinear career path and business advice with Whitman students. He has had a string of successes working in investment banking at Morgan Stanley; co-founding GBI, a financial software platform for trading and storing physical precious metals; and becoming a partner in CoVenture, a fintech-based management firm. In 2018, he left a lucrative career to take on the role as president and CEO of PAR Technology Corp., when the 50-year-old company was on the brink of bankruptcy. Using his experience and business savvy, Singh turned the company into the \$2.75 billion restaurant software company it is today through difficult choices and a multitude of life lessons and business experience he brought to the position. [w](#)



PAR



Weaving AI into the Fiber of all Aspects of Business Education

By Caroline K. Reff

Imagine a world without mass transit, electricity, the telephone or the internet. Over the past 200 years, each of these was considered a disruptive technology, as the horse and buggy were replaced by rail cars, candles were doused by lightbulbs, and almost no one today has a landline in their home, much less a set of encyclopedias. Each of these was an improvement, even if there were skeptics at the time. And many surely said, “What could possibly be next?” Right now, the answer is artificial intelligence (AI) and its all-encompassing impact on almost everything we do.

Today’s students at the Whitman School take much of it for granted, and little of it truly surprises them. They’ve never known a world without Siri checking the temperature or where Google can’t give them an answer in seconds. They will enter a workplace where AI is not just starting to be incorporated. It’s already there—and students must be prepared for it. AI is revolutionizing the way students learn, faculty research and teach, alumni work and universities revamp education. It is emphasizing critical thinking; the importance of data-driven decisions; fostering creativity, efficiency and technology; and the promise of creating a more inclusive, efficient and engaged learning environment.

The Whitman School is taking the challenge of this emerging technology head on, as it works AI into the fiber of its education and research to fully prepare students to be ahead of the curve in a competitive job market.

According to Interim Dean Alex McKelvie, Whitman revised its learning goals a few years ago to incorporate more technology. The point of this was to formalize in the curriculum that these emerging technological skills would be present. It also helped to match the expectations of companies looking to hire tech-savvy graduates. At that time, however, AI was not specifically identified, but it has quickly become an overarching technology that has been added to the top of that list.

To that end, Whitman has been supporting and incentivizing faculty and staff to use and learn more about AI as a boon to their careers and to provide the best education possible to students.

Many Whitman faculty are enthusiastic about the possibilities of AI in the classroom or to enhance research. Others are starting to dip their toes into the waters to stay current.

“AI has quickly become a vital component of a business education, so it has become a part of just about everything we do,” says McKelvie.

“It didn’t take long for us to realize that we either had to dig deep into it or be left behind. The challenge is not only implementing AI but also doing so when we know that six months from now, it’s already going to look different.” “AI in business education and practice is certainly exciting, and our interest is focused on how we are making sense of it and teaching it responsibly. AI will never replace solid business knowledge and good judgment, but it is going to challenge us by making sure we are using it as a tool for efficiency and innovation, rather than something that is simply doing work for us,” adds McKelvie. “If we want to become a top 25 business school, we have to have some realistic outcomes and train our faculty for AI.” >

Surveys Show Faculty Has Mixed Approach to AI

Last fall, the Whitman School surveyed faculty members under the direction of Associate Dean for Business Education Willie Reddic '12, '13 Ph.D., asking about their current level of AI use and class policies.

Results showed that 33% of Whitman faculty allowed unrestricted use of AI in their classrooms, 48% allowed it sometimes and 19% had a zero tolerance policy for using AI. Those who indicated a zero tolerance policy were asked to provide a rationale for their reasons. Sixty-seven percent of faculty had an interest in learning more about ways to integrate AI into their courses. And the survey showed no meaningful difference between use policies in undergraduate or graduate courses.

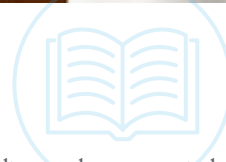
"In keeping with the mission of the University and Whitman's own executive leadership, all courses need to have at least some component of AI incorporated," says Reddic. "Whitman knows this is a necessary step to remain competitive, so we are working on ensuring AI is adopted across every major and that our faculty have the resources and confidence to implement various elements. The bottom line is that we are a business school, and businesses are using AI."

To that end, the Whitman School has offered its faculty, staff and students ongoing training to learn the basics of Google AI Essentials. Starting last summer, faculty and staff went through an AI certification program to meet them where they were in terms of their AI knowledge and comfort level. The initiative was so popular that it has become ongoing, so that others at Whitman, including students, can participate. To date, approximately 125 people have gone through this training.

"As Whitman staff, we have been encouraged to challenge ourselves, particularly in the area of AI. Earlier this year, I took advantage of pursuing the Google AI Essentials, and now another AI certification is available. I hope to add that this summer," says Tim Findlay G'22 (EDU), assistant director of graduate recruitment. "As the use of AI becomes standard in the world, I have built my knowledge to use, in my day-to-day work and encourage our students to do the same. I appreciate the support Whitman offers to help make that happen."



AI in the Classroom



Last fall, Whitman held a teaching luncheon where several faculty members presented ways in which they have incorporated AI into their courses, demonstrating both simple and complex ways of using AI as a teaching tool benefitting professors and students.

Creating Q/A With AI Personality Sets the Tone

Professor of Finance Anna Chernobai, who chairs Whitman's Teaching Committee, is enthusiastic about her use of AI.

"I've always loved technology and different ways to use it in the classroom," Chernobai says, "I was the first Whitman faculty member to record all of my lectures before COVID, so I was 100% prepared when we suddenly had to transition to remote learning on Zoom, which was fairly new to a lot of people. I helped to train other faculty during what was a really hectic time."

In her graduate-level course Data Analysis and Decision Making (MBC 638), Chernobai continues to record her class lectures on Zoom, using Kaltura to create scripts that she uploads into Microsoft's Azure OpenAI. Adding PowerPoint slides and other course information, as well, quickly helps create practice questions, quizzes or exams using a feature incorporated into Blackboard.

She has also created an automated Q/A section to efficiently address general student questions based on information loaded into Blackboard. For example, if a student asks, "What does correlation mean in AI?" an answer is generated based on the information from Chernobai's class materials.



Professor Anna Chernobai

Continued on page 8 >>>

The feature also allows her to set the tone of the response—ranging from kind, happy and mean. “Setting the feature to kind is like getting an answer as if your grandmother is explaining it to you,” says Chernobai.

However, she has found that some students enjoy the mean version, too. For example, a student may enter a prompt about a mathematical problem and will be given a preliminary answer like, “Should I hold your hand while you calculate that?”

“I have tested out all three versions, and they all answer my questions in whichever tone I choose. I tend to stick with happy, but sometimes the mean version is fun to use. I do think this tool is handy since I can ask the chatbot about topics in our PowerPoints or lectures without searching for exactly when it was discussed. It has also helped explain topics that I am having a hard time picking up on,” says James Laquidara ’26 MBA.

The Q/A can be programmed to answer from different perspectives, a helpful feature when students are working on a case study and preparing to interview a company’s CEO, for example. AI allows the chat to play the role of a CEO using AI Conversation, so students can practice before going in front of an actual person, often helping them feel relaxed and better prepared.

Of course, AI is not perfect. Sometimes the answers the Q/A chat provides are not completely accurate, so Chernobai is careful to monitor the chat and tweak the information that has been entered. And there are limitations to AI use, which are clearly outlined in her syllabi (as required of all courses at Whitman and the University) that may differ from course to course.

Chernobai believes that most of her students are fascinated with AI and appreciate the use of it in her courses.

“My students tell me they love it, and the bottom line is that I’m just trying to keep them engaged and excited about learning,” Chernobai says.



Professor Arielle Newman

Using AI to “Find Your Why”

Other faculty also offered examples of how they are using AI to increase student learning.

Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship Arielle Newman uses AI in Introduction to Entrepreneurship (EEE 370) for idea generation. Students are asked to think of a business idea and build it out throughout the semester. At times, many ideas are similar. So she has used AI to help students expand their ideas through a “Find Your Why” exercise where she gives each pair of students a detailed prompt via a QR code, so ChatGPT can help generate three to five business ideas that are more aligned with their true interests. Students can refine the prompt further to more closely match their ideas using a derivative feedback loop in ChatGPT.

“This has helped my students create much more interesting ideas than I’ve seen in a while, and it’s helping them become more comfortable with AI and understand how essential a specifically targeted prompt is to getting the output you need,” Newman says, noting that students are required to send her a link to their chats to see the depth and quality of their prompts.

Sweet Ways to Keep Students Engaged

Assistant Teaching Professor Christie Novak ’10, ’11 M.S. teaches Introduction to Accounting (ACC 151), required of all undergraduate students. “It can be a difficult course to keep everyone engaged because some have no plans of going into accounting,” she says.

However, Novak recently turned to ChatGPT for ideas to create in-class activities to solve practice problems in ways that hold almost every student’s attention.

One of the activities to come out of that query is a fixed asset challenge based on the iconic board game Candy Land. Using individual colors as different types of transactions, Novak puts construction paper across the floor with questions for the team. Students move around the game board learning accounting and can’t help but be engaged.

“The idea is not to take away the practice of fixed assets but instead integrate the content in an exciting way that keeps their attention,” Novak says. “You lose them if they’re not interested, and asking ChatGPT for ideas to apply to my lessons keeps them excited about coming to class.”



Professor Christie Novak



Professor Kyu Lee

Students Use AI to Prepare for Experiential Learning in Asia

Of course, AI use is not limited to inside the classroom. When Associate Dean for Global Initiatives and Professor of Marketing Eunkye Lee took a group of students to Singapore and Malaysia for Business in East Asia (INB 400/600) in May 2024, he gave them an assignment using AI to prepare for the trip.

“Imagine if you were going on a business trip, and you had an assistant who could put together a basic report on the business environment of your destination,” says Lee.

“AI is a smart assistant that can do just that. However, part of the challenge was for students to verify that the information they were getting was correct, as well as identify critical holes and gaps,” he adds.

Students were required to create a pre-departure report before arriving in Asia with a brief about the business atmosphere in both countries using ChatGPT or any AI tool. The six- to eight-page brief was required to include information on the countries’ economic histories and current geopolitical, economic, social/demographic, cultural and technological environments; as well as all sources used by their AI tools. In addition, they were required to add a reflection listing major points learned from the exercise, as well as important questions not answered in the report, which they had to investigate through company visits and other immersive activities on the trip.

“Overall, I think the assignment was an excellent introduction to ChatGPT. It was able to reveal many of the capabilities and limitations of generative AI, as I tried to craft prompts that would generate text adhering to the parameters of the assignment,” says Qiong Wu ’26 (WSM/A&S/MAX), an accounting, business analytics and finance major.

“I think it shows that Professor Lee is not only adapting to emerging technologies himself but also trying to pique students’ interest, so that they are motivated to gain skills that could be useful in the future.”

Use of AI Crucial to Whitman Competitions, Business Ideation

Students Use AI to Organize and Develop Capstone Ideas



Professor Ken Walsleben (left), Interim Dean Alex McKelvie (right) and team LaceMate, winners of the Fall 2024 Capstone competition.

The Whitman capstone course, Strategic and Entrepreneurial Management (EEE 457), is the culmination of four years of undergraduate work and usually leaves a lasting impression. Capstone is a required course taught each semester by faculty from the Department of Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprises during students’ senior year. Each student is put into a group challenged to create a product, service or business model that would be feasible in the real world and include a novel approach to making economic value. These ideas must be scalable with the ability to achieve \$3 million in revenue within five years, as well as attract external investments exceeding \$100,000. At the end of the semester, students present their plans to alumni and other industry professionals for awards, feedback and bragging rights.

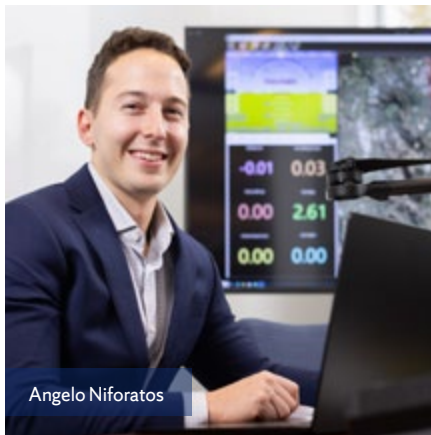
According to Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship David Park, the faculty lead for capstone, AI was incorporated into this course in late 2022. Students are encouraged to utilize AI throughout the entrepreneurial process, from ideation to pitching. Park notes that students have been urged to experiment with various AI tools, not just ChatGPT or Gemini.

For their capstone project, Laurene Yomi Mvete ’25, accounting major, and Maya Layton ’25, a double major in retail management and management, came up with the idea of ConnectUp, a platform designed to empower student entrepreneurs by connecting them with alumni entrepreneurs, fellow students and potential investors through AI. It would serve as a hub for networking, mentorship and freelance services, making it easier for students to navigate the challenges of launching a startup.

As the idea developed, it became apparent that AI was a part of the project in a way the team didn’t initially expect, according to Layton. In their business plan development, AI helped refine their proposal and structure ideas, as well as ensured they had a compelling pitch that included all main points for the judges. In addition, they used Gemini to streamline the creation task templates that kept them on track, and it transformed ConnectUp’s business plan by creating customer discovery questions to understand the pain points and needs of student entrepreneurs.

“Capstone was an experience that pushed us to think critically, refine ideas and embrace new technologies, especially AI,” says Mvete. “It reinforced a belief I’ve always had that entrepreneurship isn’t just about having an idea. It’s about taking action. And, with AI as a tool, I’m more confident that students have what they need to get started on their ventures.”

Continued on page 10 >>>



Angelo Niforatos

Drone Business Goes Sky High With AI

Angelo Niforatos '20 M.S. (ECS), '25 MBA, is using AI to further another disruptive technology—drones—through his startup Niffy Drone Solutions LLC.

A full-time systems engineer at ResilienX with a master's degree in aerospace engineering from Syracuse University's College of Engineering and Computer Science, Niforatos already had an interest in advancing drone technology before starting his MBA at Whitman. The program helped him turn his idea into reality with faculty entrepreneurs guiding him.

In spring 2024, he participated in the Orange Innovation Grant. He used the prize money to build a formal business plan and prototype for Niffy Drone Solutions. With a plan and proof of concept in place, he competed in Whitman's Orange Tank competition last fall, supported by Linda Dickerson Hartsock, founder of the University's Blackstone LaunchPad, and Indaria Jones, manager of Whitman's Couri Hatchery Incubator.

"They helped me put together a great presentation that communicated my ideas to the judges properly, as I tend to get a little too nerdy with it," he says. His hard work paid off, placing second and receiving feedback from angel investors, alumni, faculty and business leaders who served as judges.

Today, Niffy Drone is at the forefront of AI-driven autonomy, specializing in developing state-of-the-art technology that acts as a co-pilot for unmanned systems across commercial, defense and industrial

applications using real-time sensor data processing, natural language processing and machine learning (ML) to create greater operational efficiency, according to Niforatos, the company's CEO.

"Niffy Drone is bridging the gap between autonomous control and human oversight by reducing operator data overload and enabling seamless mission execution even in areas with limited internet connectivity," he says, noting that this technology is revolutionizing not only drones but also unmanned aerial, ground and maritime vehicles with solutions ideal for military, defense and infrastructure sectors where reliability and ease of use are essential.

The company recently won a Small Business Innovation Research contract from the U.S. Air Force to perform feasibility research on this technology.

"I'm grateful for those at Whitman who helped me get my business off the ground. With AI technology evolving so quickly, I am excited to see what new capabilities are ahead," says Niforatos.



Ryan Novak

Graduate Student Competition Offers Tasty AI Solutions for Local Business

If you've never tasted a chocolate pizza—a combination of chocolate, English toffee and sweet toppings popped into a pizza box—you're missing out. And while Ryan Novak '11 knows the business of making chocolate pizza and other delicacies inside and out, he thought he might be missing

out on opportunities to use AI to further his Marcellus, New York, small business.

Novak purchased the Chocolate Pizza Co. in 2010 and has expanded its online business to 50 states and 17 countries, shipping as many as 1,000 chocolate pizzas daily during the holiday season. However, much of his focus has been on creating more manufacturing space, expanding e-commerce, shipping and managing the retail store—not on AI.

So, when Whitman approached him about using his company as a case study for the 2024 Graduate Case Competition, Novak was all in. The challenge for the graduate students was to develop a comprehensive AI strategy with feasible solutions, a budget and a detailed action plan for the Chocolate Pizza Co.

Of the 11 teams that participated, five were selected to make final presentations to Novak last October, giving him many ideas for implementing AI. The first-place winners were Trang Nguyen '25 MBA, Sinduri Vangala '25 M.S. and Ahan Kent '25 M.S., who proposed a combination of Hubspot and Breeze AI tools to increase sales, service and marketing.

However, it was the second-place team whose idea was incorporated into the business recently. Allison Hellman '26 MBA, '26 M.S. (A&S); Vaijayanthi Kadhavan '26 MBA, '26 M.S. (MAX); Zhen Shi '26 MBA; Shaurya Jain '25 M.S. (IST); and Prasad Ranka '25 M.S. (ECS) proposed a chatbot to answer routine questions on Novak's recently launched new website (www.chocolatepizza.com), saving time for both his team and customers. The website's analytics have shown that the chatbot has positively impacted customer satisfaction and is keeping the bounce rate down, which is great for business.

"This competition opened my eyes to a whole new world of AI possibilities," Novak says, adding that he may consider incorporating other teams' suggestions in the future.

"The chatbot was a great jumping-off point to give more thought to how AI can improve our business and allow our staff of only eight to concentrate on other goals. I am grateful for the ideas all the students came up with to make our business even better and am very impressed with how Whitman is willing to use its resources to help local businesses."

Whitman's Faculty Research Encompasses AI/ML Across Disciplines

With the popularity of AI and the enhanced technological advances it continues to bring, numerous faculty members at the Whitman School are exploring what the various types of AI can do to make their research more efficient and also benefit their areas of expertise.

“AI is here to stay, and our faculty is embracing it in new and interesting ways that not only benefit their own work but also advance the reputation of the Whitman School,” says Michel Benaroch, associate dean for research and Ph.D. programs and professor of management information systems.

“With the support of Whitman’s administration, we are seeing a lot of exciting ideas and advances coming from our faculty and their doctoral students from research using AI as a methodology for investigating instant return credit policies in the supply chain space, to using deep ML to study how image manipulation affects guest reviews on the Airbnb platform in marketing, to the ability to improve health care using Machine Learning for Health, and investors’ response to financial advice from a human versus a machine. We are welcoming AI, as it is opening doors to new and more efficient ways of doing things and a greater level of discovery here at Whitman,” explains Benaroch.

AI Tools Help Examine Impact of Instant Credit Return on Online Purchases



Professor Rong Li

One example is the work of Associate Professor of Supply Chain Management Rong Li, who has published papers in *Productions and Operations Management*. In a recent working paper “Online Retailing With Instant Return Credit” (with Chenxin Liao of the Chinese University of Hong Kong Business School and Duo Shi of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, School of Management and Economics), Li uses predictive analytics enabled by AI tools to examine the strategy of instant return credit (IRC) in online retailing. Many online retailers have recently adopted instant return credit, where store credit is offered immediately upon a return claim without requiring it to be received or verified (similar to when a consumer starts a return with Amazon through an online account). IRC helps resolve the mismatches between products and consumer tastes and converts online returns into new sales by improving customers’ shopping budget through instant credit.

However, IRC is susceptible to misuse, as some consumers may unintentionally delay returns, forget to send items back or even attempt fraudulent returns.

In the paper, Rong and her co-authors study IRC’s fundamental dynamics and implications under two settings, one of which assumes that dishonest customers can be identified using predictive analytics enabled by AI tools. In the baseline setting, the retailer offers IRC uniformly to all consumers under three schemes:

- Offer partial IRC coupled with symmetric pricing under low market risks;
- Offer full IRC coupled with asymmetric pricing under medium market risk, and;
- Not offer IRC under high market risk.

In the advanced setting, the retailer offers IRC contingently; full IRC to honest consumers and partial or no IRC to dishonest customers. The researchers demonstrate that uniform IRC policy is more valuable for low-risk markets, while making IRC contingent on consumer type (honest or dishonest) is more valuable for medium-risk markets. They also demonstrate that uniform IRC may hurt both types of consumers for low-cost products, while making IRC contingent normally rewards honest consumers and penalizes dishonest customers.

Image Misrepresentation Negatively Impacts Selection of Airbnbs

Doctoral marketing student Ali Kozehgaran ’26 Ph.D. is examining how the emergence of digital platforms has transformed commerce, with visual content becoming crucial for consumer decision making. In experience-based markets like short-term rentals, where pre-purchase evaluation relies heavily on images, the potential for using AI to generate visual misrepresentation poses many challenges.

This study, “The Impact of Image Manipulation on Consumer Perceptions of Experience: The Case of Airbnb” (with Yang, L. and Jiang, J.), is in the early stages of how image manipulation affects guest reviews on the Airbnb platform. Unlike traditional e-commerce, these experiences cannot be returned post-consumption. Leveraging a dataset of more than 56,000 properties with more than 221,000 reviews from AirDNA, which collects short-term rental data, the researchers developed a deep (machine) learning model trained on the CASIA2 dataset to detect image manipulation through

Error Level Analysis, employed Natural Language Processing to analyze review sentiments, and implemented casual ML models to establish the relationship between manipulated images and guest satisfaction.

According to Kozehgaran, this research represents the first systematic investigation of visual misrepresentation's impact in the sharing economy. The findings will advance the understanding of information asymmetry in digital marketplaces and inform platform governance policies, particularly in experience-based markets where traditional consumer protection mechanisms may be ineffective.

Taking a Higher View of AI



Professor Burak Kazaz

Developing Consistent AI Policies for INFORMS Journals, Publications

Other Whitman faculty have taken a 10,000-foot view to study the rapid pace at which emerging AI/ML technologies are impacting and transforming the academic and business of other domains.

The Steven R. Becker Professor of Supply Chain Management and the Laura J. and L. Douglas Meredith Professor of Teaching Excellence Burak Kazaz has been chairing the committee in charge of establishing AI policies and guidelines for all Institute for Operations Research and Management Sciences (INFORMS) journals and publications to establish a common language and expectations for all submitting authors and the editorial review team.

According to Kazaz, this has been a huge undertaking as INFORMS is a collection of a diverse set of scholars from engineering, business schools, marketing, finance, information systems, mathematics, analytics and statistics, bringing together over 12,500 researchers. The INFORMS Society publishes 17 journals, and the standards to be established for each is challenging.

“The use of AI in scientific work is inevitable. It’s going to happen, but we have to apply ethical standards. AI will be a benefit, as it does things much faster than we can, but authors have to check their work. We are asking everyone to be more transparent if AI is used, like indicating what prompts were used and how else they integrated AI into their work. If there is an AI error, the authors will be responsible for that,” says Kazaz.

“We are adopting three different guidelines for our editors, because one size does not fit all for the 17 INFORMS journals. We have also created guidelines for reviewers: the use of AI is completely prohibited from the refereeing process because such submissions violates the authors’ intellectual property rights. We’ve been working on this for a year, and we still have work to do, but our goal has been accommodating every journal and focusing without deviating from the idea of new knowledge with the intent of making our society better.”



Professor Michel Benaroch

Can Machine Learning for Health Revolutionize Health Care?

In “Reproducibility of AI/ML for Health,” Michel Benaroch, along with Edward Raff ’23 MBA, examines the reproducibility crisis facing AI/machine learning (ML) models in the health domain in general.

Machine Learning for Health (ML4H) has a high potential to revolutionize health care through improved medical decisions for diagnosis, prognosis, drug discovery risk assessment, patient empowerment and more, and yet only a relatively small number of ML4H applications made it to clinical use and received FDA approval. According to Benaroch, this is blamed in part on a growing reproducibility problem—an inability to replicate the results of many ML4H studies across different datasets and conditions. If you can’t reproduce someone’s model and results using similar data and slightly different organizational settings, you cannot trust the model and its results. Evidence shows that up to 50% of published ML4H models cannot be replicated due to issues like non-sharing of development data, of the algorithm or code, and of methodology details. Most striking, however, is that of 62 ML/AI models developed in 2020 for diagnosing COVID-19 from medical scans, none were ready to be deployed clinically because of flaws such as biases in the data, methodology issues and, most importantly, reproducibility failures.

In the past 10 years, over 100 articles on the ML4H reproducibility problems have been published with over 30 articles in *Nature* and *Science* magazines alone. According to Benaroch, the study responds to calls in this literature by identifying eight different aspects of reproducibility based on review of

extant literature. Moreover, while extant literature has been focused on reproducibility only at the time a ML4H model is launched, the researchers argue that ML4H models in clinical use are living artifacts that evolve past their launch. Accordingly, the eight aspects of reproducibility they identify span the entire ML4H model lifecycle.

Most importantly, the researchers assess the state of reproducibility of AI/ML4H by reviewing over 900 articles published between 2017 and 2019 and identify which of the eight aspects are addressed by AI/ML4H developers and which aspects represent serious gaps that hold back the potential of ML4H.

The Weaknesses of AI/ML

Other Whitman professors and doctoral students have been examining areas where AI/ML may show weaknesses.



Who to Trust with Financial Decisions: Human Analysts or AI?

Associate Professor of Finance Si Cheng has a study, "Algorithm (Mis) Appreciation? Investors' Response to the Mutual Fund Ratings by Human Analysts vs. AI," providing the first comprehensive analysis of the investor response to two types of mutual fund ratings offered by Morningstar: the Analyst Rating produced by human analysts and the Quantitative Rating generated by AI. The study found that retail investors tend to ignore the recommendations of human analysts and instead chase ratings by AI. However, while human analysts have some success in identifying outperforming funds, IA ratings fail to do so.

Yet, by constructing a counterfactual AI rating following the Morningstar methodology, Cheng found that human analysts outperform AI mainly through the selective coverage of funds. Furthermore, individual investors ignore the useful soft information in analysts' reports written by human analysts and incorrectly respond to the tone of the title and summary section instead of the full report.

Overall, the findings shed light on the preference of individuals for algorithmic advice versus human advice, suggesting a potential algorithm misappreciation problem and capital misallocation in mutual fund investment.



Disclosure of AI Use Negatively Impacts Creative Reputation

Third-year doctoral management student Anand Benegal, guided by Professors Lynne Vincent and Joel Carnevale, investigated how the use of AI affects people with a reputation for creativity. They find that disclosing the use of AI has a consistently negative effect on several elements of a person's creative reputation, such as reputational prestige and creative competence. In "Creative or Contrived? How AI Use Shapes the Social Evaluations of People with Creative Reputations," Benegal's work illustrates and unpacks this phenomenon, by focusing on how perceptions of less (or more) AI use ameliorate (or exacerbate) this reputational penalty toward people who use AI, and how these relationships are mediated by perceptions of the person's creativity as being inauthentic in nature, which goes on to affect their creative reputation negatively.

Continued on page 14 >>>



Edward Raff

Alumnus Working in AI

Whitman MBA Grad Using Adversarial Machine Learning for Defense Program

Edward Raff '23 MBA is director of emerging AI and a distinguished scientist at Booz Allen Hamilton, a company that uses advanced technology to drive speed to outcomes for the federal government. Booz Allen is the largest provider of AI to the federal government, combining AI innovation with cybersecurity, engineering and emerging technology to deliver results for the country's most critical defense, civil and national security priorities.

His job title didn't even exist a few years ago. He joined Booz Allen Hamilton in 2013 to help build biometric fingerprint recognition systems; help with security, malware analysis and detection; and implement the growing techniques of machine learning (ML) and how to use them. Raff has risen through the ranks as a well-respected scientist who is grateful for the ability to shape his career in the direction of the technology that fascinates him.

Raff's current work involves defense, particularly adversarial ML, like how to circumvent bad actors trying to evade detection, such as scammers trying to avoid being discovered. In health care, he uses using AI to understand data from the National Institutes of Health that measure the amount of pain cancer patients are experiencing between doctors' visits to determine if they are truly in pain or drug seeking.

Raff's interest in ML came to him by chance. While studying at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom, he accidentally enrolled in a ML class, which sparked a true interest in the subject. Earning a bachelor's and master's degree in computer science from Purdue University, Raff noticed that many job opportunities he was interested in required a Ph.D.

He was hired at Booz Allen without one, but several years later earned a Ph.D. in computer science with research in applying ML to malware classifications and clustering from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County—while still working full time.

In 2022, he decided that building business skills was an important complement to his career and the rest of his education. Having just moved to Syracuse, he enrolled in the Whitman's School residential MBA program, while working at Booz Allen around classes.

"I got more out of the MBA experience than I anticipated, and it provided a framework to be conscious in how I think of things," Raff says.

"I learned from mentorship, from negotiations class where I could apply things I'd been doing on the job, and accounting class answered a lot of questions I had on the financial end of my work. So, getting this kind of formal business training was of real value to me and my career."

Raff's advice to those interested in the AI/ML field is not to just try to learn ML but to pick a problem of interest and work on learning the technology through that.

"Build a model about who will lose the next game if you like sports. Examine how traffic works or about revenues or property taxes if you're interested in city management," says Raff, who is completing a book on ChatGPT, *How Large Language Models Work*, to be published by Manning Books. "That's the motivation you need to have a real understanding of AI and ML, and it's built into all the standard things you might use. There's a big difference between being able to click a button and learning how to interpret the answers you got and the mistakes you made. Gaining that level of understanding of machine learning is much easier when you have an idea or an interest nagging at you."

The Future of AI

This is just a slice of the interest in AI that Whitman faculty, students and alumni have undertaken recently. And, while it reflects a vast range of AI-related topics, it is a representation of Whitman's collective ambition to stay current with, if not in front of, the multifaceted challenges, opportunities and proactive knowledge surrounding AI as a disruptive technology changing the way we live and do business.

"I am both intrigued by and proud of the level of work we are doing at Whitman to advance our education and support our faculty and students in becoming future business leaders through their curiosity of AI's possibilities. No one can exactly predict what AI's evolution will bring. Yet, by embracing AI and examining the multiple facets of education and discovery, I believe Whitman can make a significant contribution to ensuring that we're ready for the future." says McKelvie.

AI Tips from Alumni in the Know

Best Practices for AI Use in Business

Ziyu (Connor) Huang '21 was a double major in accounting and supply chain management while at Whitman and received a master's degree in analytics from the USC Viterbi School of Engineering. Today, he is a senior associate business analyst at Amgen, which is using biology and technology to combat diseases by developing, manufacturing and delivering innovative medicines to millions all over the world.

Huang offers some tips about best practices for AI:

- 1. Prompt engineering is the key to effective AI utilization.** A good prompt is always a clear instruction on what you want AI to do by steps. The more detailed information or steps you provide, the more accurate AI will perform, based on your command. Business students should learn how to craft prompts that maximize AI's potential for productivity, creativity and strategic insights. The normal format he uses for every prompt is a clear instruction on what he wants to achieve, while providing enough background information to help AI understand the current situation. In the meantime, providing feedback on the answer generated by AI can also help increase the accuracy of the answer.
- 2. Learn how to use AI Application Programming Interfaces (API) for large-scale automation.** Learning how to write and implement chatbot API calls can help to process large volumes of data, optimize workflows and enhance decision making without needed deep AI expertise.
- 3. Understand and utilize AI agents.** An AI agent can perform tasks, make decisions and interact with users or systems using AI. These agents are often powered by large language models or specialized AI frameworks. Learn to utilize it by giving detailed instruction that will be very beneficial to work efficiency.

Bringing Out the Best of AI

A dual major in entrepreneurship and emerging enterprises at Whitman and political science at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Abby Hamilton '19 (WSM/MAX) is a product manager for AI science incubation at Microsoft. She has been at Microsoft for five years, working with customers using AI to solve generational issues when it comes to innovation and customers using the technology for scientific purposes.

Hamilton offers the following tips for leveraging AI as a positive technology:

- 1. Develop a foundational understanding of how AI works.** While deep technology knowledge isn't necessary, understanding how cloud computing and data centers work will set you apart and enable you to engage in informed discussion on how your organization can adopt AI.
- 2. Champion responsible AI in business decisions because responsible use is not just a technical issue, it's an imperative.** For example, minimizing bias in algorithms is a practice that matters and ensures compliance with regulations that will eventually emerge. Other examples are protecting customer data and being transparent in how AI decision are made.
- 3. Position yourself as a connector between AI and business strategy.** AI processes vast amounts of data, but people come in with creativity and problem solving skills needed for nuanced decision making and problem solving innovation. Creative problem solving and innovative thinking help develop balance and show your strengths.
- 4. Embrace AI as a catalyst for continuous information.** It's constantly reshaping how businesses run and looking at opportunities for your business, so early adopting will be differentiating across industries and pay off in dividends long term. Others will be left behind if they don't adopt early and try new things.
- 5. Look to AI to solve humanity's greatest challenges, like advancing climate science solutions.** Aligning your expertise with these efforts could not only give you the opportunity to be a leader but also to contribute to a positive future. 🌱





Whitman School Launches Whitman Leadership Circle to Support Students, Faculty and Transformation of the Educational Experience

By Caroline K. Reff

Merit scholarships that retain top first-year students. Fellowships that allow faculty to pursue their interests and bring emerging knowledge back into the classroom. Funding for students to participate in experiential learning opportunities outside the classroom. Physical improvements to the Whitman School.

These are examples of the impact that has come from the newly launched Whitman Leadership Circle (WLC), a philanthropic giving society created to transform the educational experience by harnessing the power and support of the Whitman School community.

The WLC allows alumni, parents and friends to directly support Whitman through multi-year leadership commitments. In return, WLC members receive a personalized stewardship experience that includes

special recognition to thank them for their generosity and continue to enhance their commitment to Whitman.

“The launch of the Whitman Leadership Circle coincides with an exciting transformational time in our history,” says Interim Dean Alex McKelvie. “The energy around the Whitman School is palpable, as we have seen our rankings reach the highest level in over 15 years, and, more importantly, have witnessed our students and faculty continue to succeed in the classroom, in their careers and in their communities.”

This official roll-out of the WLC comes one year after the Whitman School restructured its advancement and external engagement team, including the hire of Assistant Dean of Advancement and External Engagement Michael Paulus. The team’s goal over the past year has been to recharge alumni, parents and others to raise the level of support for Whitman through new strategies and initiatives. The WLC targets three essential pillars at the Whitman School: enhancing the student experience, providing faculty support and improving the learning environment and facilities.



“I wish I could go back to my younger self and tell her that she would graduate with the connections I have now, the respect I have gained, the job I got and the things that I have accomplished that I never thought I could. My hope is that my pledge will help other students have the ability to accomplish similar dreams,” says Neuhaus.

Commitments to the WLC begin at \$25,000 (\$5,000 per year over five years) and can be designated to any restricted or unrestricted fund, ensuring a connection to the area each donor chooses to support. The program’s six levels of commitments extend up to \$1 million or more.

“As I have had the opportunity to meet with more alumni, parents and other supporters, I am struck by the important role Whitman has played in their lives and how much they value it as such a special place,” says Paulus. “The goal of the WLC is to harness that value into outstanding programs, as well as initiatives that make Whitman stand out and ensure that students continue to get the best educational experience in and outside of the classroom.”

To date, 75 donors have been recognized as WLC members, including 36 who have pledged their support in the last ten months during the silent phase of the initiative, generating over \$4.9 million in new support for Whitman.


The reasons behind member giving run the gamut, but at its core this generosity expresses gratitude for a Whitman education and the opportunities that stemmed from the experience.

Camila Neuhaus ’24, a financial analyst at JPMorgan Chase & Co., decided to continue her family’s legacy of giving through a pledge to the Whitman Retention Scholarship.

“As a Latina woman, I knew it was going to be very competitive in the professional world, so I soaked up all the knowledge and opportunity I could at Whitman to give myself a fair advantage,”

Third-generation Syracuse University alumna Jennnifer Kreischer ’88, director of operations and finance due diligence at accounting firm Kreischer Miller, directed her gift to the Whitman School of Management’s Dean’s Fund. “My professors left a profound impact on me and helped me envision what I could actually be doing in a career in accounting,” she says. “That’s why it’s important to me to support the Dean’s Fund, so that today’s students can have the opportunity to seek out all the options available to them.”

Edward G. Hoofnagle ’90 and his wife decided to pay forward the current value of a scholarship that he received in the late 1980s from Junior Achievement to attend the University. They pledged a current gift to the Whitman School, creating the Edward G. Hoofnagle ’90 and Julie Hoofnagle Scholarship for financial assistance to undergraduate Whitman students, and then signed a second pledge to create an endowed scholarship.

“I think as you get older, you have a greater perspective for what something like a scholarship can do to keep you on a track for success,” says Edward. “I wanted to make sure I was expressing my gratitude. As we got into a position to give, Julie and I decided to fund this scholarship to express our appreciation.” 



To learn more about opportunities to make an impact through the Whitman Leadership Circle, visit whitman.syracuse.edu/WLC

Whitman Ambassador Thankful for Opportunities Syracuse Has Provided

By Renée Gearhart Levy

Korean American student Enoca Shin '25 was excited to visit Japan and South Korea as part of a Whitman School Business in East Asia Immersion trip at the end of her sophomore year. The marketing and business analytics major was so enamored with the experience that she decided to stay in South Korea for the summer.

Shin enrolled at Yonsei University for the summer term and was hired as a public relations intern at 3ProTV. "The company was planning to move into the U.S. market, and, being bilingual, I was able to assist with translations and creating presentations for investors," she says. "The experience was honestly mind-blowing, not only being able to work internationally but collaborating with a diverse global team."

Last summer, Shin served as a brand marketing intern for Sharp Electronics Corp., working on social media and public relations for the home appliance sector. "It was a completely new industry for me, but I had a fantastic time collaborating with their communications team," she says.

Shin says both internships allowed her to apply her Whitman education to practice.

"At Whitman, we're constantly doing group presentations, and I found that experience very useful in terms of having professional communication skills," Shin says.

She has also put her marketing knowledge learned in the classroom to use in her extracurricular activities: the Korean American Student Association and University Union, the campus programming board. Shin started working in social media and marketing as a first-year student, became marketing director and is now vice president for her senior year. "My marketing skills have been so helpful with every event we plan and promote, from cinema screenings to concerts and performing arts shows," she says.

That experience has been so influential, she is focusing her post-graduation job search on the music/entertainment industry.

"My dream job would be to work in event management, creating dynamic and engaging spaces that make live music experiences more entertaining and memorable for audiences," Shin says.

Enoca Shin '25



Wherever she lands, Shin feels well prepared for the workforce. "Syracuse University has opened so many opportunities for me," says Shin, a big reason she applied to be a Whitman ambassador, who works with Whitman prospective students to learn about the programs and school.

"The Whitman School is like a second home for me. I've had such a great experience here I want to showcase that to visitors of the school. Without Whitman, I wouldn't have been able to grow so much, from my friends that inspire me to the professors who are always available for me," says Shin.



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Using Her MBA Experience as a Business LaunchPad

By Renée Gearhart Levy

Growing up with a diabetic father, Tosin Alabi '25 MBA was acutely aware of the dangers of foot ulcers for people with diabetes. Now, the Nigerian-born MBA student is poised to disrupt diabetes care through a smart sock bandage that helps detect early signs of diabetic foot ulcer.

The product, developed by Alabi's health tech startup, DiabeTech, is past the prototype stage, and Alabi is in talks with manufacturers who might mass produce it for clinical trial. She raised \$40,000 last semester alone, winning five of eight entrepreneurial pitch contests she entered.

"Last semester was very stressful for me, between juggling academics, working 20 hours a week and pitching my business," she says.

But Alabi has a vision to revolutionize diabetes care while building a business and creating jobs. It's what brought her to the Whitman School.

Alabi earned an undergraduate degree in software engineering and a master's in information technology and worked for more than a decade as a business analyst and consultant. But she had her own business idea she wanted to pursue and sought an MBA program to provide the foundation to bring her idea to fruition.

At Whitman, Alabi has carved her own path. To augment her MBA curriculum, she has built a network of entrepreneurial mentors who have worked with her one-on-one in independent study courses.

She was also selected to participate in a regional National Science Foundation I-Corps Innovation Course at Syracuse aimed to help researchers bridge the gap between laboratory discoveries and commercial applications.

"That experience helped me confirm that the market for this product is real. The rate of diabetic amputation is pretty high, and amputation costs thousands and could be prevented at a fraction of the cost with the device," Alabi says.

That's not just self-confidence talking. Alabi applied for and was awarded permanent U.S. citizenship through an EB-1A visa, better known as an Einstein visa, given to foreign nationals who exhibit exceptional abilities in their field of expertise.

Tosin Alabi '25 MBA



In her final semester, Alabi is using an independent study course to ready her product for a clinical trial and begin the patent process.

"A lot of students in the MBA program are on a corporate path, but I like to create a pathway where no one has walked before," Albi says. "I want to build my own company to help everyone who is dealing with a diabetic loved one and then continue building startups that improve health care and create jobs."



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Online MBA Student Co-Founds Historic Whiskey Brand, Shares Career Experience with Whitman Students

By Renée Gearhart Levy

You might say that Keith Weaver '25 MBA is taking things one sip at a time—with a number of fascinating business opportunities in whiskey, real estate development and hospitality that has taken him from his hometown of Los Angeles to the heart of Tennessee. Along the way, he has detoured through Syracuse—virtually, anyway—to earn an online MBA from the Whitman School.

For over 20 years, Weaver enjoyed a career at SONY Pictures Entertainment in California, most recently as executive vice president, global public policy. A first-generation college student, he already had a bachelor's and master's degree but decided an MBA from the Whitman School would help him round out his business skills.

Weaver started with just one class at a time in 2015, working each into his already full calendar. He has also attended several in-person residencies, two on campus and two in London.

"I've been quite impressed by the caliber of the residencies, I'm an older student, and it has been fun for me to interact in-person with younger students and understand their journeys and ambitions, as well as be a thought partner for them," Weaver says.

As Weaver worked on his MBA, he and his wife, Fawn, made a major life and career shift that took them into the whiskey business in Tennessee.

In 2017, the couple launched Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey. The company became the first spirits brand in the world named after an African American, Nathan "Nearest" Green, an enslaved man who taught Jack Daniel the distilling process. Over the past eight years, Uncle Nearest has become the fastest-growing whiskey company in the U.S., and, in 2019, the Weavers opened the Nearest Green Distillery in Shelbyville, Tennessee, a destination that boasts Humble Baron, the longest bar in the world at 518 linear feet. The brand has won more than 1,000 awards and sold approximately \$100 million in product to date. Most importantly, the story of Uncle Nearest has been carefully woven into the brand, a nod to his contributions to the crafting of outstanding American whiskey.

With the success of the distillery, Weaver recently launched Nashwood, focusing on real estate development and hospitality venues that will give a further economic boost to the community and make it a true destination stop. He and his wife are also expanding the whiskey business with the

Keith Weaver '25 MBA



recent acquisition of Square One, a vodka company, and are planning to launch a cognac company next year, headquartered in their newly purchased chateau in the Grand Champagne region of France.

Weaver believes that having "lived some life" has helped him better understand many of the lessons learned as he completes his MBA.

"I always knew it was going to be a 'slow and steady wins the race' journey for me at Whitman, but I think everything happened in the right time," he says. "I've learned a great deal and achieved many things I never could have dreamed of—and Whitman's Online MBA Program has only enhanced the experience."



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO
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International Student Focuses on Digital Marketing and Social Responsibility

By Renée Gearhart Levy

Marketing can achieve more than promoting a brand and driving sales. According to fourth-year doctoral student Xiaobo Lin '25 Ph.D., "Marketing that reflects a company's stance has the power to raise public and consumer awareness about social issues."

Lin is particularly interested in digital marketing campaigns. Her most recent research examines female representation in marketing communications. "While there is plenty of research on gender equality in leadership and the workforce, I found very little about gender representation in marketing," she says.

But she believes understanding representation in marketing is important.

A quantitative researcher, Lin developed a machine learning algorithm to study the Instagram posts of S&P 500 companies and measure how often women appear, as well as the diversity of that representation. "I'm analyzing the proportion of female elements in those images to understand how companies use marketing to promote diversity," she says.

An earlier study examined the impact of a product quality crisis on competitor brands.

"Many people assume a competitor's crisis will be beneficial, but my research shows that a product crisis can negatively impact rival firms because it creates overall suspicion among customers," Lin says.

Lin became interested in social media marketing in her first professional roles, holding positions at L'Oreal and Pfizer after earning an undergraduate degree in marketing from Shandong University in China. "At the time, social media marketing was booming. There was a lot of talk about data-driven marketing and how emerging technologies would drive even more change," she says.

Wanting to be at the cutting edge of industry trends, Lin pursued a master's degree in digital marketing, studying at Kings College of London. "I can still remember how exciting every lecture felt because each one was tied closely to current global trends," she says.

As part of her study, she began reading academic papers in the field. "I found myself completely drawn in," she says. "It was a transformative experience that not only deepened my understanding of marketing phenomena but also ignited my passion for academic inquiry."

Xiaobo Lin '25 Ph.D.



Lin hopes to add to that body of knowledge. At the Whitman School, Lin has focused her research on socially responsible marketing and ways marketing can support underrepresented groups.

She has found Syracuse a supportive environment to study and conduct research, something she had little experience with before her doctoral study. She credits her advisor, Associate Professor of Marketing Guiyang Xiong, for his encouragement and confidence in her abilities.

"Academia is a perfect fit for me to explore research questions and contribute to knowledge," Lin says.



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO
READ THE FULL ARTICLE**

2025 Whitman Scholars



Adriana Albizu-Russe

Hometown: Morovis, Puerto Rico | **Majors:** Marketing Management, and Environment, Sustainability and Policy (MAX)
Future Plans: Pursuing a master's degree in marketing in Madrid

"Whitman has transformed me into a confident and secure individual over the past four years, allowing me to express the potential I once doubted. Every class, group project, networking event and connection with professors has given me opportunities I never saw as viable. From studying abroad in Madrid to helping create an honors society club for Latinos on campus and partaking in the creation of a premier Latinx magazine, Whitman has enabled me to proudly showcase my Puerto Rican culture, and for that I am forever grateful."



Adam Best

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wisconsin | **Majors:** Accounting and Finance
Future Plans: Financial Services Office Audit & Business Intelligence staff at EY

"What's more important, the journey or the destination? Neither. My time at Whitman has taught me that it's the company. My incredible experience at Whitman has been defined by my dedicated professors, welcoming classmates and engaging alumni. Whether on the Kenya immersion trip, living abroad in Sydney or sitting in a classroom, it was the lifelong connections I've made with the Whitman community that made it special. This community has forged me into a capable individual, and I can't wait to enter the professional world and showcase what it means to bleed Orange."



Isabella Chavez Miranda

Hometown: El Paso, Texas | **Majors:** Management and Medicinal Chemistry (A&S)
Future Plans: Pursuing a master's in health care administration

"Whitman has been a transformative part of my journey here at Syracuse, and I am truly thankful for the incredible professors and staff who have inspired me with their wisdom, compassion and belief in my potential. Their dedication has fueled my passion for learning and leadership, pushing me to grow beyond what I thought was possible. The lessons and relationships I have built through this community will always hold a special place in my heart and have shaped not just my career, but who I am as a person. It will always be, "Go Orange."



James Crane

Hometown: Buffalo, New York | **Majors:** Accounting and Business Analytics
Future Plans: Master's program in professional accounting at the Whitman School

"The Whitman School is a community of students, faculty, staff and alumni dedicated to fostering transformative growth inside and outside the classroom, working together to help students become the best versions of themselves. I am grateful for the opportunities I have had at the Whitman School and the invaluable support of mentors throughout my undergraduate career. Reflecting on my journey, I realize that embracing challenges, fostering meaningful collaboration and striving for excellence have propelled my growth far beyond what I once imagined possible."

Whitman Scholars are chosen from the senior class each year through a competitive selection process. To be considered, students must have a minimum GPA of 3.65 and a demonstrated history of engagement and leadership at the Whitman School and Syracuse University. Here the 2025 Whitman Scholars share their thoughts on their experiences and the skills they gained at Syracuse University.



Cassandra Dasco

Hometown: Hingham, Massachusetts | **Majors:** Finance and Public Relations (NEW)

Future Plans: Pursuing opportunities in financial communications industry

“Whitman provided me with everything I was looking for and more with endless opportunities to learn and a community that instilled in me the confidence to challenge myself, to lead and to chase after my goals. Through experiences like the Kenya Immersion Program, engaging alumni and encouraging professors, lifelong friendships and being surrounded by motivated, supportive people, I grew immensely over the past four years. As I look to what’s next for me, I am exceedingly grateful for the strong foundation and family I found here. I am proud to say I’ll always bleed Orange.”



Gianna Davis

Hometown: Westfield, New Jersey | **Majors:** Accounting, and Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprises

Future Plans: Audit associate in the Financial Services Organization at EY in New York City

“For me, what I find so remarkable about Whitman is our collective drive to be better. Everyone defines that differently, but for me, I have learned through the relationships I have formed and the experiences I have had, that being better means believing in your goals, empowering those around you and constantly raising the bar. When we better ourselves, we better those around us. Beautiful things happen when we choose to do better.”



Taylor Feiden

Hometown: Albany, New York | **Majors:** Supply Chain Management, Real Estate and Marketing Management

Future Plans: Supply chain consultant for EY in Boston

“My time at Whitman has been shaped by invaluable experiences, supportive mentorship and a dynamic learning environment. From engaging coursework to hands-on consulting projects, each opportunity has challenged me to grow as a professional and as a leader. I am incredibly grateful for the professors, peers and experiences that have pushed me to think critically, embrace challenges and strive for excellence. As I prepare for the next chapter, I carry with me the lessons, relationships and confidence that Whitman has instilled in me. Go Orange.”



Joseph Justic

Hometown: Westchester, New York | **Majors:** Accounting and Finance

Future Plans: Master’s in professional accounting at the University of Texas

“I am grateful for the supportive and enriching experiences at Whitman that have shaped my academic journey. The combination of dedicated professors, collaborative learning, challenging coursework, a motivating academic environment and practical internship opportunities have equipped me with knowledge, skills and confidence to pursue my future career in accounting.”

2025 Whitman Scholars



Evan Kalish

Hometown: Winnetka, Illinois | **Majors:** Business Analytics and Finance

Future Plans: Business technology solutions analyst at Deloitte Consulting

“My Whitman experience can be characterized by taking advantage of the incredible resources and transformational opportunities we’ve been provided. Through getting involved on campus, studying abroad, serving the local community and more, Whitman has broadened my worldview and shaped the person I am today. This holistic experience is invaluable, as it has equipped me with the skills, knowledge and perspectives necessary to succeed in my career and in life. I am immensely grateful for the supportive community and the lifelong connections I have made at Whitman.”

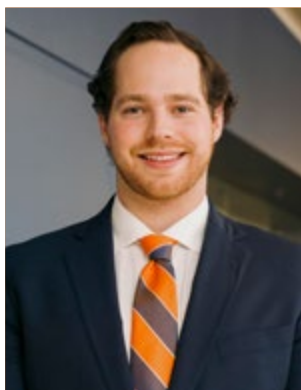


Emmy Njue, Whitman and University Scholar

Hometown: Nairobi, Kenya | **Majors:** Business Analytics and Finance

Future Plans: Business consultant at EY

“Syracuse University has honored the hope I carried with me when I first arrived from Kenya—the hope of building a future beyond the limitations I knew, the hope my family had for me, and the hope my community placed in my success. Through the challenges, the guidance of mentors and the support of friends, I have seen those hopes transform into reality in ways that I couldn’t have anticipated. At Whitman, I found not just an academic home but a place that has prepared me to contribute meaningfully to the world that awaits beyond these walls.”



Michael Paul Pellizzari

Hometown: Syracuse, New York | **Majors:** Accounting and Finance

Future Plans: Deal advisory and strategy associate at KPMG

“Whitman has provided me with invaluable opportunities to grow academically, professionally and personally. Through my experiences, I’ve evolved into both a scholar and a leader, taking on leadership roles within various organizations and working to drive meaningful improvements that benefit the entire Whitman community. In addition, I’ve had the chance to network with professionals across industries and gain hands-on experience. The opportunities I’ve had at Whitman have shaped me into who I am today.”



Ashley Rauch

Hometown: Reston, Virginia | **Majors:** Business Analytics and Finance

Future Plans: Master’s in applied data science at Syracuse University

“As I reflect on my time as a student, both Whitman and Syracuse University have provided me with ample resources, countless opportunities to grow, and challenged me in ways I didn’t think possible. Professors, peers and the community have encouraged me to embrace every moment and to not take the little things for granted. I am deeply grateful to have been part of a welcoming, professional, excellent and competitive program that has undoubtedly prepared me for a successful future.”

2025 Graduate Student Spotlights



Jude Azai '25 MBA

Hometown: Jos, Nigeria

Degree: MBA, Concentration in Marketing and Supply Chain Management

“With a pharmacy degree and over a decade of experience in marketing, sales and supply chain management in health care, I needed Whitman to optimize my skills and broaden my perspective. I’m privileged to be involved in the Syracuse Local Leadership Initiative and playing a key role in organizing the Whitman Dean’s Sustainability Challenge. Highlights include my international trips to Singapore and Malaysia, exposing me to diverse business environments, and transforming me into a global business professional. Inches make champions. Be Orange. Be Whitman.”



Donald Freenor '25 MBA

Hometown: La Palma, California

Degree: Online MBA, Concentration in Supply Chain Management

“As my 30-year Army career nears its end, I sought to bridge the military-civilian gap and break free from the usual online format—#nomorediscussionposts. Whitman delivered. The program design made learning engaging and rewarding, and I look forward to applying what I learned post-retirement. Thank you to everyone I met along the way. Most of all, to Veronica, Sophia and Natalia, your love and support made this possible. As I prepare for my first-ever graduation, I could not be prouder to do it as an Orange.”



Bhavana Murthy '25 M.S.

Hometown: Bangalore, India

Degree: Master of Science in Business Analytics

“My time at Whitman has been a transformative journey, where every experience has contributed to my personal and professional growth. Collaborating with diverse peers and business leaders through leadership initiatives broadened my perspective and strengthened my leadership skills. Experiential learning courses, such as my Lean Six Sigma project with Upstate University Hospital, provided valuable experience to solve real-world problems. Whitman’s supportive community and dynamic learning environment have prepared me to embrace new challenges with confidence as I step into the next chapter of my career.”



Mi “Kelly” Tran '25 Ph.D.

Hometown: Hanoi, Vietnam

Degree: Ph.D. in Business Administration, Concentration in Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprises

“My Ph.D. journey in the entrepreneurship department has been an incredibly rewarding experience. I had access to all the resources I needed to enhance my research and teaching, along with opportunities to present my work at prestigious conferences. The faculty’s support and mentorship in my research and job search, along with their connections to leading scholars in the field, made a substantial impact on my academic growth. In addition, my advisor’s care for my mental well-being encouraged me to maintain a healthy work-life balance, making my time here both productive and fulfilling.”



Message from the Assistant Dean of Advancement and External Engagement

What a year for Whitman! As we near the end of the 2024-25 school year, I write to offer updates on the progress we have made this year in strengthening our connections with alumni, parents and donors; elevating our engagement opportunities; increasing philanthropic support for the Whitman School; and, most importantly, making an impact on the students and faculty of our school.

Some of these notable achievements include:

- renovations throughout the Whitman School of Management building that have elevated the facilities to meet the needs our students and faculty;
- increased philanthropy to support student retention scholarships and awards to ensure Whitman students can complete their education without financial burden;
- the launch of the Whitman Leadership Circle, which generated over \$4.9 million in new commitments to Whitman in the first 10 months and has helped cultivate a culture of leadership giving at the Whitman School;
- record support for the Whitman School of Management Dean's Fund, Whitman's annual fund that supports the highest priority areas of need across Whitman;
- elevated career readiness programming and networking opportunities in partnership with the Whitman Career Center, which engaged 660 alumni and parents in our Orange Business Network.
- the first meeting of the inaugural Whitman School Parents Advisory Council, which includes 14 parents who provide insight on improving the student experience.

We believe this is just the start of what's to come for Whitman as we continue this momentum beyond the school year and into the future. We are actively working to secure support for additional student-facing programs and initiatives that will differentiate the Whitman experience, attract the best and brightest students, empower our current cohort and offer new opportunities for alumni and parents to be involved.

Innovation is at our core; it is the lens through which we approach our curriculum, our student experience and our culture. As we work to launch these ideas, we invite you to be a part of the conversation by attending events on campus and virtually, volunteer to host students at your job or network in your city, or make a gift to support Whitman. However you choose to engage, know that you are an important part of our community and you can make an impact as we innovate for the future of Whitman together.

Be Orange. Be Whitman.

Michael Paulus

Assistant Dean, Advancement and External Engagement

**\$4.9
million**

*in new commitments
to Whitman in the first
10 months*

41,900

*alumni and parents
in our Orange
Business Network*

14

*parents on the
Whitman School Parents
Advisory Council*



More Experiences: Whitman Opportunity Fund Opens Doors for Students

By Suzi Morales

Internships, case competitions and career exploration trips play a crucial role in shaping the futures of Whitman School students. Through these experiences, students hone their skills and make valuable connections.

Established in fall 2024 by a gift from Douglas '86 and Susan Present, the Whitman Opportunity Fund ensures that these kinds of opportunities are within reach for all students. The need-based fund covers expenses related to student activities that aren't normally included in scholarship funding, like living expenses during internships.

There are four general categories under the umbrella of the Whitman Opportunity Fund: internships, student activities, Whitman-sponsored programs and an emergency aid fund that helps students with unforeseen hardships.


"It's really a unique opportunity fund in a sense that it's very broad, because that's the way it's designed in order to help provide opportunities for students, either to grow, or when they need help," says Assistant Dean for Advancement and External Engagement Michael Paulus. "It's really created to show that Whitman's here to support you." This support can include everything from interview attire to living expenses for programs like the Whitman Semester in NYC.

During the 2023-24 academic year, the Whitman Internship Opportunity Fund—one of the initiatives supported by the Whitman Opportunity Fund—awarded scholarships to 30 students participating in internships from coast to coast. Students worked in companies such as Amazon, Estée Lauder and KPMG.

"These funds made a tremendous difference for me and the future of my career," says Michael Haass '25. "I was lucky enough to intern with

Cushman & Wakefield, and it set me off on my commercial real estate career. With these funds I was able to get to and from work every day, buy groceries, make food for myself and so on."

"As a student from Michigan, I never thought I would have the opportunity to work in New York City. Thanks to [the] donation, I got to put it towards my living expenses to have an internship I dreamed of for years. This allowed me to experience new things in a new city," says Elizabeth Rupp '25, who interned for PwC.

"The Opportunity Fund is another way for Whitman to differentiate itself and how it supports our students," says Paulus. "When students want to explore an internship or make themselves better, to set themselves up for networking or jobs, we have the funds in place to do that." 



Elizabeth Rupp

Influencing the Influencers: Impact on the Content Creation Industry

By Suzi Morales

Benjamin Grubbs '10



Benjamin Grubbs '10 was a Syracuse University first-year student in the late 1990s when media organizations were grappling with what the internet would mean for their future. As a high school student, he had worked for newspapers and cable access television.

Brooke Baevsky '18 (WSM/NEW)



Growing up, **Brooke Baevsky '18 (WSM/NEW)** taught healthy cooking classes to children and wanted to combine her interests in media, entrepreneurship and nutrition. When she enrolled at Syracuse in 2014, it was one of the only schools where she could study social media marketing and business.

John Spina '27



When **John Spina '27** arrived on campus in 2023, he already had tens of thousands of TikTok followers. Students he'd never met recognized him from his videos.

Despite their differing media backgrounds, Grubbs, Baevsky and Spina are each helping to shape the content we consume. They represent the impact of Whitman School students and alumni on the evolving content creation industry.

In on the Ground Floor

In the summer of 2000, Grubbs worked for Yahoo! in Singapore as part of Whitman's study abroad program. He enjoyed the experience so much that he planned to return in the spring of his senior year and complete his last two required courses remotely. Instead, Yahoo!, which then was the largest online platform, offered him a full-time position. He put those last few credits on hold and moved to Singapore.

Over the next decade, Grubbs built his career at Yahoo!, eBay, Turner Broadcasting and YouTube. At each company, he was on the ground floor of the burgeoning content industry.

"What I saw was the early days of how entrepreneurs were building a business on top of a platform, in this case, eBay, people that were starting off as a casual seller then growing into a PowerSeller and, in effect, running a business and employing people all behind a single eBay account," recalls Grubbs.

Grubbs believed the industry was moving toward the model of content originating with creators rather than the top-down approach of television networks and wanted to be at the forefront. This led him to YouTube, where he helped develop YouTube Kids. Around this time, with the motivation that comes with being a new parent, he also completed those last two courses and became a member of the Syracuse Class of 2010.

Grubbs eventually returned to the U.S. In 2018, he launched Next 10 Ventures, an incubator for content creators. Today, he is a partner at Creator Capital, which invests in content entrepreneurs. As an early player in the industry, Grubbs helped pave the way for creators like Baevsky and Spina.



The Next Generation

Brooke Baevsky was a dual major at Whitman and the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, with minors in food science and psychology. After graduation, she worked in food product development for companies including Starbucks and Panera. She eventually began cooking and designing menus for professional athletes. That led to more celebrity clients and a move to Los Angeles, where she creates content around celebrity cheffing and nutrition on her “Chef Bae” website and social media including [TikTok @chefbae](#).


Baevsky’s multifaceted interests are apparent on her channels. A video of her making lattes for actor Adam Sandler’s family while Sandler’s “The Chanukah Song” plays in the background appears near content about cooking for first responders fighting the Los Angeles wildfires. She hopes to someday develop her own line of food products.

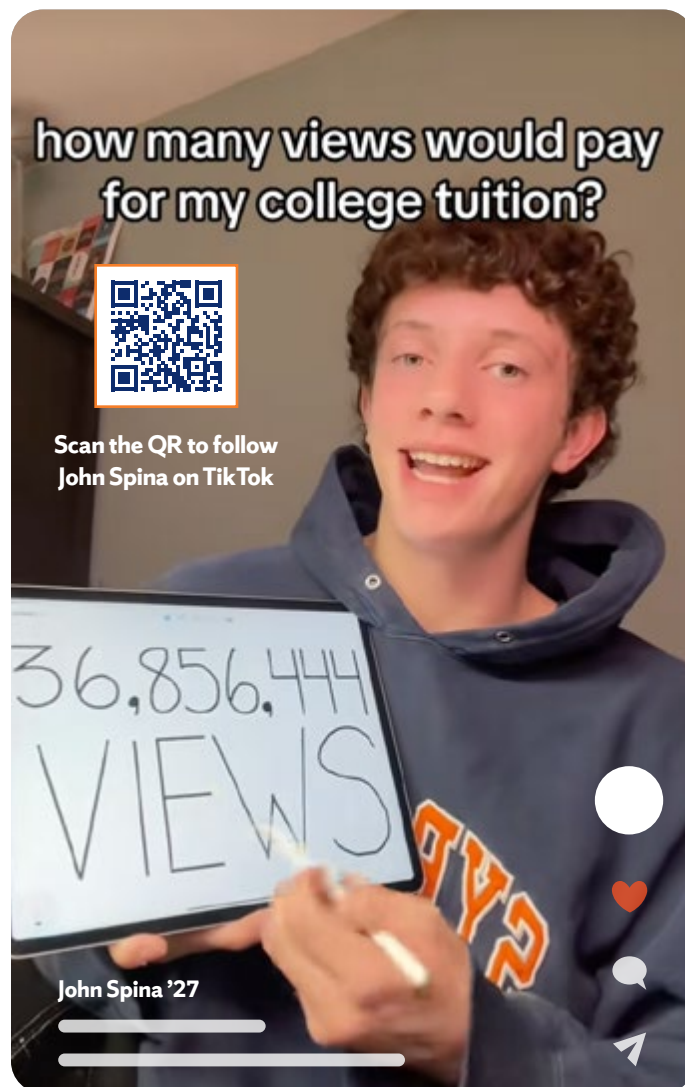
John Spina began posting on TikTok during the pandemic and garnered a healthy following for his dance videos, a joyful riot of baggy jeans and

a flying mop of curly hair. His videos have changed since then, and the University is now a character. In one video on his [TikTok feed @johnspinaa](#), he and a friend say “pumpkin” with increasing volume in Bird Library (filmed at 2 a.m. in a deserted library, he is quick to clarify). Despite the frequent silliness, Spina considers content creation a business. Millions of viewers have watched his videos about using social media income to help pay tuition. He was surprised to hear from friends that professors discuss his content in class.

In a constantly changing industry, Grubbs encourages up-and-coming creators like Spina to take the same proactive approach he embraced.

“As a creative person, as a producer, as a business person, to have those options and opportunities is overall positive if you’re always looking at it from the evolution side of things,” says Grubbs.

“There are so many different facets of content creation and social media and so many different perspectives on the industry,” says Spina. “There’s so much that you can do.” 



Whitman's Southern California Alumni Represent Growing Presence on the West Coast

By Caroline K. Reff

“Go West, young man!” This iconic statement credited to newspaper editor Horace Greeley in 1854 echoed a time when Americans were enticed by the country’s westward expansion and opportunities like plentiful farmland and the lure of the California Gold Rush. While circumstances have certainly changed over two centuries, the pull of opportunities remains, as more than 1,700 alumni call California home, representing a growing Whitman presence on the West Coast.

Meet three Whitman alumni who have found success in California, while still staying in touch with their East Coast alma mater.



Michelle J. Hockett '16

Last year, Michelle Hockett worked on her first Grammy award-winning song, “Water,” by South African singer/artist Tyla and was able to attend her first red carpet event this year with client, gospel singer Yolanda Adams. Three years ago, she never would have believed she would have a star-studded career in Los Angeles working as director of marketing for Epic Records. From Long Island, Hockett was a marketing and supply chain major at Whitman. She credits the activities she participated in—like Alpha Kappa Psi business fraternity, being a brand ambassador for a number of products on campus and working with her Capstone team—for giving her skills that have translated into a thriving career.

After graduating, Hockett worked in New York City, first for Warner Media, then in the music industry for Tidal, Sony Music Entertainment and Spotify. When an opportunity at Epic Records presented itself, however, she was West Coast-bound. Today, Hockett works with 15 artists, but over the past two years she has been focused on Tyla, who is “breaking records and making history in the music space.”

Although Syracuse is a long way from Los Angeles, Hockett often runs into alumni working in the music industry.

“We have a big community out here that lets me stay connected to my Orange family,” Hockett says.



Richard Corgel '71, '76 M.S.

Richard Corgel, a former member of the Whitman Advisory Council and the Los Angeles Regional Council, established the Corgel Endowed Scholarship to provide financial assistance for Whitman students and is a supporter of the Whitman School Dean's Fund. Corgel was a double major in finance and accounting. He says he has taken the foundations in technical skills, communication and ethical behavior he learned at Whitman with him throughout his career.

“Whitman continues to be highly relevant and demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous improvement. It prepared me for what I consider a satisfying career, and I have great appreciation for what the school did for me,” Corgel says.

After graduation, Corgel joined Arthur Andersen LLP in New York City, but when the firm was looking for someone to work in San Francisco and later Los Angeles, he jumped at the chance. He later worked at Navigant Consulting in Los Angeles, and then EY, retiring in 2017. Next he then created Cross-Current Consulting LLC, advising boards on governance and ethical issues to help develop proportionate responses to alleged threats from unethical or alleged illegal acts. Today, he lives in Manhattan Beach, California, with his wife, Dr. Joan Otomo-Corgel.




Rob LaBreche '87

Originally from Connecticut, Rob LaBreche says he was “hooked” the first time he visited Syracuse University. He studied marketing management and personnel and industrial relations at the then School of Management and says what impacted him most were the professors who “instilled in me that you can make anything happen by finding a need and filling it.”

After graduating, he convinced two friends to rent a U-Haul and head to California, where he started his career as a finance broker. Later, he was president of consumer marketing for College Loan Corp., which sparked the idea for his own company. iGrad was established in 2009 as a financial wellness company helping students and employees be more financially well and become more financially literate. iGrad was recognized in 2023 when LaBreche received one of the University's inaugural 'CUSE50 awards, honoring successful alumni in the entrepreneurial space.

“It was a great honor to be included with so many recipients that have accomplished so much, and it was nice to know that my alma mater is paying attention to my success after so many years. Syracuse helped prepare me for my time after graduation,” LaBreche says.

There is no question that LaBreche is a devoted alumnus. He had a dog named Cuse, and his California license plate reads CUSE, too. More importantly, he established the Janice McKenna LaBreche Scholarship in memory of his mother, who was so proud of his time at Syracuse. “It's a way to honor my mom, while also helping a student in need,” he says. 

The Growing Role of Whitman Parents: New Programs Build Meaningful Relationships

By Suzi Morales

At Family Weekend during their son Jayden's first year, Amy and Jonathan Kass met his faculty mentor. "She knew everything about our son," Amy recalls. "And it wasn't just our son, it was every student in there. She knew where he sat, what learning style he had, and it was very impressive to see."

Since that first semester, the Kasses have been active in the Whitman School parent community, with financial support and frequent visits to campus.

During the 2024-25 academic year, Whitman launched two initiatives, both of which play a role in an ongoing effort to increase the parents involvement: Parents Advisory Council and Whitman Leadership Circle (WLC).

The Parents Advisory Council includes up to 20 Whitman families from across the country. Members serve for two-year terms focusing on the three core areas of career readiness and job placement, student experience, and philanthropy and community building.

The Whitman Leadership Circle is an exclusive philanthropic society that generates leadership support for Whitman and gives donors a personalized stewardship experience, ranging from exclusive communications from the dean to gifts and apparel, and opportunities to interact with students and faculty. WLC is open to parents as well as alumni and other friends of Whitman.

The Value of Parent Feedback

Amy and Jonathan Kass, who are WLC and Parents Advisory Council members, contribute to the Whitman Experiential Learning Fund because they believe students should have hands-on learning. The Experiential Learning Fund helps finance programs like internships and networking trips.

"There's some satisfaction just from a personal level, when you could help another individual out and put them on a path of a career," says Jonathan Kass.



Amy, Jayden, Jonah and Jonathan Kass.



Susan and Robert “Bobby” Kravitz have three sons in the Whitman School, Philip ’27 and Samuel ’28 and Joseph ’28. Growing up, the boys were around close relatives who had attended Syracuse, but Bobby and Susan Kravitz wanted their sons to decide on colleges for themselves. Bobby says, “We tried to impart our experience, but it had to be their decision, because this is grown-up world now, when you’re going to college.”

Bobby and Susan’s philosophies on parenting and philanthropy go hand-in-hand. They appreciate that Whitman students have guidance along with latitude to tailor their education. For example, one son was interested in science and business and was drawn to Syracuse because he could take courses at Whitman, and elsewhere within the University. The Kravitzes are WLC members and donate to the Whitman School Dean’s Fund, which Whitman leadership uses to fund high-priority projects.

“The fact that they really seem to be supporting the student on their journey without ... trying to put them in one [path], it’s very synergistic with our belief of that combination of guiding and leading in education,” says Bobby Kravitz.

Hats, Sweatshirts and a Relationship


Susan Kravitz values the level of communication at Whitman. She sees it both in her sons’ interactions with faculty and as a Whitman parent. “Everyone’s super communicative,” she says. “[They’ll say,] ‘What do you need? How can we help? Let’s have a discussion.’ People will always find the time to have that chat.”

The Kravitzes and Kasses encourage parents to get involved in whatever capacity they can. Bobby Kravitz illustrates the importance of parent support by recalling when his sons were high school wrestlers and parents would coordinate bringing snacks to meets.

“Not all of it was about money. There were lots of parents who helped organize and help do things that made it very easy for us to help, even when we couldn’t actually be there. And, you want to know something, sometimes doing the work is more valuable than just contributing dollars,” Bobby Kravitz says.

That might include role playing on business etiquette or speaking to students on a networking trip.

After seeing Whitman with his brother Jayden Kass ’26, younger brother Jonah applied and will be coming to campus in the fall. Jonathan and Amy Kass are pleased to continue the involvement that has meant so much to them. Jonathan quips, “We were happy with our hats and sweatshirts. We wouldn’t have to get another school’s hat and sweatshirt.”

But Whitman parents can expect much more than Orange swag. “What I do love is, we do feel it’s a relationship,” says Bobby Kravitz. “And when things are a relationship for us, it makes us want to lean in.” 



Susan, Joseph, Philip, Bobby and Samuel Kravitz

Tahirah
Abdul-Qadir '26 >

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as innovative and prepared
leaders who are ready to tackle
the world's business challenges
and face their futures head-on.

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Whitman School, you empower
the leaders of tomorrow.

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Whitman School
of Management

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Provide financial support and
student scholarships,



Support faculty excellence
and research,



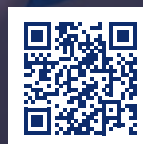
Offer first-rate career readiness
programming, internship support and
career exploration opportunities,



Enhance the learning environment
and upgrade facilities,



Meet the areas of greatest need.



GIVE TODAY:
givetosu.syr.edu/WSM25

Class News & Notes

1970-1989

NEW POSITIONS AND PROMOTIONS:

Bruce Rosen, CPA '83: Partner, Sasserath & Co.

Dana Appel Young '85: Enterprise Account Executive, LottoShield

Christopher Jaeger '87: Senior Advisor, Beacon Global Strategies

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS:



Joseph Eppolito '82 MBA received the Wall of Distinction Award for lifetime distinguished community service by Canastota Central School District, New York. Eppolito is a financial advisor for

IBN Financial Services, and a past president of the Whitman Alumni Club of Central New York and a long-time adjunct professor at Whitman.

IN MEMORIAM:

Joseph C. Leavell '83, '85 MBA of Hingham, Massachusetts, passed away Oct. 12, 2024.

Andrew Earl Larew '86 of Westport, Connecticut, passed away Oct. 21, 2024.

1990-1999

NEW POSITIONS AND PROMOTIONS:

David Cordts '90: Director of Sales, Sales Support and Marketing, Toyota Industries Commercial Finance

Krishan K. Batra '92 MBA: President and CEO, Institute for Supply Management

Kelly Hines '98: Head of Americas, Talent and Culture, Kone

2000-2009

NEW POSITIONS AND PROMOTIONS:

Lucas Fisher '03 (IST), '08 MBA: Senior Manager, Specialty Products Global Category Management, Xylem

Brett Bushinger '05: Managing Director, Mizuho

Justin Opalenski '06: Marketing and Investor Relations, Old Orchard Private Credit LLC

Russell Patchett '06: Director, Deb Syndicate, Societe Generale

Adam Gregorius '07: Producer and Senior Vice President—Total Rewards, Newfront

Jack Leeney '07: Investor, Poolside

Jane Burke '08: Supply Chain Manager, Amazon

Michael DePersia '08: Financial Planning and Analysis, Molina Healthcare

Gary Louie '08: Senior Spend Manager, Vizient Inc.

Vaibhav Shah '08: General Manager, LiftOne

IN THE MEDIA:

Stacey Tank '02 (WSM/NEW)

was featured in the *D Magazine* article, "How Stacey Tank and DFW-based Bespoke Beauty Brands are Playing to Win."

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS:

Congratulations to the following Whitman alumni who were included on the *Forbes* Best in State Top Wealth Management Teams 2025 list:

Jason Mingelgreen, CFA '04 (WSM/NEW) of the Broderick Mingelgreen Group at Sifel

Gwen (Le) Parks '13 of the Simon-Marra-Parks Group at Morgan Stanley

Taylor Brady '15 of the Brady Wealth Management Group at Morgan Stanley

2010-2019

NEW POSITIONS AND PROMOTIONS:



Jeffrey Hansel '15 MBA, first vice president at Rockland Trust Company, has been appointed to the U.S. Small Business Administration's Small Business Lending Advisory Council.

Hansel and his fellow council members will advise the SBA on small business lending matters and recommend policy and program changes to improve small businesses' access to capital.

Jelani Chance '10: Executive Director, Mid-Cap Financial Sponsors Group, JPMorganChase

Jorie Fox '10: Director of Logistics, Horizon Organic

Stephen Lombardo '10: Account Executive, Chewy Advertising

Katelyn Meola '10 (WSM/NEW): Director, Brand Marketing—Sparkling Beverages, PepsiCo

Danielle Scott '10 MBA: Senior Pricing Manager, Lockheed Martin

Lisa Sonneborn '10: Health care Senior Advisor, MidCap Advisors LLC

Tom Albrecht '11 MBA: Senior Project Manager, Kettering Health

Jason Garfield CPA '11: Partner, UHY LLP, Certified Public Accountants

Joshua Bobrow '12 MBA: Vice President—Purchasing, Magna International

David Buziashvili '12: Treasury Director, Brookfield

Neal Casey '12: Co-Head of Originations, UBS

Jing Martin '12 MBA: Strategic Alliances Manager, Upland Software

Emily Deshaies CPA, '13, '14 M.S.: Senior Manager, The Siegfried Group

Vidhya Sagar Kumar Naidu '13 MBA: Managing Consultant, Exusia

Olivia (Rotenberg) Holt CPA '14, '15 M.S.: Accounting Manager, Prospect Capital Management

Kevin MacConnell '14: Field Examiner, PNC

Ronald Gregory Tascarella '14 MBA: Senior Vice President and Chief Lending Officer, Pathfinder Bank

Max Wainer '14: Team Lead, Customer Success, parcelLab

Amanda El-Haj '15: Head of Finance—Continental Europe Transformation, HSBC

Adrienne Gulino '15: Divisional Merchandising Manager, Ross Stores Inc.

Julie Johns '15 MBA/M.P.A. (WSM/MAX): Budget Analyst, Defense Security Cooperation Agency

Stephen Kolka '15: Licensed Real Estate Salesperson, Brown Harris Stevens

Jessica Matos '15: Dream In Color (employee resource group) Events Lead, National Basketball Association

Catherine McDonald '15: Senior Manager, Beauty Business Operations, Macy's

Kelley McKenna '15: Senior Manager Consumer Markets and Insights, Degree and Axe, Unilever

Melanie Prior '15 (WSM/NEW): Manager, Change Acceleration, Constellation Brands

Chelsea Ransom-Cooper '15: Chair of the Young Whitman Advisory Council, Whitman School of Management, Syracuse University

Ethan Rothschild '15 (WSM/NEW): Head of Human Resources, Nutrition North America, Unilever

Marissa Blanchard '16 (WSM/NEW): Social Media Manager, TodayTix Group

Alex Bruno '16: Corporate Recruiter, The Vitamin Shoppe

Nicholas Dickinson '16: Chief Financial Officer, Sauce Essentials

Nathan Fornal '16: Fixed Income Associate Trader, Capital Group

Lauren Goldberg '16: Senior Sales Account Manager, Amazon

John Graham '16: Supervisor of Financial Analysis, Sig Sauer

John Grib '16: Vice President of Investments, Jadian IOS

Rami Jackson '16 (WSM/MAX), G'22 (MAX): Senior Consultant, REI Systems

Eric Klein '16: Chief Revenue Officer, Stealth Startup

Caitlyn Murphy '16: Product Delivery Manager, Bloomberg

Dylan Weinberger '16 (WSM/IST): Senior Data Classification and Privacy Specialist, M&T Bank

Kelsey Weston '16 (WSM/NEW): Vice President, Director of Customer Experience, DDB Health New York

Haley Albert '17: CRM Campaign Manager, T-Mobile

Gavin Dowd '17: Senior Manager Corporate Development, Saltchuk

Vanessa Eatz '17: Principal Consultant of Architecture, Harper Harrison

Joe Egidio '17: Large Enterprise Account Executive, Box

James Eisenberg '17: Customer Success Manager, S&P Global

Stephanie Gal '17: Mid-Market Account Manager, monday.com

Eric Lebedin '17: Vice President, Liquidity and Treasury Sales Specialist, J.P.Morgan Private Bank

Joe Lee '17: Senior Vice President of Investments, Dominari Securities

Sam Levis '17: Mid-Market Account Executive, Level IV, Gong

Eva Narun '17 (WSM/NEW): Director of Public Relations, Attentio PR

Caroline Pusak '17: Buyer, Foot Locker

Jacob Rackmil '17: Enterprise Account Executive—Federal, Box

Annie Chu '18: Global Operations Associate, Flexport

Corey Dender '18: Associate Director of Finance Operations, IPG Mediabrands

Alexandra Dodge '18: Senior Merchandise Planner, Stitch Fix

Ana Gomes '18: Corporate Development Manager, Diploma PLC

Connor Hughes '18: Executive Vice President, Harmony Housing Affordable Development

Brigid Kennedy '18 (WSM/NEW): Breaking/Trending News Writer, *Sports Illustrated*

James Matlesky '18: Commercial Bank Risk Manager, KeyBank

Ryan O'Hara '18: Vice President, BlackRock

Victoria Parker '18, '21 M.S: Sourcing Manager, NBC Universal

Jason Abell '19 MBA: Account Executive, AIS

Grant Chamberlain '19: Tax Manager, The Bonadio Group

Emily Dann '19 (WSM/NEW): Senior Search Engine Optimization Associate, Seer Interactive

Alex Duffy '19: Financial Due Diligence Manager, PwC

Sarah Flaherty '19: Associate Buyer II, The TJX Companies Inc.

Natalia Grosfeld '19: Senior Merchandise Planner, Ross Stores Inc.

Kristen Hurley '19: Supervisor, Paid Search, Mediahub Worldwide

Khalil Jean-Baptiste '19: Vice President, Goldman Sachs

Zachary Levine '19: Sales Executive, Skematic

Carl MacEwen '19: Vice President, Financial Institutions Sales and Solutions, Citi

Devin Miller '19, G'23, L'23: Associate, McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter LLP

Anthony Mongelluzzo '19: Senior Staff Accountant, 4th Sector Solutions Inc.

Megan O'Donnell, CPA '19: Manager, PwC

Catherine (Fields) Park '19 MBA: Senior Manager—People Operations, Milestone Systems

J.P. Pham '19 MBA: Vice President, Umax Shipping Inc.

Sarah Quady '19 (WSM/NEW): Lead Product Analyst, Zocdoc

Taylor Ratsep '19: Senior Demand Generation Manager, Rescale

Brittney Scheriff '19: Vice President, Bank of America

Nathaniel Solomon '19: Vice President of Business Development, Beecher Reagan Capital

IN MEMORIAM:

Ankita Varman '19 passed away Jan. 25, 2025. A video tribute honoring Ankita's life can be viewed at www.ingramfuneralhome.com/obituaries/ankita-varman.

2020-2024

NEW POSITIONS AND PROMOTIONS:

Nneka Akukwe '20 (MAX), '22 MBA: Vice President, Client Advisor, Marsh

Danielle Barenholtz '20: Account Manager, Strategic, Rippling

Logan Blumenthal '20: Chief Operating Officer, Noah Chemicals

Matt Brodie '20: Revenue Operations Manager, IBISWorld

Jim Camp '20: Senior System Deployment and Implementation Specialist, Sherwin-Williams

Kevin Crowley '20: Director, Fidelity Investments

Dorinda Foster '20 MBA: Vice President, BNP Paribas

Brett Genzer '20: Vice President, BNY

Emily Hua '20: Assistant Accounting Manager, ROKT

Keni Jheun '20 MBA/M.S.: Vice President - Commercial Property Management, Onni Group of Companies

Jason Mathios '20: Director of Sales, Ace Apparel & Promotions

Carter Morris '20: Associate, U.S Real Estate, The Carlyle Group

Dustin Pruett '20 MBA: Partner, Solberg Financial

Madison Rademacher '20: Assistant Property Manager, Marx Realty

Sean Ross '20: Financial Professional, New York Life

Quetzal Sebastian Martinez '20: Associate Marketing Manager, Zolay

Nathan Sommer '20 MBA: Avionics Technician, U.S Air Force Reserve

Andrew Southard '20: Account Executive, Key Accounts, Automation Brand, IBM

Jack Walls '20: Senior Associate, Tamarix Capital Partners

Joshua Wennrich '20 MBA: Host Recruiter, Sporcle Inc.

Spencer Wilcox '20: 401(k) Product Integrity Analyst, Paychex

Jinni Yang '20: Strategic Market Insight Lead, PayPal

Ruth Bang '21: Director, FTI Consulting

Charles Courtenay '21: Associate Investment Advisor, Masterworks

Madison Dallas Hofrichter '21: Rewards Marketing Planner, Kohl's

Margaret Dude '21: Programmatic Manager, EssenceMedia.com

Brendan Foy '21: Senior Underwriter, Chubb

David Hart '21: Settlement Consultant, Hart Settlement Group

Xinan Huang '21: Assistant Analyst, HighLight Capital

Max Kennedy '21: Supply Chain Manager, SizTech LLC

Ryan Klinger '21: Investment Banking Associate, KeyBanc Capital Markets

Tommy Meusel '21: Senior Account Executive, Expel

Ben Munick '21: Senior Consultant, Applied Value Group

Brigid Naughton '21 (WSM/IST): Senior Analyst, People Change Management, CIBC US

Julius Rees '21: Investment Banking Associate - Public Finance and Infrastructure, Stifel Financial Corp.

Omari Romain '21: Operations Manager, Success Academy Charter Schools

Jake Zeidman '21 (WSM/NEW): Senior Associate, PwC

Amanda Blutig '22: Sales and Trading Associate, Bank of America

Matthew Bromberg '22: Investment Associate, J.P. Morgan

David Browne '22: AVP-ADP, Merrill Lynch Wealth Management

Tyler Cianciola '22: Senior Commercial Account Executive, Navan

Spencer Gross '22: Corporate Account Executive, Launch Darkly

Matt Keenan '22: Senior Account Executive, Prosek Partners

Emma McSherry '22: Senior Associate, Marketing and Growth Strategy, Omnicom Health Group

McKayla Murphy '22: Senior Financial Analyst, The TJX Companies Inc.

Jenna Smooke '22: Associate Partner Manager, Walmart Connect

Yani Carter '23 MBA: Talent Negotiations Manager, ESPN

Christian Gaucci '23: Orthopedic Sales Representative, Arthrex

Michael Hills '23 MBA: Initiative Demand Manager, Procter & Gamble

Daniel Liquori '23: Junior Clinical Marketing Specialist, Straumann Group

Sam Roberto '23: Analyst, Cambridge Realty Partners

Win Tran '23: SDR, RingLink

Mallika Gore '24: Growth Marketing Associate, Superbolt

Tanisha Mehta '24 M.S.: Associate in Financial Due Diligence, Grant Thornton Bharat LLP

Smita Sawant '24 M.S.: Audit Associate, FustCharles

Brianna Tubbs '24 M.S.: Accounting Manager, Ashley McGraw Architects D.P.C.

Alexander Ward '24 MBA: Logistics Strategic Sourcing Specialist, Metrea

In Memoriam



Gary R. Gemmill

Syracuse University Professor Emeritus
Gary Gemmill died on Jan. 3, 2025. He was 87 years old.

Gemmill received his A.A. in 1957, B.S. in 1959, an MBA in 1962 and in 1966 he received his Ph.D. from Michigan University.

He was a professor of organizational behavior in the School of Management (Whitman) from 1966 until 2018 and from 2019-21 he volunteered his time in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. His heart was full of SU spirit and he loved teaching and having people connect with each other. Many of his students became lifelong friends.

Gemmill worked part time for Walden University, Becker College and Le Moyne College.

He was an organizational, personal growth and team building consultant for organizations like Utica Savings Bank, Boys & Girls Clubs, NYS Corrections, Mack Studios and he hosted several human growth development seminars.



Badr Ismail

Badr Ismail passed away on Feb. 7, 2025. He was 86 years old.

Ismail graduated from Cairo University with a B.S. as valedictorian in 1962. He traveled to Indiana University and received his MBA in 1966. He completed his Ph.D. in accounting from the University of Illinois in 1974.

Ismail's teaching career started at Butler University followed by a position at SUNY Albany as a professor of accounting until 1979. He then joined the faculty at the School of Management (Whitman) as a professor of accounting. He was known for his dedication and kindness to students, and a valued mentor and advisor, always available to students who needed guidance. He retired as a professor emeritus in 2015.

His legacy in teaching made an indelible mark on countless students throughout his career and after he retired.



Whitman School Professor Peter Koveos Remembered

Peter Koveos, professor of finance and Kiebach Chair in International Business at the Martin J. Whitman School of Management, passed away on Dec. 20, 2024. He was 78.

Koveos studied economics at Pennsylvania State University, where he achieved both his master's degree and Ph.D. He went on to teach at Penn State and the University of Rhode Island before joining the faculty at Syracuse University in 1982.

Koveos was a dedicated professor and scholar who taught at the Whitman School for 42 years. During that time, he served as a professor of finance and chair of the finance department on multiple occasions. He was the Kiebach Chair in International Business Studies and director of the Kiebach Center for International Business. He previously served as interim dean, associate dean for master's programs and senior director for international programs, among other service roles to the Whitman School and Syracuse University.

Koveos led many of the early internationalization efforts of Whitman, including expanding Whitman's work in Russia and China in the 1990s. Among the many accolades he received throughout his career was the White Yulan Prize from the City of Shanghai, similar to receiving the keys to the city and the highest award given to foreign experts by the municipality. He also received an honorary doctorate from American International College. Koveos was

the editor of the *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship* and associate editor of *Finance Review*.

Koveos had a strong work ethic and was a proud mentor to the thousands of students who joined his classroom. He thought very highly of his colleagues and strongly believed that it took a village to be successful. Koveos taught a range of courses in finance, international business and global entrepreneurship. He was interested in exploring international financial market behavior, especially as it pertains to economic systems in transition. His most recent work was on the theory and practice of financial system reform. Much of his research was focused on Asia in general, with a particular emphasis on China. His research has been published in the *Journal of Monetary Economics*, *Journal of International Business Studies* and other scholarly journals.

Koveos also worked closely with small businesses conducting business internationally and served on the board of the Central New York International Business Alliance and the Africa Business and Entrepreneurship Research Society. In addition to his academic activities, he was the co-founder of ExportNY and served as executive director of the program since 1998. In the 20-plus years of the ExportNY Program, over 100 Central New York businesses have developed international business plans and initiated or expanded their global footprint.

His family finds comfort in knowing that Koveos' legacy "lives on through the lessons he taught us, the scholars he mentored, the love he shared, the happiness he encouraged and the memories we will cherish forever."

Koveos' more than 40 years of service at Syracuse University will be fondly remembered by his colleagues and friends.

"Peter was in the office a week ago finishing his school duties. His sense of duty to students and colleagues kept him going all the way to the end. What a big loss to Whitman and the world. I can't recall him ever saying anything negative even in the midst of confronting rather controversial matters. He always saw the positive in people—a trait for all of us to emulate. Lastly, Peter's long personal struggle with health issues is just inspirational. He never complained or let it slow him down," says Associate Dean for Research and Ph.D. Programs Michel Benaroch.

"I first met Peter 16 years ago: he came in to interview me for a junior faculty position shortly after his bone marrow transplant. Such was his dedication to Whitman. He served as finance department chair for so many years we all lost count, and although he stepped down from that role long ago, he very much remained our leader, and I regularly turned to him for advice. He was a calming and thoughtful voice in all matters. I will miss his kindness and sense of humor," says chair of the finance department David Weinbaum.

Interim Dean Alex McKelvie says, "While there are many ways we could highlight Peter's contributions, it is safe to say that he has had a profound impact on the Whitman School and our students' success. Peter's positive spirit, supportive approach and willingness to help out had a personal impact on many at Whitman. Simply, he was one of the good ones who truly cared. He will be deeply missed."

The Whitman School will honor Professor Koveos and his legacy across decades in the near future. 🍷



In honor of his legacy and in celebration of Peter's 42 years of service, colleagues, alumni and friends are invited to make a gift to the Walter

S. Kiebach Center for International Business Studies in support of scholarships that fund student study abroad opportunities. Koveos believed these opportunities were crucial to helping students see the world.

Link: <http://cc.syr.edu/PeterKoveos>



A Strong Foundation: The Habayeb's Provide an Endowed Fund

By Suzi Morales

According to Elias Habayeb '93, P'29, his Whitman School education gave him a strong foundation for a decades-long career in the financial industry. In 2024, Habayeb, along with his wife, Michelle, created a new fund to give future students the same foundation.

The Elias and Michelle Habayeb Endowed Fund will provide scholarship and financial assistance to undergraduate students at Whitman, with a focus on first-generation college students.

"Syracuse laid the foundations for me to build my career on, and this is my token give-back to the University," Habayeb says. He wants the fund to help expand the base of students who can benefit from the quality of education he received.

A Family Tradition

Habayeb was raised in Lebanon by Palestinian parents and attended high school in Athens, Greece. When he began considering universities in the United States, Syracuse was a top choice because he had several relatives who attended. There have been so many that he's not quite sure of the exact number. "It's north of 10," he says. "Exactly how many is being debated. I was middle of the pack."

At the time Habayeb was making his college decision, one cousin was a Syracuse student. "Her interests and my interests were aligned," he says. "She was at Whitman following an accounting degree, and that's what I was going to do. So I've heard through the family about Syracuse quite a bit over the years, and my cousin was there, so it's kind of continuing the family tradition."

Although Habayeb had heard of the University from his family, moving from major urban areas internationally to Central New York was "a cultural shock." But he appreciated the friends he made from all over the world. "I got to meet people from different parts of the U.S., people from South America, parts of Asia that, living in the Middle East and southern Europe, you don't come across as much," he says.

Habayeb also found mentors and friends among his Whitman professors. "I had great professors at Syracuse, some that I formed a friendship with, and some that mentored me, especially when it came towards graduation," he says. "I was considering going back to Greece, and one of the professors convinced me to stay behind in the U.S. and to go get my CPA. And that to me, if you look back, was a fantastic recommendation."

Taking the Challenge

After graduation, Habayeb started in accounting at Deloitte, where he worked for more than a decade. He has stayed in the financial industry but has taken advantage of opportunities to broaden his experience and pivot to other specialties. He is chief financial officer of Corebridge Financial, formerly AIG's life and retirement business.


"Syracuse gave me the initial building blocks, and with hard work and determination I built on those blocks, and as opportunities opened up for me, I was able to take the challenge and deliver,"

Habayeb says.

Elias and Michelle Habayeb have previously given to the Whitman Dean's Fund. Michelle also has an accounting background and works as the training director at Caring Contact, a nonprofit that trains volunteers to provide compassionate support on the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, where she started as a volunteer. Both Michelle and Elias have long valued philanthropy.

In addition to building a legacy through giving, the Habayeb family tradition at Syracuse is continuing. In the fall, Elias and Michelle's son Farid will be a first-year student at Whitman. "He followed Syracuse basketball. He was passionate about it, and when he told me that he wanted to go to Syracuse, it was very exciting," says Habayeb.

For his son and the rest of the next generation of Whitman students, Habayeb has this advice: "To succeed in a career, you've got to be passionate. If you don't wake up excited in the morning to go to work, you're not going to succeed. It doesn't matter about the money or the prestige or all that. The key driver for success is passion."

Students who follow that advice will have a firm foundation for the future. 

From Flowers to Horse Racing: Bill Strauss '80 Found His Way from the Post Position to the Winner's Circle

By Caroline K. Reff



Growing up in New Jersey, Bill Strauss '80 never imagined his business savvy would lead him to a successful career that would take him to California to work in tech, run one of the country's top e-commerce companies, partner in a popular San Diego restaurant and make a Run for the Roses at the Kentucky Derby.



But first he went to Syracuse University. His father was an entrepreneur, which spurred Strauss to learn more about business. So he enrolled at Syracuse and studied accounting.

"I was always self-motivated, but I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do, so being at

a big school where you could find just about anything was good for me," says Strauss, who also met his wife of 40 years, Margie Sperber Strauss '80 (VPA), there.

The first in his family to graduate from college, Strauss had a successful career in

finance in New York City before being lured to the West Coast in 1992 by ChipSoft/Intuit, the makers of TurboTax.

"They told me this was the perfect job for me, but the smartest thing they did was ask me to bring my wife along," he says. "She took one



look at the ocean views and was sold. So, we packed up our kids and have been happy in California ever since.”

As his career progressed, Strauss got in on the ground floor of ProFlowers, which later became Provide Commerce, one of the nation’s top e-commerce companies, at a time when internet sales were just emerging.

“I knew less about flowers than I knew about almost anything else, but Jared Polis, now the governor of Colorado, came up with the idea to cut out the middleman. It was a startup, and I worked as the president and chief operating officer,” he explains.

The idea was to buy flowers in bulk directly from South American growers and move them to consumers via the internet with a seven-day guarantee. And the company developed a tracking system to see what flowers U.S. consumers were buying—primarily roses—which helped growers focus on demand.

Says Strauss, **“We were the first ones to gather data on the internet and then ship flowers, which was unheard of at that time.”**

The company went public in 2001 and Strauss sold two years later. (In 2014, ProFlowers/Provide Commerce was acquired by FTD for \$477 million.)



Along the way, Strauss became a silent partner in a restaurant with his brother, Jeffrey, a renowned executive chef who has cooked for movie stars, presidents and global dignitaries. Over the years, Pamplemousse Grille has become one of San Diego’s premier upscale dining destinations, located across the street from Del Mar Racetrack.

“I’ve always been in love with horse racing,” Strauss says. “I love the action of the sport. A

race lasts two minutes, not three hours, and, if you’re lucky, you win some money back.”

One of the restaurant’s frequent visitors was bloodstock agent Alex Solis II, who helped Strauss purchase his first thoroughbred, The Pamplemousse, which became a stakes winner. Since then, Strauss has been part owner of horses like Mizdirection, a Breeders’ Cup winner in 2012 and 2013; and Hot Rod Charlie, which won \$5.6 million in his career, coming in second in the 2021 Belmont Stakes and winning the Louisiana Derby, which secured a spot in the 2021 Kentucky Derby.


“Having a horse that took me to the Kentucky Derby—well, we got very lucky, and it was a wonderful, crazy time,” he said of Hot Rod Charlie’s third-place finish.

“Horse racing is not a job, it’s a hobby. It’s a brutally expensive game. I hate the fact that I love it so much. But even having a cheap horse win is far more exciting than Wall Street. And there’s nothing like the thrill of going down to the winner’s circle after your horse wins a race,” explains Strauss emphatically.

Strauss served on the board of the Thoroughbred Owners of California from 2013 to 2022, working to carve out a stronger presence for horse racing in the state. He continues to be active on the thoroughbred racing circuit and was asked to join the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club board in 2023.

“Now I see things from the perspective of the owners, and I see the challenges of the track, which I hope helps me bring valuable insight to the board,” he says.

Strauss credits a lot of his overall success to the foundations of business he learned at Syracuse and over the years has been a generous supporter of the University, particularly its athletics department.

“I didn’t have any idea where I would end up when I went to Syracuse. I just wanted to get a business education and make a good living,” says Strauss. “But it’s been quite a ride.” 



Two Sets of Twins in Class of 2015 Doubled Down on Success with a Whitman Education

By Caroline K. Reff

The chance of having twins is approximately 3% globally, but the chance of having two sets of twins enroll in the Class of 2015 at the Whitman School would certainly challenge even the most savvy statistician.

Members of the Class of 2015 were seeing double as two sets of twins roamed the halls of the Whitman School: Bernard “Ben” Essoka ’15 and Tommy “Modi” Essoka ’15, along with Natasha Caminero Sanchez ’15 and Katherine Caminero ’15 (WSM/NEW). A decade later, both sets of twins give credit to Whitman for helping them find their individual career paths.

Fraternal twins Tommy and Ben Essoka were born in Cameroon and spent their early years relocating around Africa. Being a twin meant having an instant friend when they moved to a new location, which helped a great deal when they left for boarding school in New Jersey. When it came time for college, one of Tommy’s boarding school mentors, Jacob Levy ’13, encouraged both to consider Syracuse University.

“We liked Syracuse and had similar interests, which at the time was film studies,” says Ben. “And it was a very classic college campus and was a good fit for us.”

“Our first-year dorm was an incubator for being a Whitman student, and there were lots of synergies pushing us towards Whitman, so we both transferred and decided to study finance,” says Tommy Essoka.

They enrolled in many of the same courses and took advantage of all Whitman had to offer. Ben credits the Bloomberg product certification courses as a pillar of his education, while Tommy says faculty always encouraged him “to be fearless and take paths that were less traveled.”

After graduating, the Essokas chose different careers. Ben started at Bloomberg LP as a data analyst in New York City, then moved into fintech at Blackstone, earned an MBA from Pepperdine University and is a senior products manager at Converse, working from Los Angeles. Tommy began his career in New York City as a financial analyst for Time Inc. and subsequently iHeart Media. He, too, earned an MBA from Pepperdine, which served as a springboard for his transition into the technology sector, where he completed internships at Meta and Amazon Web Services. Today, Tommy is a senior pricing associate at Google Cloud, based in the tech hub of San Francisco.

LATINAS



Both are giving back to Whitman. Ben is a member of the Young Whitman Advisory Council (YWAC), and Tommy has been mentoring some Whitman students and trying to help open doors to career opportunities.

Whitman's other set of Class of 2015 twins, Katherine Caminero and Natasha Caminero Sanchez, grew up on Long Island, wearing matching outfits, sharing a bedroom and playing the same sports. Although they, too, are fraternal twins, their similar looks have caused many double takes throughout their lives.

They applied to the same colleges, never thinking they'd each choose Syracuse University. Originally, both were waitlisted, but when Katherine received a call saying she had been accepted, her first response was, "What about my sister?"


Ultimately, both enrolled at Syracuse, transferring into Whitman sophomore year with Natasha opting for a double major in accounting and finance and Katherine pursuing finance with a dual major in public relations at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

"Whitman set me up for success," says Camerino Sanchez, who joined (EY) in New York City after graduation.

She obtained her CPA and later worked at Silver Point Capital, a hedge fund in Connecticut, before heading back to the city to work at EY again, this time as a tax manager. She also earned a master's degree from Hofstra University, got married and is about to be a first-time mom. Natasha has been making a concerted effort to get more Whitman students at EY as interns and employees.

Katherine's career took another route, or, as her sister puts it, "She left me for California." After graduating, Katherine went to New York City to work in compliance for Bank of America, then to UBS, but, in 2021 she moved to the West Coast for a job with JPMorgan Chase. Today, she is vice president of Ares Management Corp., a global alternative investment firm in Los Angeles. Katherine is also a member of YWAC and works with the school to reach out to more California alumni.

The Essoka and Caminero twins are grateful for their time at Whitman and appreciate the opportunities that helped them stay together while also reaching their individual successes.

"Our careers have taken us in different directions and to new challenges, but, no matter where life takes us, we'll always have the privilege of having a twin and be proud to be Whitman graduates," says Tommy Essoka. 

Marketing Professor Champions Critical Thinking and Experiential Learning

By Renée Gearhart Levy

During three decades of teaching, Eunkyu Lee, professor of marketing and associate dean for global initiatives, has witnessed marketing practices and consumer behavior impacted by revolutionary forces, including the creation of the internet, the development of smartphones, the founding of Amazon and, now, the adoption of AI.

“Technology reshapes market forces, which are dynamic and always changing,” he says. “The importance of business education, especially in marketing, is striking the right balance between introducing students to emerging trends and techniques and providing a theoretical foundation for systematic thinking as the market environment keeps changing.”

One of the key tenets Lee wants students to take away from his classroom: It depends. “You should not make a quick conclusion about what is the right marketing strategy or marketing action,” says Lee.

“Seeing a company having success using one strategy doesn’t mean that is the right strategy for your product or company. It depends on a variety of factors, which opens up a whole range of analysis to synthesize to find the best answer for that particular case, that particular product, that particular company,” he adds.

Lee believes the best way to learn is experientially, the impetus behind the popular Brand Management course he created. Offered to both undergraduate and graduate students, the course is built around a computer simulation in which students form teams to represent the brand management team of a multimillion-dollar company. Through the course of a semester, students develop and manage brands and are accountable for the financial performance of the company.

“The course plays a very important role in the marketing curriculum of the Whitman School because students have to utilize the knowledge and skills they have acquired from pretty much every other marketing course,” he says.

Creating a dynamic learning environment has earned Lee numerous teaching accolades during his 25 years at the Whitman School, including the Dean’s Recognition of Teaching Excellence and the Graduate Faculty





of the Year Award. Last fall, he was named one of the nation's top 50 undergraduate business professors by *Poets&Quants*, a website dedicated to business education.

Lee attributes his success in the classroom to his passion for marketing and his genuine love for teaching. "You can't fake that," he says.

He's also deeply invested in the student experience. "The student body is very diverse, and students learn in different ways," he says.

"I try to make the classroom interactive and to present information in multiple ways. Some students may be more visual than verbal; others may respond better to a more abstract explanation," Lee says.

He also focuses on making students feel respected. "I want to create a safe environment so that students can focus on learning rather than being distracted by anxiety," says Lee. "Whether they end up earning an A or a low grade, that's just reflective of their performance in that particular classroom. But as far as their potential goes, I tell them they are all A students in my mind."

A native of Seoul, South Korea, Lee majored in business as an undergraduate at Seoul National University and came to the United States to earn an MBA at Duke University. He initially focused his study on finance with plans for a career on Wall Street. In the midst of a promising interview process for a major Wall Street firm, however, he became riveted by his marketing course.

"Marketing is very diverse and dynamic. No two cases or problems are the same, and it really challenged me to use the whole range of my intellectual capabilities, thinking strategically, creatively and analytically," he says.

Lee set his Wall Street dreams aside and remained at Duke to earn a Ph.D. in marketing. He held faculty positions at Seattle University and the University of British Columbia and was recruited to the Whitman School after attending a marketing conference held at Syracuse in 1999.

In addition to distinguishing himself in the classroom, Lee is a leading marketing scholar who develops mathematical models to analyze strategic issues in distribution channels and market competition. His research has appeared in top academic journals—such as the *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Marketing Science*, *Management Science* and the *Journal of Retailing*—and he speaks on those topics to industry and academia. His current projects study the impact of artificial intelligence in advertising and consumer decision processes.

Lee has served as chair of the marketing department and director of the Ph.D. program at Whitman. Since 2018, he has served as associate dean for global initiatives, a position created to help Whitman lead the way in global education and global engagement.

In his position as associate dean for global education, Lee worked to give students opportunities to travel abroad, many times hosting these trips himself to East Asia and other regions.

"The business world is so globalized, you cannot really think about business education and business research without having a global business understanding," Lee says. "It's a must for everybody." 🌐



Combining Deep Reinforcement Learning with AI for Optimal Selling Strategies on Hog Farms

Assistant Professor of Supply Chain Management Ye Liu and colleagues have developed a new, AI-powered approach to hog farm management. Their support tool, introduced in the *Journal of Operations Management*, builds on deep reinforcement learning and allows farmers to make better selling decisions in a complex environment.

Decision making in hog farming is rife with uncertainty. Every week, farmers must choose whether and where to sell their hogs, but they face volatility on multiple fronts, from unpredictable growth to varying operating costs and changing numbers of available hogs at optimal weight. They may fulfill long-term contracts with meatpackers, sell on the spot markets or hold animals for sale the following week. Prices for all options fluctuate from week to week.

To tackle this problem, the researchers—Liu; Panos Kouvelis, Emerson Distinguished Professor of Supply Chain, Operations and Technology at

Washington University in St. Louis; and Danko Turcic, associate professor of operations and supply chain management at the University of California, Riverside—used inventory and pricing data from a large U.S. farm, along with publicly available pricing information for various agricultural commodities, to build a new tool.

Fed with market prices and quantities of at-weight and underweight hogs, the machine delivers a near-optimal selling strategy. But users may not trust the tool without insights into its inner workings. So Liu and her colleagues developed heuristics using classification trees to understand how the machine makes decisions. They call this method managerial learning. Currently the study farm uses an always-fulfill policy to prioritize its long-term contracts, even if this means selling underweight hogs. The new, more flexible heuristic, on the other hand, will sometimes dictate holding some hogs to hedge the risks of production and sometimes shift trading of hogs to markets with higher prices.

“What the farmers are doing now, based on their experience, is too simple, leading to losses of 26% of possible profits,” Liu says. “With the heuristic, the loss is only 8% compared to machine output. So, if they want to combine it with their experience, if they feel more trust this way, that is also very good.”

Applications of this approach extend beyond hogs to other types of agricultural operations. “This framework can be used more broadly for decisions involving input and output uncertainty and extracts useful insights from the AI model to improve decision making,” Liu says.

Liu, Y. (2024), An Empirically Grounded Analytical (EGA) Approach to Hog Farm Finishing Stage Management: Deep Reinforcement Learning as Decision Support and Managerial Learning Tool (with Kouvelis, P. and Turcic, D.) *Journal of Operations Management*.



How Does Hedging Affect Product Market Competition?

Professor of Finance and Michael J. Falcone Chair in Real Estate Erasmo Giambona and colleagues examine this question in an article in the *Review of Financial Studies*. They find that if life insurance companies have the opportunity to better protect their assets, they can price their products more competitively. This in turn allows them to gain market share and serve customers more effectively.

Giambona—with Anil Kumar, associate professor of finance and real estate at Aarhus University in Denmark, and Gordon Phillips, the Laurence F. Whittemore Professor of Business Administration at Dartmouth College—took advantage of a natural experiment unfolding in the life insurance sector. With over \$7 trillion in assets and over 1,000 private and public firms, it is one of the largest industries in the United States.

Since 1998, 22 states have introduced legislation that lowers the cost of hedging for insurance firms. It does this by allowing their derivatives

counterparties—organizations willing to assume risk for the companies for a price—to more easily repossess collateral in case of financial distress.

“We exploit the fact that this regulation was passed in different states at different points in time, and it affected companies based on their domicile state,” Giambona says. As similar companies competed for the same customers in a marketplace, some benefited from the new legislation, based on their home state, while the other did not. “This is really beautiful from a research point of view,” Giambona says. “It’s quite similar to medical research. Using the staggered difference-in-difference methodology, we could make a direct comparison between one entity getting the treatment and the other having a placebo.”

Assured that their assets would be better protected from potential losses, insurers in states that had passed the regulation could offer better pricing for their life insurance policies and annuities. As a result, these firms outpaced their competitors.

In practice, Giambona said, these findings indicate that properly tailored financial innovation can be helpful for the stability of both a particular sector—in this case, life insurance—and the wider economy. “If this industry went belly-up, it could potentially bring the U.S. or world economy down,” he says. More consumers benefit as they gain access to better and cheaper products from more companies.

Giambona, E. (2024), Hedging, Contract Enforceability, and Competition (with Kumar, A. and Phillips, G.) *Review of Financial Studies*.



Examining Gender Inequality in Academic Publishing

Editors of academic journals hold an influential position in their field. They have decision making power over which authors and papers get published, set journal policy and help shape the trajectory of their discipline. It is also a role in which women are frequently underrepresented.

Assistant Professor of Accounting Sebastian Tideman-Frappart and several colleagues set out to fill a knowledge gap about this issue in the field of management science by tracking gender diversity in world-leading management journals over time. The resulting article—co-authored by Brooke Gazdag, associate professor of management at Kühne Logistics University in Germany; Jamie Gloor, assistant professor of management, and Eugenia Bajet Mestre, Ph.D. candidate, both at the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland; and Cécile Emery, senior lecturer of organizational behavior at the University of Exeter in England—appears in *The Leadership Quarterly*.

Through substantial efforts involving archives and libraries across five countries, the researchers constructed a comprehensive dataset. It lists

21,510 unique authors and 4,173 unique leaders in 11 top management journals from 1990 to 2022. “It’s a cool, novel dataset,” Tideman-Frappart says.

Analysis of the data showed that management science remains a male-dominated discipline at all levels. Only 32 of 135 editors, close to 24%, were women. They were similarly underrepresented further down the hierarchy as associate editors, editorial board members and authors—and having a woman editor did not appear to create a trickle-down effect. While the number of women in leading positions has increased over the past decades, this may be due simply to broader societal trends toward better representation.

“There has been progress, but it’s been slow, and there’s still a long way to go,” Tideman-Frappart says. “So, if you want to have fair representation of women in the discipline sooner rather than later, it looks like we need intervention to get there.” The authors recommend that editors and publishers aim to mitigate network effects, increase inclusion and recognize and circumvent invisible barriers, for example, by setting targets and transparency standards for women in leadership positions or providing training and support for aspiring women editors. This study, they hope, shows the importance of tracking data and will provide a benchmark for academic journals and a starting point for changes to the discipline. “Our data is open access, so anybody can use it,” Tideman-Frappart says. “We really view our study as a conversation opener.”

Tideman-Frappart, S. (2024), Women’s Representation in Academic Publishing: Descriptive Trends from Authors to Editors across 33 Years of Management Science (with Bajet Mestre, E., Emery, C., Gazdag, B. and Gloor, J.) *The Leadership Quarterly*.



Entrepreneurs Create Businesses—and Meaning—for Life Satisfaction

Many entrepreneurs are motivated not simply by a desire to get rich but also by the wish to self-actualize by creating something meaningful. This idea is at the center of a new study by Al Berg Chair and Professor of Entrepreneurship Johan Wiklund and co-authors Nadav Shir, lecturer and senior researcher in the Faculty of Business Administration of Ono Academic College in Israel, and Srikant Manchiraju, associate professor at Florida State University’s Jim Moran College of Entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial well-being—how people think and feel about their lives as entrepreneurs—has not received a lot of attention in research thus far, according to Wiklund. “But we argue that entrepreneurship is more than a job, that it’s a very big part of people’s identity,” he says. To measure how much

individuals value their role as entrepreneurs, Wiklund and his colleagues introduce the concept of entrepreneurial life satisfaction (ELS).

Their paper, in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, shows that people who started a business out of their own desire (described as “volition”) rather than for such reasons as unemployment or lack of alternative opportunities, experience entrepreneurship as a significant source of well-being. Volition in the early stages of starting a business is also associated with greater ELS later.

Wiklund was especially gratified to see these findings holding up in two different cultural settings. The researchers were drawing on two diverse sets of data—a cross-sectional study of American business owners as well as a longitudinal study of actively engaged Swedish entrepreneurs.

“I’m a little bit on a mission,” Wiklund says. “This paper is a building block in a greater focus on well-being. I think it’s important for entrepreneurship for a number of reasons. It’s a large motivator for people to engage in entrepreneurship in the first place, there’s a general interest in society in well-being, and we have a mental health crisis going on. So, sure, if you start a business, you have to make money. But that doesn’t mean it’s the only goal or even the most important one.”

Wiklund, J. (2024), Satisfaction with Life as an Entrepreneur: From Early Volition to Eudaimonia (with Shir, N. and Manchiraju, S.) *Journal of Business Ethics*. [W](#)



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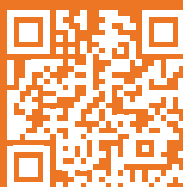
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