



# THE BUSINESS MAVERICK

UTA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS MAGAZINE



## An Ecosystem of Entrepreneurship



Alumni-Owned Companies Connect through MAVS 100 and MavPitch



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# From the Dean's Desk

The year 2020 will be remembered as a time of changing perspectives. Two events, one emanating from Wuhan, China, and the other in Minneapolis, Minnesota, significantly altered the way we interrelate with each other and will continue to impact the future of higher education.

The outbreak of COVID-19 and the stark reality of racial injustice brought unique challenges to the university and our students. I am proud to be part of a university community that proactively addressed the myriad challenges confronting our institution in 2020. The initiative, ingenuity, thoughtfulness, and compassion displayed by all was truly inspiring.

The return to campus this fall is not a return to normal. The university adopted rigorous social distancing protocols to ensure the safety of all who come to campus. Larger classes will remain online with other instruction utilizing hybrid or social distancing face-to-face modality. Many staff will continue to telework to further reduce the number of people on campus. Strict protocols regarding the wearing of masks, testing, and contact tracing have also been established.

As one of the most highly diverse business colleges in the United States, it is incumbent upon us to be leaders in the areas of diversity, racial equity, and inclusion. In response, the College created the position of Associate Dean for Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion, as well as two diversity and inclusion councils, one comprised of faculty and staff and the other of students. We also announced the creation of Diversity Partners, a group of community and business leaders designed to provide the College with an external perspective regarding racial equity, diversity, and inclusion issues.

Despite the emergence of COVID-19 in 2020, the College continued to make significant strides in alumni engagement, community outreach, and raising student scholarships.

In its first year, the Dean's Leadership Circle (DLC) raised more than \$220,000 for first-time student scholarships and selected the awardees. As noted in the accompanying story on page 9, scholarships provided by the DLC are having a significant effect on the lives of our deserving students. Becoming a member of the DLC is one of the most effective ways for alumni to make a direct impact in a student's life. In the spirit of Mavericks helping Mavericks, the DLC Board voted to set aside a one-time award to assist current students impacted by the pandemic.

MAVS 100 held its inaugural gala and celebrated the 100 fastest-growing MAVERICK-owned and directed businesses (see



PHOTO BY SHARON ELLMAN, ELLMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

pages 10-11), providing networking and collaborative opportunities for our "Mavtrepreneurs." The MavPitch, a collaboration with the College of Engineering and underwritten by a generous donation from a UTA alum, has awarded \$514,000 to 34 distinct student teams to assist them in transforming their ideas into businesses (see pages 30-31). Highlighted by an evening with Robert Kaplan, President of the Dallas Federal Reserve Bank, the Maverick Macroeconomic Speaker Series promoted discourse on significant economic issues.

Academically, we refreshed our MBA program, creating a stronger, more competitive, and flexible program that will enable students to be even more successful in their chosen careers.

We remain committed to providing strong academic programs that lead to life achievements for students by imparting both practical knowledge and experiential learning. Successful business professionals are not only knowledgeable and prepared, but also insightful, ethical, and discerning business leaders.

- Harry M. Dombroski  
Dean of the College of Business

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Left to right, John Goolsby, Sabrina Harrison, and John Merrill

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THE  
**BUSINESS  
MAVERICK**  
UTA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS MAGAZINE  
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## BGS Earns Silver Chapter Award

The UTA College of Business chapter of Beta Gamma Sigma (BGS) has earned the international business honor society's 2020 Silver Award in recognition of its program to reward academic achievement, develop and celebrate student leadership, and connect its members with faculty, alumni, and business leaders.

BGS International, a member of the Association of College Honor Societies, annually awards Gold, Silver, and Bronze honors to the chapters that best demonstrate support for the organization's mission. The 2020 Gold Award went to Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia; Abu Dhabi University in the United Arab Emirates received Bronze. BGS is a selective honor society that annually inducts only about 10 percent of undergraduate students and 20 percent of graduate business students.

UTA's Silver Award acknowledges the chapter's work during the 2018-2019 academic year, according to adviser Stephanie Rasmussen. BGS evaluates how well the chapter has encouraged student leadership, how it represents the founding principles and values of BGS, which relates to ethics and honor, and how the chapter connects members to alumni and professional opportunities.

"I think one of the key things our chapter has done, and we've done it for the last three academic years, is [student members] have planned and organized a charity dinner," Dr. Rasmussen said. "This started out as a way to give back to the community, but at the same time it's just a really great opportunity for our students to put into practice the business skills they learn in classes. They have to plan an event from the ground up. So that's finding a venue, determining the budget, figuring out how they're going to price tickets. Then they have to market it, get tickets sold and get people there, and make it an event that people want to attend."



PHOTO BY SAMER HIJAZI, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

Attendees at the BGS annual charity dinner, which raised almost \$3,500 for Alliance for Children.

The last charity dinner in February, just before the campus was closed for the spring semester, raised almost \$3,500 for Alliance for Children, a Tarrant County children's advocacy center.

In the Fall 2019-Spring 2020 semesters, the group volunteered with the Friends of Arlington Animal Shelter and held member meetings that gave students the opportunity to learn about well-crafted resumes, skills needed in the workplace, the BGS Global Leadership Summit, and attending graduate school at UTA. The chapter held two induction ceremonies for 101 new members.

The Silver Award also recognizes the chapter's efforts to support students with scholarships and networking opportunities with alumni and business professionals.

"Another thing that sets our chapter apart is we received an incredibly generous donation from a UTA alumna back in 2015, and we are able to give out a significant amount of scholarship money to BGS members each year," Rasmussen said. "Last year, alone, we gave out \$58,000 in scholarships."

The scholarships for student officers

and other chapter members range from \$1,000 to \$8,000 per year, with the largest scholarships reserved for students who intend to continue their master's degree education at UTA. A portion of the money also helps cover costs of sending students to the BGS Global Leadership Summit. Nine students attended in fall 2018.

Current chapter President Mireya Baharanchi-Espinosa (2020, BBA, Marketing/Management) was one of the students who attended a leadership summit. Baharanchi graduated in the spring and is admitted in the College of Business Master of Science in Marketing Research program. She was thrilled at having the opportunities to network and work with other BGS members from around the world.

"I would have never had the networking opportunities if not for Beta Gamma Sigma," Baharanchi said. She is now hoping to have some of the leaders she heard at the summit speak at the BGS chapter meetings. "I would love more members to see the benefits of Beta Gamma Sigma and use it to their advantage, because it can really propel their careers because of all the connections they can make."

## College of Business Shares Credit in UTA's Recognition for Veterans Support

The UTA College of Business has set a high bar for best practices that support veteran students and their families, helping UTA earn recognition this year as the nation's top four-year university in rankings by *Military Times*.

The No. 1 ranking is based on a variety of criteria that assist veterans and dependents in earning college degrees, including university culture, student support, academic policies, academic outcomes/quality, as well as cost and financial aid.

James Kumm, executive director of veterans programs in UTA's Office of Military and Veterans Services, said the College of Business shares in the credit for supporting his office's mission, particularly in efforts to connect students with faculty and staff who served in the military. *Military Times* notes that this benefits veterans by providing mentors who understand the military background.

In the *Military Times* ranking of the top three four-year institutions, UTA finished ahead of Colorado State University and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The rankings are based on what veterans rated as most important to them, and *Military Times* editors say that university culture and student support received the greatest weight.

"The first thing I tell everybody when we talk about this No. 1 ranking is that, while our office definitely led the way, we had to rely on the whole campus. It really was the campus culture that got us to this No. 1 position," Kumm says. "And the College of



PHOTO BY SHARON ELLMAN/ELLMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Veterans Ethan Warner, left, and David Rash

Business has been instrumental from the day that I got here. They made sure that we were provided with resources, services, and that we knew what their mission was to allow us to push forward and provide services to our students."

The College of Business had 511 veteran students and/or family members enrolled in the spring semester this year. UTA overall has 2,536 veteran students who are either active duty, national guard, or reserve and 2,917 dependents.

"Transferring from a community college where there was little to no support system, I have been very impressed with the communication and willingness to help from James Kumm and his team in Military and Veteran Services," said David Rash, who is scheduled to graduate this semester with an undergraduate degree in management and marketing.

Campus-wide, UTA has a variety of resources to assist veterans and dependents. These include: MavVets, which helps connect veterans with community leaders, scholarships, and community service opportunities; Veterans Upward Bound, which offers services such as

refresher classes, tutoring, assistance with financial aid and college applications, academic and career counseling, personal counseling, and peer-to-peer mentoring; the Lockheed Martin Career Development Center, which helps all students with professional goals and connects them to employment opportunities; Veteran Orientation, a welcoming event designed specifically for students transitioning after military service; Corporate Dialogue Initiative, a program to help prepare veterans as job candidates; and VetSuccess on Campus, a program to help coordinate delivery of benefits, assistance, and counseling.

Veteran Ethan Warner said the programs have provided tremendous assistance. "They helped me immensely with how to file for my benefits, study groups, and events to feel welcomed," Warner said.

In the College of Business, Kumm said, he gets support from several key colleagues such as Assistant Dean Rebecca Neilson, Goolsby Leadership Academy Director Jerry Hubbard, and Management Professor Jim Quick, all of whom have military backgrounds.

# Innovative Program with Ericsson Points to the Future of Data Science Education

An innovative executive certificate program that customizes instruction for employees of Ericsson, a leading supplier of information and communication technology to service providers, could become a model for higher education in data science and information systems.

That is the hope of the chair of the Information Systems and Operations Management Department, Radha Mahapatra, and three faculty members who helped design and implement the program, Sridhar Nerur, Kay-Yut Chen, and Jay Samuel.

Brian White, Ericsson's Vice President and Head of Support and Repair for North America, agrees.

White said he is very optimistic after working with UTA professors to launch the Ericsson Executive Program, a four-course certificate curriculum taught at the company's Plano headquarters over two semesters. White watched enthusiastic employees learn and apply machine learning and artificial intelligence tools and techniques to solve challenges specific to the company using its own data.

The certificate program, White said, has provided several advantages: a cost-effective means of reskilling employees who might be unable to pursue a master's degree in data science; a direct return on investment by combining educational coursework with Ericsson-specific business needs; efficient, on-site instruction that UTA professors purposefully designed to be flexible to the company's requirements; and new opportunities to grow a culture of data-driven decision-making across the company.

"We have really strong, highly skilled people in telecom, and they either just didn't have time to go back and get a full master's degree or were



PHOTO BY SHARON ELLMAN, ELLMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Radha Mahapatra, chair of the Information Systems and Operations Management Department, and three faculty members helped design and implement the Ericsson program.

trying to learn on their own, using, for example, generic data sets to try to run models," White said. "It just wasn't relevant. What we did was say why don't we develop a program customized for Ericsson, using Ericsson data sets, using Ericsson homework assignments, focusing on the key courses that we think are the most important to have."

It took almost a year to design and refine the program, but White said the program now is eliciting interest "from across all of our different business areas.

"We found that this was a fantastic way to bring a cross section of the company together working on projects that would be meaningful across our whole organization," White said. "The professors at UTA were thought leaders.

They were collaborative, flexible to the kinds of things we needed, and in the end, they were really interested in our results. It was about meaningful business impacts."

The certificate program, White and Dr. Mahapatra said, reflects how data-driven decision-making needs to evolve in corporate environments where employees have extensive experience in their fields of expertise but little or no understanding of data science.

"What many companies have done is put our data science graduates together with their own employees who have 10-15 years of industry experience," Mahapatra said. "If the domain knowledge is very dense and complex, you can't just bring in someone with a data science background and they'll be able

to make sense of the data."

The executive certificate program, Mahapatra said, is part of an ongoing broader strategy to make his department and the College of Business more relevant to the business community in North Texas by developing relationships with companies and tying education to the real-world business challenges they face. Mahapatra credited Dean Harry Dombroski for encouraging industry engagement through educational programs and for making business analytics a key thrust of the College of Business.

"There is significant benefit to the institution by directly engaging with industry, and the certificate program is one such engagement," Mahapatra said.

That corporate demand for students with data science and analytics education remains strong, Mahapatra said, and the certificate program improves the classroom experience by allowing students to directly apply their learnings.

"I thought why don't we take it to the company," Mahapatra said. "Let's do it and see if it works. We found Ericsson was very willing and interested. It's not corporate training, which companies do all the time. It's not classroom teaching, which we do all the time. It's somewhat in the middle. We take classroom knowledge to the company. It's a lot of interaction that happens between the instructor and the students, and we customize – that's the key part of it – our program using the data set and problem set that are relevant to the company."

Mahapatra is quick to credit faculty

members, particularly the work of Dr. Nerur, Dr. Samuel, and Dr. Chen, for designing the program.

Samuel, an assistant professor, previously worked extensively in the telecommunications industry, including as a data scientist and senior manager for service delivery at Ericsson North America Customer Support. His understanding of both data science and the telecom domain was critical in determining how classes should be taught.

Samuel recognized how difficult it is for young data scientists to come into corporate environments, learn the industry quickly, and efficiently apply

“  
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– Brian White,  
Ericsson's Vice President and Head of Support  
and Repair for North America

what they learned in the classroom. Reskilling training to teach new data technology and techniques is helpful but less effective as a means of driving a data analytics culture for solving new business problems as they emerge.

"What I found is that in certain industries – oil and gas, telecom, healthcare – the domain is very dense, which means when you get hired in as a young data engineer, you spend the next five to six years learning the business," Samuel said. The long learning curve can frustrate many data scientists, in turn creating a revolving door and hampering a company's goal of retaining good employees.

Nerur also sees this as a challenge for

companies. "If an organization hires data scientists but doesn't have a data vision or strategy, they languish," Nerur said.

The Ericsson certificate program is designed to address that issue by providing employees who have deep industry experience a data-analytics lens through which to look at business problems differently.

Samuel, Nerur, and Chen invested time to learn about Ericsson to make data science more meaningful.

"Our contention is that this is the best way for organizations to go," Nerur said. "It works, in my opinion, by not only imparting data science knowledge

but also showing how to approach problem solving within their domains. Once that takes root and people see tangible progress, it will spread throughout the organization."

Chen, who has experience in industry research and conducting data science projects with companies, taught a course in the Ericsson program on advanced analytics and found the

students highly motivated because they used what they learned immediately in their jobs.

Chen said he presents some of his past industry projects as illustrations of how to apply data science. "I obviously also do that in my regular UTA classes," he said. "In this case, there is a heavier emphasis, as the students can relate to and appreciate real-world projects."

White is one who recognized such long-term benefits of the program. "The intent," White said, "was to build and reinforce a culture around data that would be very innovative, creative, and driven towards a competitive differentiation in the marketplace."



## Annual Business Analytics Symposium

The College of Business Center for Innovation and Digital Transformation annually organizes a Business Analytics Symposium as a forum for North Texas industry professionals and academics to discuss technological advances and business applications of data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI). The fifth symposium, held in March, attracted about 200 attendees representing 55 companies. A key attraction was the AWS DeepRacer event, sponsored jointly by Amazon Web Services (AWS) and French multinational technology company Capgemini. The DeepRacer event allowed hands-on experience of applying Reinforcement Learning, an advanced machine learning technique, to train and drive a model race car on a track. In addition to technology discussions led by industry experts, the symposium featured an analytics competition, sponsored by Alcon, for student teams from Metroplex area universities and a recruiting event that allowed companies to meet business analytics students and graduates of UTA. The next symposium is scheduled for October 2021. For more information, contact Santos Budiman, Director of the Center for Innovation and Digital Transformation, at [digital.innovation@uta.edu](mailto:digital.innovation@uta.edu).



PHOTOS BY SHARON ELLMAN/ELLMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

# New Dean's Leadership Circle Awards First Scholarships

The Dean's Leadership Circle (DLC), established in 2019 to solicit donations for scholarships, has raised more than \$220,000, with 100 percent of donations going toward support for UTA College of Business undergraduate and graduate students.

The DLC Scholarship Committee recently identified 10 students who will receive the first scholarships, which range from \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year for a total of \$84,000 over a four year period.

Sarah Caldwell (2007, BS, Accounting; 2011, MS, Taxation), a DLC member, knows firsthand the significance of a little financial support to launching a career.

"When I was going to school, I worked full-time and went to school at night," said Caldwell, a Certified Public Accountant and partner at JTaylor. "I was fortunate. I had a job where I was able to pay my rent and pay my tuition as I went along. I got an accounting scholarship ... around \$1,000, and I was over the moon. It was unexpected. A thousand dollars may not sound like a lot now, but it was huge back then. The recognition — it made me feel so special. You're grinding away, and you're recognized for that."

Caldwell was sold on the DLC after hearing Dean Harry Dombroski speak passionately about UTA and the College of Business. She said UTA has a top-notch accounting program, and she credits one of her professors for personally helping to land her first job at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

"My whole career really is based on UTA beyond the education part," she said. "I'm in a position now to totally afford to give back. I'm in this position because of the support I had there."

UTA's support was not just financial, she said. She also received mentoring and network support from her accounting professors that were significant contribu-



Sarah Caldwell

SHARON ELLMAN/ELLMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

tions to her landing that first job.

"All those things you hear about building your network and who you know, that's really powerful," she said. "I didn't really understand it at the time I was going to school there, but now, in retrospect, I realize the connections I made through UTA are responsible for all these things."

"UTA students," Caldwell added, "have a reputation that I'm proud of. We're hard workers. We're gritty. A lot of us are working full-time and going to school. Some people have kids and families. When they get out into the workforce, they're able to handle the bumps and keep on persevering because of their previous experiences."

Jesse Chandler Bunn (2021, BBA, Marketing) is a prime example to which Caldwell is referring. Bunn is working his way through his final two semesters, holding two part-time jobs, one at Walgreens and the other with a moving company. The global pandemic quashed his summer internship with GM Financial.

He is grateful for both the work he has and the scholarships he has received, which help him reduce the amount of debt he

will have when he finishes his education. Even though he will not graduate until Spring 2021, Bunn already is volunteering to help the DLC to attain its goal of raising \$1 million annually by participating as an ambassador for the College of Business.

"The scholarships are so incredibly important, not only to get students in the door but to keep them focused on their studies and not have to work a job or two," Bunn says. "I have a lot of friends who work part-time and full-time just to get themselves through college. A program like the Dean's Leadership Circle is great to allow them to not have to do that. It's just one less stress on their minds. It's what's so incredibly beautiful about this program. It has the opportunity to do so much good."

Scholarship awardees announced in August include Saide Abreu, Zaria Bilal, Hailey Compton, Brianna Gomez, Suhail Haque, Antonio Holman-Franco, Alexis Jauregui, Caleb Malinowski, Ivan Perez, and Victoria Trevino. Each of them said the scholarships represent both recognition of their hard work as well as the promise of a future that can be dedicated to their academics.

"Being awarded this scholarship is an honor and has made me reflect with fondness on the steps taken to get here and also to look forward to exciting things to come," Malinowski said.

For Abreu, the scholarship "is an opportunity for me to be able to fulfill my dreams." Compton, Gomez, Holman-Franco, and Jauregui each said the scholarship provides additional motivation to continue their academic successes. Haque and Bilal said they are honored by UTA's faith and investment in their potential, which Bilal said will "make me want to try harder in my studies and to not fail those who believe in me. It is the motivation I will need, especially with the stressful issues we are facing today."

# Inaugural MAVS 100 Event Highlights Entrepreneurial Spirit

## 2ND ANNUAL MAVS 100

**When:** February 26, 2021

**Where:** Live! by Loews – Arlington Texas

**How to be nominated for 2021:** Nomination forms can be completed online at [www.uta.edu/mavs100](http://www.uta.edu/mavs100).

For additional information, email Edmund Prater at [epater@uta.edu](mailto:epater@uta.edu).

As a serial entrepreneur, Edmund Prater, professor of Information Systems and Operations Management, knows how difficult it is to launch a business from scratch. Entrepreneurs, Prater said, know that “everything we teach in business is theory until they have to make payroll.”

So, when two alumni, Connie McCarty (1997, MS, Taxation) and Drew Madsen (2006, BBA, Accounting) approached UTA College of Business Dean Harry Dombroski (1979, BBA, Accounting) with an idea to recognize the top Maverick-owned businesses, Prater enthusiastically jumped on board, helping the College of Business launch its inaugural MAVS 100 recognition program.

The first event was held in January, and the second is scheduled for February 2021 at the same location, Live! by Loews – Arlington Texas. The event includes a cocktail reception, dinner, awards ceremony, and networking reception after dinner.

“The MAVS 100 is a celebration of the entrepreneurial spirit that exists at UTA and that resides in our many alumni,” Dean Dombroski said. “It’s an opportunity for us to recognize these individuals, their accomplishments, and their contributions to the community.”

Sabrina Harrison (2005, BBA, International Business/Spanish) is a good example of the UTA

entrepreneurs that the inaugural event was designed to honor.

She is the co-owner, along with her husband, Field Harrison, of Mint Dentistry, which has 64 locations in the Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston metropolitan areas. She also is a mother of two who still finds time for philanthropic activities, such as serving on the Big Brothers Big Sisters Lone Star executive board.

“Success appears a lot easier than it actually is,” Harrison said. “The training ground for every victory is established in the background, in the years of process and preparation that others will never see. There’s a lot of sacrifice that comes with public victories.”

For Harrison and her husband, the process and preparation she spoke of includes a belief that as business owners they must strive to make a positive impact in the lives of others.

CAET Project Management Consultants LLC received top recognition at the first dinner, ranking as the No. 1 fastest-growing Maverick business. The companies were ranked based on financial data submitted to Madsen, a certified public accountant and partner with Sutton Frost Cary LLP.

Molly Sandlin, (2015, MBA) president and owner of CAET Project Management, said UTA



Sabrina Harrison

has played a significant role in her career, and she is honored by the recognition. “It’s through programs like MAVS 100 that you can see all of the success that is tied to UTA,” she said.

In addition to the opportunity to bring attention to Maverick-owned businesses, the event, Prater said, is a chance to enhance connections between the college’s “entrepreneur ecosystem” and its widespread business graduate network. According to Prater, the entrepreneurial spirit that the dean speaks of runs deeper at UTA “than people realize. Over 60 percent of our undergraduates are working to put themselves through school, so they’re entrepreneurial by necessity.”

The idea for the MAVS 100 was forged in that enterprising spirit and competitive fire. “I’m a competitive person,” said McCarty, a principal with Rainwater Business Advisors, LLC. “And my business partner is an Aggie. We went to a work event, and everybody was talking to him and not me. He told me, ‘It’s an Aggie thing.’ He kept telling me about the Aggie 100, and I thought why isn’t UTA doing that?”

McCarty, Prater, and Dean Dombroski tapped Texas A&M for its experience and knowledge. McCarty worked to spread the word, and Madsen calculated the year-over-year growth that determined the rankings, “You go to all kinds of dinners and fundraisers, and they all seem to be the same, but this — and all credit to UTA — this really was above and beyond what I expected it to be,” Madsen said.



Molly Sandlin

# 2020 MAVS 100 RECOGNIZED COMPANIES

### Top 30 ranking in bold

- A+ Academy Driving School, LLC
- Aeroblaze Laboratory
- American Carton Company **19**
- Ankr Agency
- Arch Venture Partners
- Arlington Wellness
- Chiropractic Center **10**
- Aroga
- Ascendix Technologies
- Aulsbrook Law Firm
- Averett Financial **5**
- Baird, Hampton & Brown **18**
- Biel Partners, LLC, Commercial Real Estate **25**
- Bioworld Merchandising **29**
- Byerly & Associates, CPA **6**
- Cadmus Dental
- CAET Project Management Consultants **1**
- cc2media
- Cedar Ridge Advisors
- Chick-fil-A White Rock
- CHS Architects
- Clean Finances **7**
- ClosedWon
- Cloud Elements
- Cloud9 Perception
- Dayne’s Craft Barbecue
- De La Parra Sprinklers
- Digital TaaS
- DRG Concepts
- Estes Insurance Group, LLC
- EW - Estrada Webb & Associates
- EVX Midstream
- Fort Worth Axe Factory
- Gallery2You
- GetOnDemand
- GFF Media, a division of GFF
- GM Pharmaceuticals
- Groove Jones **12**
- Haptic Solutions (Hapticsol)
- Hardee Partners, LLC
- Harris Packaging **17**
- Harrow Health, Inc.
- Hurtado Barbecue Co.
- Innovative-IDM
- Inspirations Catering & Gourmet Shop
- Kanna (Formerly Fade)
- Kemp and Sons General Services
- L Henry Trask - Architect **30**
- Locavore
- Mackenzie Eason
- Mapsnapper Group
- Martin House Brewing Company **14**
- MEI Group
- Mint Dentistry
- Nano Liquid Solutions
- Oakhollow Group
- Oilwellstore.com
- Outdoor Element **4**
- OverRidge Wealth Advisors **23**
- Parekh Architects PLLC
- Payix
- Per4Max **20**
- Perkins Engineering Consultants, Inc. **24**
- Polo Carpet Cleaning & Flooring
- Powers Brown Architecture
- PSK LLP **28**
- RSI -- Resonant Sensors Inc.
- Ricochet Fuel Distributors, Inc. **21**
- Robokind
- Rolling Ice
- Sellmark Corporation **8**
- Senior Life Simplified **11**
- Shield Engineering Group, PLLC **26**
- Sol Gro
- Spectrum Staffing Group **3**
- Sugar Bee Sweets Bakery
- Sun ‘N’ Sand Accessories **27**
- Tax Advisors Group
- The Barron Companies, Inc.
- The Good Jerky
- The Law Office of Lantis G. Roberts, PLLC **9**
- The Sanford House Inn & Spa
- Thiel & Thiel, Inc
- TransSolutions **15**
- Travel Queen(s)
- UMoveFree.com **22**
- Unica Janitorial Solutions LLC **2**
- Veryable, Inc.
- Vigor Active
- VLK Architects **13**
- Watermark Pro Solutions
- Whitley Penn **16**
- Women’s Health Services
- WordPlay PR & Marketing
- Zatar Truck
- Zenu App



Members of the Mavs 100 gather for a group photo after the inaugural dinner.

PHOTOS BY SHARON ELLMAN/ELLMAN PHOTOGRAPHY



*In 2003, John and Judy Goolsby directed a \$2 million anonymous donation to The University of Texas at Arlington to help establish the Goolsby Leadership Academy (GLA) and Goolsby Distinguished Professorships in the College of Business. The emphasis of the academy is on three pillars of leadership: integrity, courage, and impact. The initial donation in honor of Goolsby was matched by College of Business fundraising and has allowed 435 students to go through the program and launch careers and businesses. The GLA has been well-chronicled, but the story behind its genesis is less well-known. Stories about the GLA's two programs and the successes of two of its scholars can be found on pages 18 through 21. This is the tale of the link between the College of Business and the enigmatic, reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes, who at one time was America's wealthiest individual and whose life is the subject of legends. This is an account of a corporation's rebirth and the business acumen, integrity, courage, and impact required to navigate the storm that erupted after Hughes' death.*

**John Goolsby's  
Life Lessons in  
Integrity,  
Courage, and  
Impact**

# Order out of Chaos

William Rice Lummis, the closest living relative to reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes and a Houston attorney responsible for handling his massive sprawling estate, came calling in 1977. He needed help from someone with impeccable integrity. A fellow attorney directed him to a high school friend who graduated from UTA's College of Business.

At first, though, John Goolsby (1964, BBA, Accounting) wasn't interested.

The thought of leaving his own San Antonio real estate investment and development company and stepping into the Texas dust storm that whirled around Hughes' complex estate holdings was not appealing. Goolsby's friend had warned him about the "nightmare" that Lummis was living.

"He said he doesn't have any idea who he can trust to run the business," Goolsby said. "The estate has a lot of value, but many of the businesses are nearly insolvent. He's looking for people he can trust and know how to run a business."

Understandably, Goolsby's initial response was "thanks, but no thanks."

Hughes, addicted to prescription drugs and

living out of sight in Mexico, had died intestate – without a will – a year earlier. About "40 phony wills" were eventually filed, Goolsby said, some of which attempted to tie in the Mormon church and Rice University in an effort to bolster their claims to Hughes' wealth, which by some accounts was \$1.1 billion at the time of his death. According to reports, more than 1,000 people staked claims as heirs.

At the same time, the federal government and several states, Texas and California in particular, wanted their share of taxes.

Hughes had owned a wide range of businesses: Hughes Tool Company, Hughes Aircraft Company, a movie studio and television station; mining operations; aviation manufacturing and services, including now defunct Trans World Airlines and Hughes Airwest; casinos and hotels; and thousands of acres of real estate in Arizona, California, and Nevada. Hughes was an avid aviator who once held several airspeed records. He had disposed of Hughes Tool Company and Hughes Aircraft Company prior to his death and what was left of his corporation when he died was more of a "collection of Hughes' hobbies, not a company,"

**Continued on next page**

JOHN GOOLSBY PHOTOS BY JASON KOSTER

Goolsby said, “20 or 25 different types of businesses that didn’t seem to relate to a company you could easily build around.”

Lummis was a partner in the law firm of Andrews, Kurth, Campbell, & Jones, which had handled Hughes’ and his father’s business affairs for years. His firm probably knew more about the companies than anyone actually employed in them, Goolsby said.

But, as Goolsby’s friend warned, Lummis had questioned not only the ability but the ethical standards of many top executives, which had created an environment that was stifling the company.

“The organizational structure appeared to be one in which nobody was accountable,” Goolsby said. “Lummis did an incredible job of creating order out of chaos and determined that it was going to be an ethically managed company.”

That’s why Lummis called on Goolsby. He needed executives with the background, skills, and integrity to help make the company profitable and to develop management and ownership structures for three core businesses — gaming, aviation, and real estate — that would someday be turned over to Hughes’ legitimate heirs.

“I can’t say enough about his leadership, judgment, and integrity,” Goolsby said of Lummis. “I can’t imagine what he must have gone through by the time he got to me.”

It took three years, but in 1980 Goolsby worked up the courage to step out of his comfort zone. After graduating from UTA, Goolsby had worked for a national hospital management company and was heading their division in Portland but had always dreamed of owning his own company. When the hospital management company changed hands in a hostile takeover, Goolsby joined up with friends in San Antonio to start their own real estate investment and development business. When Lummis called the second time, one of Goolsby’s associates encouraged him – it

was time to tackle a new venture.

He was brought into the Hughes organization as the vice president of Summa Corporation, with overall responsibility for managing Hughes’ vast real estate holdings in Arizona, Southern California, and Nevada. Lummis also had recently recruited new executives to head up the gaming, aviation, and other businesses.

“My job,” Goolsby recalled with a laugh, “was to figure out what in the hell we could do with all this real estate. We knew there was a lot of value there, but we also understood the liquidity it could provide to buy us time to resolve the ownership issues.”

No doubt, the job was not easy. The company was cash poor and did not have the capital needed to properly maintain its seven Las Vegas and Reno hotels and casinos to remain competitive. The company did own “virtually all of the vacant land on the Las Vegas strip,” Goolsby said, about 25,000 acres in the city area. “Nobody could build a casino or expand one without dealing with us. It put us in a tremendous position of leverage so we could get some real value out of our land.” But an economic recession put a clamp on gaming industry development and expansion at the time.

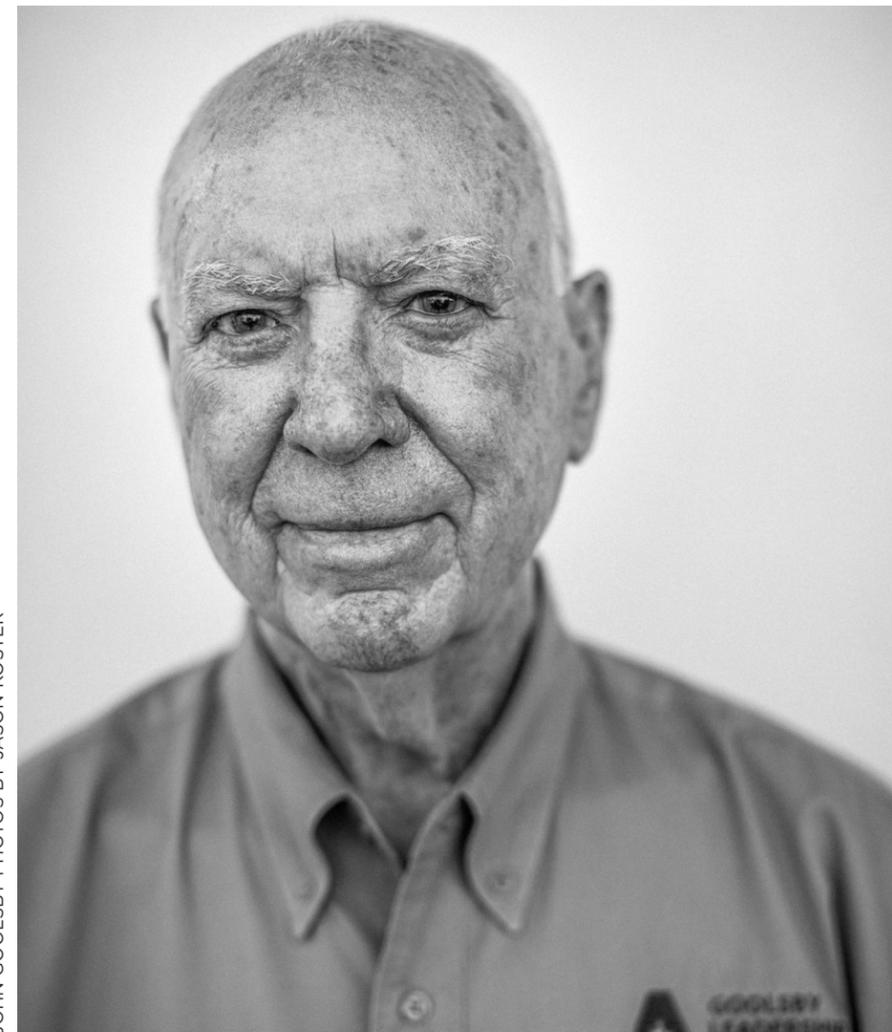
Instead, Goolsby found initial

success in Tucson. During World War II, the U.S. military had encouraged Hughes to move his aircraft manufacturing operations off the West Coast to Arizona or Nevada as added protection from any potential Japanese attack. Hughes owned about 15,000 acres in the Tucson area, Goolsby said.

“We set up a competitive process for interested investors. A banking institution in Colorado bought 12,000 to 14,000 acres in an all-cash deal,” Goolsby said. “That gave us the capital to take a long-term view, and it gave me a better ability to focus on the Los Angeles and Las Vegas real estate.”

In the meantime, Lummis worked on selling off some of the gaming and aviation operations. Hughes Helicopter Company, which manufactured the Apache for the U.S. Army, was sold to McDonnell Douglas in a \$500 million cash deal, Goolsby said, a transaction that provided additional liquidity and enabled the first distributions to the heirs of Hughes, who had been patient to that point.

Goolsby began new developments, including a large retail mall on the Las Vegas Strip, in partnership with a large retail center developer, and a large mixed-use development that would essentially become a new central busi-



JOHN GOOLSBY PHOTOS BY JASON KOSTER

ness district for Las Vegas with offices, restaurants, and condos. Other Las Vegas projects included several office and business parks. In the mid-1980s, Goolsby initiated the master planning of Summerlin, a community near Las Vegas that eventually would grow to more than 40,000 homes and related uses. In California, he directed the development of about 1,500 highly valuable acres along the San Diego Freeway near Marina del Rey.

To be successful in these projects, Goolsby said, the company not only needed financial capital but social capital. The company had to not only bring in new executives but change its battered image. They had to restore integrity and build trust with public officials, bankers,

customers, and business partners.

The company historically had a reputation for just buying whatever it wanted. “If they wanted legislation passed in the state of Nevada, their reputation was to do whatever was necessary to get legislation enacted,” Goolsby said. “Before I got there it was highly unusual for our executives to appear before a hearing of the county commission or the planning commission, leaving that up to attorneys and PR people. Likewise, charitable organizations involvement was something for the PR guys. We would throw some money at it but have little real engagement.”

Goolsby said they “started a very aggressive outreach program where we encouraged all of our executives to

## EDUCATION

- 1964** – BBA, Accounting, UTA College of Business
- 1994** – UTA Distinguished Business Leader
- 1998** – UTA Distinguished Alumni Award
- 2000** – Member, University of Texas System Chancellor’s Council
- 2002-2014** – Member, UTA Development Board
- 2003** – Founder, Goolsby Leadership Academy
- 2003-2014** – Member, UTA College of Business Advisory Council
- 2015-2019** – Member, UTA President’s Advisory Board

## CAREER

- Vice President of Summa Corporation, 1980
- President and member of the board of directors, Hughes Corporation, 1988
- President and CEO, Hughes Corporation, 1990
- Owner, John Goolsby Investments, 2011

become actively engaged in at least two civic or community organizations.” The company established a public affairs committee to coordinate civic and political involvement. Over time, Goolsby said, it “was a lot of little things that amounted to more than a little,” helping to transform the image of the Howard Hughes Corporation.

Those “little things” can be seen now through the Goolsby Leadership Academy’s emphasis on three core values — integrity, courage, and impact.

Goolsby personally shared his stories with the first dozen or so GLA cohorts. He eventually stopped, though, deciding that business had changed so dramatically that students would be better served by someone who was still actively involved “on the front line.”

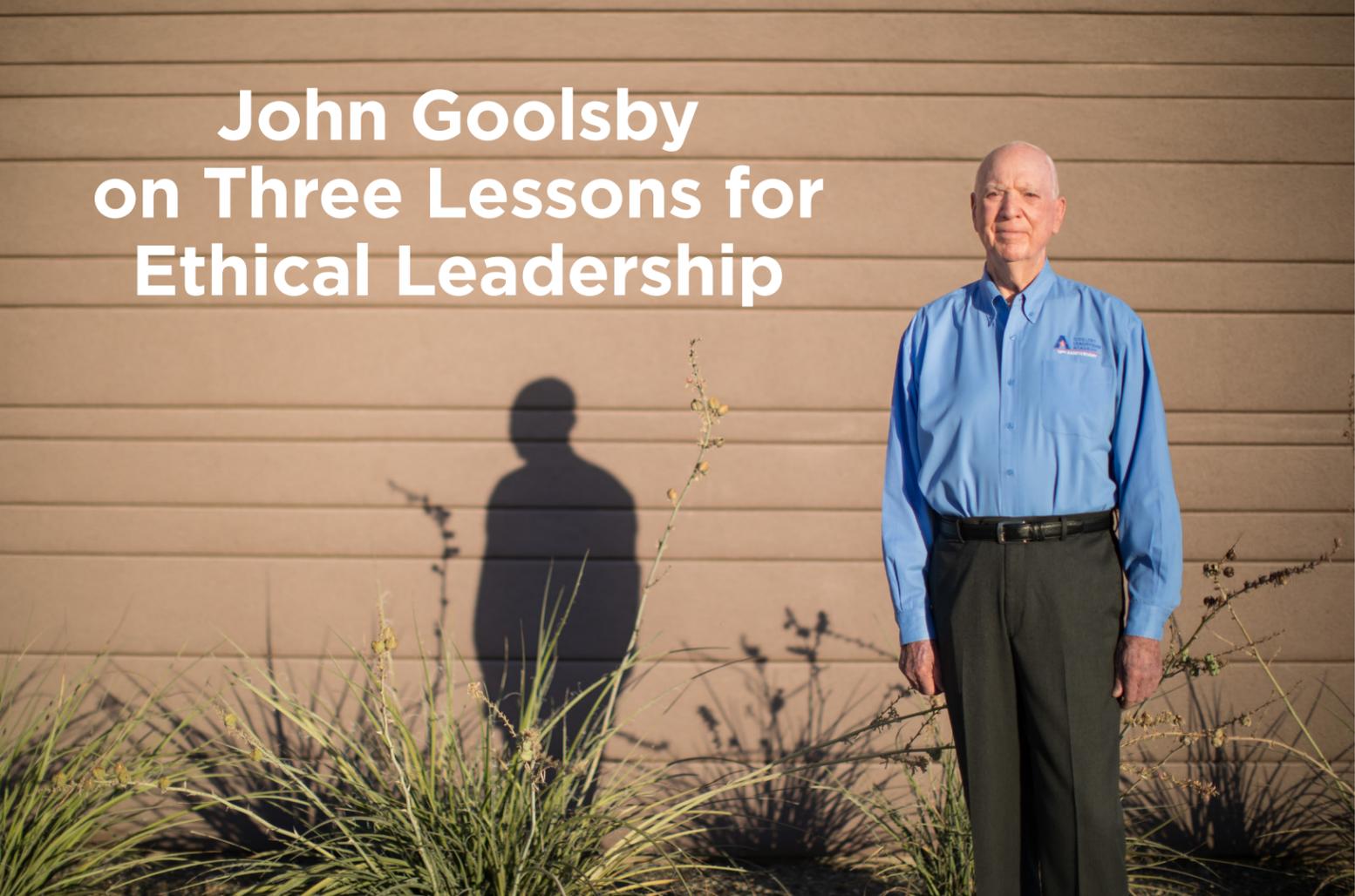
He retired from the storytelling role, but the lessons he learned firsthand, the values he embraced as he worked through the chaos that was Howard Hughes’ legacy, have not. They remain a meaningful foundation for the academy.



HOWARD HUGHES SPEAKS IN 1938 BEFORE THE PRESS CLUB IN WASHINGTON, D.C. HE DIED WITHOUT A WILL IN 1976.

HOWARD HUGHES PHOTO FROM NATIONAL ARCHIVES

# John Goolsby on Three Lessons for Ethical Leadership



JOHN GOOLSBY PHOTOS BY JASON KOSTER

John Goolsby outlined three key lessons on ethical leadership in a 2010 *Organizational Dynamics* journal article that he co-authored with UTA management professor David Mack and Professor Emeritus James Quick. Those three lessons, Goolsby noted a decade later, still provide good insight for budding business leaders and entrepreneurs.

## 1 KNOW WHAT IS NEGOTIABLE AND WHAT IS NOT.

“In general, the way I look at this is pretty simple: doing the right thing when nobody is watching. There are some things that obviously you can’t compromise on. One of the things you find in business is that ethical lapses are sometimes overlooked if the performance is there. That’s always been a concern of mine. Just because you’re doing well doesn’t mean the actions you take are ethical. People can begin to take advantage of that opportunity — I’m bringing home the bacon, therefore, I deserve this, which is exactly what we found when we got to the Hughes organization.

“One thing people get confused about with ethics is

legality. We talked in that article about the difference between ethical behavior and legal behavior. Just because something is legal doesn’t make it ethical.

“One of the first deals I did I entered into a joint venture agreement with a major shopping center developer to develop a shopping center on the Las Vegas strip. The agreement was pretty straight forward. We had the land; he had the expertise. Among the conventions of the agreement was he guaranteed the cost of the mall. You have to remember that in 1980 inflation was running rampant. Interest rates had gone to 21 percent. That’s the environment we were building this mall in, and he had guaranteed the cost. Long story short, when we finished the mall, it was a huge success, but we had projected the cost of the mall ... at no more than \$100 million. Well, for various

reasons, the costs came in at about \$110 million. I had a firm binding agreement. He came to me and said, you know, I’m \$10 million under water. What can you do? Frankly, if I had just said a deal is a deal, I probably would have been a hero to my board. Instead, I said why don’t you bring in the detail of all the cost overruns, and we’ll take a look at them. That’s what he did. Clearly, there were a few items that were his responsibility. On these other things, I said you weren’t responsible for what happened with interest rates; you weren’t responsible for huge increases in the cost of steel. I agreed to share with him about \$6 or \$7 million in cost overruns even though we had no legal obligation. It was the right thing to do. We were going to be partners for a long time, and I knew we wanted to have a good relationship.

“Another thing — when I left to go to Las Vegas, I was in San Antonio. I was partner in a real estate firm with two other partners. I was 38 at the time. They were both in their 60s. They had relied on me, since I was the youngest of the group, to carry on the firm. Before I went to Hughes, I asked the Hughes people to give me about three months to get things settled. I sought out a [new] partner [to replace me]. The partner that I brought in bought me out, bought one of the other [existing] partners out, and entered into an agreement with the third partner. Everybody was happy. I didn’t feel comfortable leaving until I’d resolved all of that. That’s another example of doing the right thing. I could have bailed out, but that’s not the way I wanted to do business.”

## 2 CHARACTER AND ETHICS REQUIRE CONTINUAL PURPOSEFUL EFFORT AND MINDFULNESS.

“Absolutely. This speaks for itself. It means, first of all, there have to be some firm, well-understood guidelines that run through the organization. In our case [at Hughes] that meant a specific book of ethical guidelines. Most companies probably do that. Secondly, there has to be uniformity in enforcement and some enforcement mechanisms. Anytime we were involved in dealings, we were expected to be aware, but once a year, just to reinforce it, we had every employee sign a document that said they had not only read the ethics policy originally, but they read it again this year, and looking back at their conduct over the year, they had to confirm that nothing they had done would be a violation of those ethics. That was just another way of constantly reinforcing that. But

the real reinforcement is leadership from the top. If it’s good for all the employees, it’s good for all the executives; it’s good for the CEO. That’s one of things we found at the Hughes organization ... executives were considerably more concerned about their own comfort and perks than they were about the success of the company. So, one thing we sought to instill in everybody was that the entity, the owner, should be the beneficiary of the efforts of the employees and the expenditure of the company’s funds and not the employees. It’s a simple concept, but one we had to go to a great deal of effort to eliminate. We eliminated most of the executive perks that were just nonsensical. For example, none of our executives ever drove themselves to the airport. We had to employ a fleet of drivers. The rank and file got none of that but could see the excesses. And what that does to the employees, it encourages them to cut corners, as well. If the big boys don’t care about the nickels and dimes, then why should we? It just encourages sloppiness and bad behavior. So those are the kinds of things that I think about when I think about instilling and enforcing conduct and ethical policies.”

## 3 THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A MORAL COMPASS — A PERSON OF CHARACTER RESPONDS NOT JUST TO REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS OF THE MOMENT BUT TO CORE VALUES.

“It is important that you understand that there are things that are important to you, things that affect other people, things that affect not just the company but the community, and doing things that are consistent with ensuring a better result for all those constituencies. It’s as simple as, you know, when you lie, when you fudge the numbers, when you engage in those types of things, it just undermines the integrity of the whole organization. It’s something that some people are born with. For me, it was simple: I was raised to do the right thing, and not everybody has that. It was a simple pattern for me to understand right from wrong. There were people within the Hughes organization who had a higher level of moral standards than others, and it was obvious to identify those when you came into situations where those conflict. Those have to be resolved, and you have to come to a common understanding. That’s not always easy, because people come from different backgrounds, different places, and [have] different moral compasses. It’s not necessarily something you can teach. It’s something you can demonstrate.”



Goolsby Academy Cohort 16, which graduated spring 2020.

PHOTO BY SHARON ELLMAN/ELLMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

## GLA: Teaching New Emerging Leaders, Entrepreneurs for Challenging Times

Integrity, courage, and impact are the three pillars that the UTA Goolsby Leadership Academy (GLA) emphasizes in its program to teach undergraduate students how to become future business leaders and entrepreneurs. In the economic wake of the global coronavirus pandemic, those values will likely serve Goolsby scholars well.

Jerry Hubbard, Director of the GLA and a clinical professor, said the academy prepares students in its Emerging Leader and Early Leader programs to face challenges by engaging, supporting, and leading communities, whether in everyday commerce or, as now, facing new economic challenges.

“We do that throughout the programs in ways that start the thought process,” Dr. Hubbard said. “This can’t be something that you just think about because there’s a national event. It’s something that has to be a core part of helping GLA scholars identify and apply their personal strengths, and that’s part of the academy.”

The GLA started its 17th cohort this fall in the Emerging Leader Program, which is designed for juniors and seniors. Cohorts are a group of students who will go through the two-year program together. The target size of each group is 30 students, each of whom must maintain a 3.1 GPA or better to

stay in the program. Junior and senior students are selected based on written applications and interviews, most of which were done this year via video conferencing in the spring.

Students learn from a diverse selection of business executives and entrepreneurs in the classroom as well as through internships, exploratory study, and special projects. GLA scholars have participated in the MavPitch business competition, and about 4 percent have gone on to start their own businesses.

The academy focuses on the psychology of leadership, management and decision-making, ethics, goal-setting, performance measurement, team building, and a special emphasis on communication. Coursework includes classes on understanding cultural diversity in both national and international business, trustworthy leadership, conflict/negotiation, and analysis of sociocultural, political, and legal business issues.

John Goolsby, the namesake of the academy who directed a \$2 million anonymous donation as seed funding, praised the program’s focus on connecting students with executives who are on the front line of business and how the academy encourages entrepreneurship.

“One of the things we thought was really important is that we needed a component that involves interaction with exec-

utives who are active in the business world today,” Goolsby said. “It’s not enough to hear from the professors. We wanted these people to see what it’s like in the real world.”

Goolsby said that a primary goal was to develop students that the business world wants to hire, “but we also wanted to encourage entrepreneurship. There’s nothing more satisfying than creating something on your own.”

To encourage entrepreneurship, the academy stresses individual “strengths-based leadership,” said David Mack, Senior Advisor to the Dean and a clinical professor of management who served as the second director of the GLA from 2006 until 2016. Dr. Mack was part of a group that included former Dean Dan Himarios and Jim Quick, the first GLA Director, who shaped the final academy concept and presented it to Goolsby.

“Leaders come from a variety of backgrounds, and they lead in different ways,” Mack said. “We decided that our focus was going to be helping each individual figure out what their strengths are and to capitalize on those, and also for them to figure out what their challenges are and how to minimize the impact of those.”

The Early Leader Program, designed for freshmen and sophomores, began in the fall of 2015, thanks to a generous gift from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF). In this program, students are required to take economics, management, and business communication courses, and to begin to develop teamwork through group projects.

“We start with the freshmen to figure out their strengths,” Hubbard said. “The process is building them into a cohort.”

Both programs put a special emphasis on communication. “We stress communication because an effective leader must be able to communicate orally and in writing,” said Becky Neilson, Assistant Director. “I tell them I can’t make them all into leaders, but I can help them learn to communicate more effectively.”

Mack said he personally takes great pride in the diversity of Goolsby scholars who benefitted from scholarships that helped them focus on leadership education. “We’ve impacted several hundred students. In many ways, the academy has become the pinnacle for the College of Business,” Mack said. “Employers in many places now realize the quality of these students.”

## BNSF Executive Says GLA Helped Her Professional Poise

It has been 14 years since Farah Lawler — then Farah Khan — graduated as a member of the first Goolsby Leadership Academy (GLA) cohort and went straight to work for BNSF, but the lessons she learned, the experiences she had, and the connections she made stick with her today.

Lawler is based in Denver and leads five employees on the BNSF minerals team, which sells rail transportation services for materials ranging from sand used in oil-and-gas fracking to clay used in products like kitty litter and cosmetics. Early on, during her time in the GLA, she was able to refine her professional poise, improve communication skills — oral and written — and develop long-lasting relationships — all of which have helped in her career.

“You take some leadership classes that you wouldn’t normally take when you’re an undergrad,” Lawler said. “Then you also have the cohort. You have the group of tightly knit folks that learn from each other.”

The program’s focus on integrity, ethics, and interactions with business leaders help undergraduate students get a “real-life, quick, one-on-one mentorship early on,” she said. Lawler also emphasized that going through the program with the same group teaches the value of developing good business relationships.

“I think we had a pretty tight-knit class,” she said. “It is so important in your career to lean on your peers. I felt like that really helped me a lot in my career. I’m really close with peers at work, and we bounce things off each other. And I think because we do that, we end up making better decisions. I think if you can find relationships in your career, and we’re all in the mindset of helping each other, then everybody’s just better off.”

Lawler’s relationship with BNSF started during one of the academy’s classes when she met the former chief marketing officer, who came to speak.

From the employer’s perspective, she believes the GLA helps identify top students who are motivated to become leaders.

“A young student showing interest in that early, it already shows that this person probably has some grit and some determination in life and wants to improve their skill set,” she said.



### Farah Lawler

BBA, Marketing 2006

Goolsby Leadership Academy Cohort 1, 2004-2006

General Director of Field Sales

Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway



# GLA Taught Entrepreneurial Student To Be Comfortable with Discomfort

At several points along his path to becoming an entrepreneur and restaurateur, Niddal Abedrabbo knew that to be successful he would need to make himself uncomfortable – to push himself in unknown directions. It was his education at UTA, and specifically two years in the Goolsby Leadership Academy (GLA), that helped him understand how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Growing up in New York City was difficult for Abedrabbo and his family, a time when he said he never applied himself. He had little motivation and interest in academics.

“I was always preoccupied with worrying about other things,” he said. “At one point, I actually lived in the ‘projects.’ I even remember one day I was playing in the playground outside of my building, and I was so ecstatic to find a nickel laying on the ground. I was so happy that I found it because I could go buy a yellow Charleston Chew candy with it from the bodega down the street.”

When he moved to Texas, Abedrabbo knew it was time to change.

“Something dawned on me,” he said. “I realized my future rested solely in how I spent my time at the university. That was the first time I applied myself in academics. I realized I had to step up. One of the things I also realized that was really important to me was if I wanted to grow as a person, to progress, to better myself, I have to challenge myself and put myself in uncomfortable positions.”

Abedrabbo completed his first 4.0 semester, which kickstarted a new energy to keep going, to keep succeeding in his academics. “I was proud I was able

to do that,” he said. “Because of my good grades, opportunities opened up. One was the GLA. I was blessed and fortunate to be part of that.”

The GLA, he said, gave him the courage and confidence to push himself, to confront being uncomfortable with the unknown or uncertain – qualities necessary for an entrepreneur.

“The faculty members were nothing short of outstanding,” Abedrabbo said. “They really care about the students and

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**The GLA gave me the courage and the confidence to take these risky moves. They say entrepreneurs pay for their job. That’s what you have to do because you’re looking into the future.**

– Niddal Abedrabbo

look after them as parents and mentors. And the core principles of integrity, courage, and impact are really instilled in you. That really gave me confidence that anything I wanted to do I could achieve.”

And achieve Abedrabbo did.

He received the University Scholar award while at UTA and graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2010.

Upon graduation, he started a career as a financial analyst at The Hewlett Packard Company, the multinational information technology company. He specialized in business models, operational processes, and management strategy.

Abedrabbo was awarded the 2012 Hewlett Packard Outstanding Efforts

Award and promoted in 2013, becoming one of the youngest analysts to lead HP’s \$1.8 billion revenue management system encompassing a multi-industry group of energy, technology, manufacturing, communications, media, auto and aerospace clients.

Despite his success, Abedrabbo felt there was more he could be doing. “I had this desire, this feeling inside, that there’s something more to life,” he said. “Don’t get me wrong. I’m not bashing a corporate career. People who do that, more power to them. But I always try to put myself in uncomfortable positions.”

He found discomfort, and eventually business motivation, in the face of a homeless man who stood on a street corner in Fort Worth.

“I would see this one man on the corner day after day. It just kind of affected me,” Abedrabbo said. “I thought I need to go talk to this person. I decided to have breakfast with him and so I pulled up and parked right next to him. It was a striking image. Me going to my business internship in a suit having breakfast with him. The police showed up and told me I had to move on. But a feeling of wanting to help always stayed inside me like a fire. How can I find a way to help organizations and people in need at the same time, while making sure I’m not on the street myself?”

His solution became his first business, the ZaTaR Food Truck, which serves up Mediterranean food with a New York twist.

Using four years of savings and the business experience he gained at HP, Abedrabbo launched ZaTaR and partnered the business with a new website, One For Mario (<http://oneformario.com>), a communal platform that allows customers to make donations, in person or online, which are then delivered physically by the food truck to various programs throughout the Metroplex. One For Mario fulfills Abedrabbo’s desire to make the homeless feel more dignified, more respected, and more human.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NIDDAL ABEDRABBO

com), a communal platform that allows customers to make donations, in person or online, which are then delivered physically by the food truck to various programs throughout the Metroplex. One For Mario fulfills Abedrabbo’s desire to make the homeless feel more dignified, more respected, and more human.

Relationships that Abedrabbo developed through the food truck business led to other opportunities, including a new brick-and-mortar restaurant, Harvest Hall, in Grapevine that is scheduled to open in October. Relationships mixed with hard-earned perspiration – cooking over a hot stove, in a hot metal truck, in the Texas heat – led to more entrepreneurial inspiration. Abedrabbo has become a franchise owner of Bahama Buck’s, which specializes in shaved-ice and tropical desserts and smoothies. He signed a partnership with the Texas Rangers to open two locations inside their new Globe Life Park and will be

## Niddal Abedrabbo

**BBA, Finance 2010  
Goolsby Leadership Academy  
Cohort 5, 2008-2010  
Owner, ZaTaR Food Truck,  
Bahama Buck’s**

open for business Spring 2021.

“One summer we were pretty hot and wanted to cool off,” he said. “We found a Bahama Buck’s behind the food truck park. We became hooked on gourmet shaved ice and smoothies.”

The COVID-19 pandemic forced Abedrabbo to temporarily shut down his operations and delay openings. But then again, he is familiar with being uncomfortable. That comes with entrepreneurship.

“Like I said, the GLA gave me the courage and the confidence to take these risky moves,” he explained. “They say entrepreneurs pay for their job. That’s what you have to do because you’re look-

ing into the future.”

Entrepreneurs understand, however, that taking calculated risks can lead to new opportunities, Abedrabbo said.

“One of the things I try to tell students is that when you do the right things, opportunities open up,” he said.

“Basically, what I learned along my journey is that when you do good work, honest work, with good efforts, opportunities always open up for you and lead to something better and greater. It’s really important to know that you may not have all of the answers, that everything is not a calculated move. I had no background in cooking or the food industry before deciding to jump in. You have to step out on limb and trust in yourself, your qualities. If they do their due diligence and proper research, then anyone can jump into anything and shouldn’t feel reluctant.”

No doubt Abedrabbo will always look forward to the next uncomfortable challenge.

# John Merrill

UTA Benefactor and Wealth Management Business Owner Knows Firsthand that Economic Resiliency Arises from the Creativity of Entrepreneurship

**Creative destruction.** It's a term that comes to mind for wealth management adviser John Merrill when he thinks about 2020. Some economists use the term to describe an inherent loop in capitalism – the economic evolution that occurs when businesses and industries fail but give rise to a wave of entrepreneurial creativity. This year could see widespread examples of economic creative destruction.



“Obviously I’ve never seen anything like it in my career,” said Merrill (2011, BS, University Studies), whose successful entrepreneurial path in financial services led him to fund three endowments in the College of Business. “I mean, I’ve had tastes of it – 9/11 was a small taste of one element of it, the 1987 crash was another taste of a small element.” But this year, he said, “in the everyday economy, it’s unbelievable how much things have changed.”

What Merrill is quick to add, though, is his insight drawn from his years of equities market research and applied practice as the President and Chief Investment Officer of his own company in Houston, Tanglewood Total Wealth Management. Turmoil is a factor in capitalism, but turmoil presents opportunities, which UTA business students and budding entrepreneurs can take to heart following the events of this year.

“Joseph Schumpeter, the famous economist from a different era, coined the phrase creative destruction to talk about how our economy is constantly destroying the old and evolving the new,” Merrill said. What remains constant, though, is the resiliency of the economy and the entrepreneurial and philanthropic nature of Americans.

“We have everything today that we’ve always had, which is the entrepreneurial spirit, the investigative minds,” Merrill said, “and we have tools that we couldn’t have imagined 20 or 30 years ago. If you look at our history, it’s one invention on top of another.”

Merrill attended UTA from 1966 to 1970 but left to pursue a job opportunity despite needing just one class to graduate. He returned in 2011 to complete his Bachelor of Science in University Studies, a broad-based degree that includes at least three subject areas.

Merrill’s concentration was in economics, government, and mathematics – disciplines that eventually would lead him to building a successful wealth management firm.

His success, in turn, enabled Merrill to support three UTA endowments: one for consultative sales, a second for scholarships for master’s students, and the third for the Financial Literacy and Personal Finance Program.

The program covers education on all aspects of basic finance for UTA students as well as through community outreach

“  
We have everything today that we've always had, which is the entrepreneurial spirit, the investigative minds, and we have tools that we couldn't have imagined 20 or 30 years ago.  
– John Merrill

programs, said Sanjiv Sabherwal, professor and Finance and Real Estate Department chair. Through workshops, clinics, programs such as Money Smart Week and information on its financial education platform (Moneyabcs.org), the Financial Literacy Program works to “bring all kinds of people interested in financial literacy together,” Dr. Sabherwal said.

Merrill’s support allows UTA to hire students as financial education specialists and programmers for its educational website. The specialists assist with organizing and conducting workshops and community programs, including the College of Business’ Money Smart Week, which is normally held each year in April but was canceled this year because of the pandemic.

Money Smart Week brings in professional financial advisers and bankers to conduct programs on a variety of topics such as “how to gain control over your finances, how to understand student loans, how to choose a credit card wisely, how to plan a household budget,” Sabherwal said.

Merrill also contributes expertise in financial management as chair of the Financial Literacy Program’s board, which includes bankers, insurance executives, other financial advisors, and finance professors who oversee the direction of the program.

Continued on next page

Merrill's career in wealth management evolved out of several serendipitous, sometimes turbulent, turns that led him from one opportunity to another. While at UTA, he had applied "as kind of a fluke" with a national sales organization, landing the job and heading off for Denver. That position would lead to an opportunity in real estate in Houston in the 1980s.

"Real estate was just hot; it was really just smoking at that time," he said. "They offered me a job as sales manager of their organization at a compensation that was just unbelievable."

But in about a year the real estate bubble imploded. Creative destruction. Merrill was forced to jump from real estate, discovering the emerging world of financial planning.

"Financial planning was just getting kicked off," he said. "I fell in love with the planning side. I was just very unfamiliar with it. The more I learned, the more I liked it. I decided this is a career. This is something I can really sink my teeth into."

What he did not like, however, was how financial planning at the time was primarily a sales and commission-driven business.

"I just wondered why can't I do all this but just for a fee," he said. "That was very novel at the time. Nobody in Houston was doing that, and I decided to try it. I'm not saying it was easy by any means. A lot of people were kind of suspicious of things they'd gotten for, quote-unquote, free because the commission was paid out, and now they had to write a check."

But Merrill saw it as the opportunity of the future, and he slowly and steadily built his company, Tanglewood, which just celebrated 40 years in February. His strategy was an emphasis on disciplined investing with a distinct perspective on the concept of asset diversification.

"When I came into the business, the watchword was diversification," he said. "Just be diversified. But as people in the business knew diversified meant different things to virtually everybody. There was no science around diversification. It was more



art than science. For some people, owning just blue-chip stocks, but all equities, was diversified. For some people it was all bonds."

In 1986, he read a journal article on asset allocation that launched him into his own research. The author had taken transaction data over a 20-year period and analyzed what impacted investment returns, determining that returns were less influenced by specific security ownership and more by a portfolio's asset allocation.

"Ninety-one percent of the returns came from asset allocation as they had defined it," Merrill said. "Only 9 percent came from security selection. So, it didn't turn out whether you owned Chevron or Exxon; it just meant how much you owned in energy."

Based on the article, Merrill did his own analysis of market transaction data that he purchased from the University of Chicago's Center for Research in Security Prices.

"That institution has every transac-

tion that's ever been made in its database," Merrill said. "Even back then it was a massive database. Back then I bought it for \$10,000 which, believe me, in 1987-88 was a lot of money. And it came in floppy disks ... box after box after box of floppy disks. And my computer couldn't handle it, so we had to buy a bigger computer."

Merrill spent two years piecing together the historical picture that emerged from the data and developing tools and methodologies for analysis. "It was a labor of love, and it took a heck of a long time," he said. "But out of it came my studies of asset allocation. The idea was to turn what had been an art form into a science where you can measure different results by asset allocations."

Merrill used his data analyses to author or co-author five books on portfolio finance. The methodology he employed using the historical data, he said, is still relevant today.

"The original published data that we

## EDUCATION

**2011** – BS, University Studies

**2011** – Donor, John Merrill Endowment

**2014** – Donor, John Merrill Endowed Professorship in Consultative Sales and John Merrill Endowment Personal Finance & Financial Literacy

**2015 to current** – Member, Chairman, Financial Literacy & Personal Finance Advisory Council

**2016** – College of Business Outstanding Service Award

**2019** – College of Business MAVS 100 Honoree

## CAREER

- Founder, President & Chief Investment Officer – Tanglewood Total Wealth Management, 1979 – current

- Completed Financial Planner Studies, 1980

- Recognized Leader in the Registered Investment Advisor (RIA) community

- Authored *Beyond Stocks*, 1997

- Authored *Outperforming the Market*, 1998 (McGraw Hill)

- Charles Schwab's Advisory Board, 2007-2008

- Co-authored *Investing in Uncertain Times 2nd Edition* with son Brian, 2018

had at the end of 1990 hasn't changed that much," he said. "Basically, you've added 30 years of new data on top of it, and yet the results are strikingly similar. We thought we were on to something, but we couldn't confirm until it happened in real time. Fortunately, we have 30 years of real time, and we're pretty pleased with the way it has all worked out."

His historical perspective also reaffirms Merrill's belief that, despite the current challenging disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the economy will continue to evolve. Businesses and industries will fail, but the spirit of entrepreneurship will rebuild the economy.

"Our economy likely won't look the same coming out of it," he said. "Something will be different. Something will be lost – that creative destruction that changes what happened before. Things change. Nobody wanted or expected this, but on the other side, we'll actually find there are things that are better than they were before."

# In memoriam

## CAMILLA HARDEE

Camilla (Cami) Ann Haugarth Hardee ('89, MBA), co-publication consultant, writer and editor of *The Business Maverick*, died prematurely on June 10, 2020. In large part, *The Business Maverick* owes its existence to the dogged determination that defined her life and career. Indeed, it was Cami's suggestion to name the magazine *The Business Maverick*.

When faced with the challenge of publishing the inaugural issue of the College of Business magazine, a task much more difficult than I had originally envisioned,



I reached out to Cami, who had previously served as publisher for PaySand and numerous other publications for Hunt Consolidated, Inc., before moving on to serve as Woodbine Development Corporation's Senior Vice President for Marketing. Although not looking for another task, Cami agreed to help an old friend. To her, friendship and relationships were everything.

It's unusual for a peer to also be a mentor, but Cami was a mentor to everyone.

She taught us all the importance of loyalty,

teamwork, and a relentless determination in pursuit of a goal. While she would have hated this terminology, she was a true pioneer for women in the workplace. Her company, Hardee Partners, LLC, was part of the inaugural MAVS 100, and as Cami and I posed for our picture, she acknowledged the twists in our careers that brought us there that night, saying, "This is just so surreal." What is even more surreal is living in a world without her.

## MIKE GASTON

On June 15, 2020, the College of Business lost a long-time friend, supporter, and alumnus after a lengthy battle with cancer. Mike Gaston ('67, BBA, Economics), principal of the Gaston Group, served on UTA's College of Business Advisory Council (2006-2020) and supported numerous other boards in the area. His insights and contributions to all were invaluable.

Mike's contributions to UTA were not limited to the College of Business. Mike was also an avid supporter of UTA athletics, especially the golf team. David Gray, professor of management, recalls that "Mike was someone who would offer to do something or indicate he was planning to attend and he always followed through. He would score extremely high on any reliability or dependability scale." David Mack, Special Assistant to the Dean, adds, "Mike was very proud of UTA."

Mike was a prolific businessman, having founded six companies and serving in executive positions on three publicly owned NYSE companies, including Executive Vice President of Cash America International from 1997 to 2009. Mike was an enthusiastic pilot who earned the FAA Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award for 50 years of flying. He truly had a joy for life, his family, and friends. The College of Business is lucky to have been such a friend. Our thoughts go out to Mike's wife, Susan, and his family.

-Dean Harry Dombroski

# Research Mavericks



## Wendy Casper, PhD

Professor – Management  
Associate Dean  
for Research  
Director, PhD Programs  
in Business  
Peggy E. Swanson  
Endowed Chair

2000 – PhD, Industrial  
Organizational Psychology,  
George Mason University  
1996 – MA, Industrial/  
Organizational Psychology,  
George Mason University  
1989 – BS, Psychology,  
Penn State University

[https://mentis.uta.edu/explore/  
profile/dr-wendy-casper](https://mentis.uta.edu/explore/profile/dr-wendy-casper)

PHOTO BY RANDY  
GENTRY/THE UNIVERSITY  
OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

## FACULTY RESEARCH

*Universities play a fundamental role in the creation and dissemination of knowledge. “New knowledge provides individuals with a set of skills and competencies that allows them to create new value and wealth,” said Wendy Casper, UTA College of Business Associate Dean for Research. “The generation of new knowledge is a necessary condition for innovation, economic growth, and prosperity.” Casper says faculty research is motivated by the College tagline: Transforming Lives Through Knowledge. “Through tireless effort and their commitment to research, faculty members advance the knowledge frontier and our understanding of business practices.” The following Faculty Research Highlights exemplify the intellectual contributions and new knowledge creation of two distinguished College of Business faculty.*

**A**t the start of 2020, Wendy Casper was considering new ideas for studies of employee well-being drawing from her experience working during cancer treatments. She wanted to understand how medical crises impact employee welfare.

Little did she know that a worldwide pandemic would soon have an unprecedented effect on workers, raising a multitude of questions about how to keep them safe. In the 20 years that Dr. Casper has studied workforce and work/life balance issues, there had never been a time when employee well-being mattered more.

In February, Casper was collecting data with two colleagues to develop a scale they planned to use to study work-life balance. Along with her co-authors – Hoda Vaziri, an alumna of the College of Business PhD program and faculty at the University of North Texas, and Julie Wayne of Wake Forest University – they intended to gather a second wave of data about a month later to see if work/life balance was stable over time.

But things changed dramatically.

“By the time a month passed, everything was different,” Casper said. “As we entered the second week of March, we knew we could not look at the stability of work/life balance amidst a global pandemic without the pandemic having a major effect on our findings.”

When a national health emergency was declared in March, Casper was teaching a research design class to PhD students.

“We were talking about how societal

events can offer opportunities to conduct naturally occurring quasi-experiments.” Casper said. “This is the only time in the many years I have taught this class that I was doing such a quasi-experiment in real time while talking about it in class.”

Casper and her co-authors knew their work/life scale research questions had to change to reflect the pandemic, and they worked quickly to get approval to ask them. The first week of April they launched a second wave of their survey to the same 600 people who had participated in early February.

“We thought about all the factors that might affect employee well-being during the pandemic,” Casper said. “Some were personal factors like employee personality, preferences, and coping styles. Some related to things the organization could control, like leadership behavior and organizational support for employees to learn new technology for remote work.”

By July, Casper and her co-authors completed their study analysis, detailed in a paper titled “Changes to the Work-Family Interface During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Examining Predictors and Implications Using Latent Transition Analysis.” The article was accepted to the top journal in organizational behavior, the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, as part of a special call for papers that would be considered in a rapid response format so that information on COVID-19 gets into the public domain quickly.

“One of the interesting findings was the relative stability of people’s experiences managing work and family,” Casper said.

“We found that among people whose experiences managing work and family before the pandemic were good, most continued to do well after the pandemic struck. The pandemic did not uniformly create havoc in people’s work and family lives, even among the many participants who changed from onsite to remote work.”

But Casper’s findings also pointed to the important role employers can play during disruptive events like COVID-19. Employees who felt overwhelmed by new technology for remote work, often referred to as “technostress,” found it hard to manage during the pandemic.

“This suggests the need for training and help-desk support when employees are learning new technology,” Casper said.

Employees with compassionate supervisors better managed work and family during the pandemic, which fostered greater loyalty to their employer and reduced their desire to quit, suggesting doing right by employees during crises aids retention.

Casper not only conducts research and teaches graduate courses, but also serves as the College of Business Associate Dean for Research and Director of PhD programs. She has tried to put her research in practice by showing compassion toward the college’s many PhD students during COVID-19.

“This has been a stressful time for our PhD students,” Casper said. “None of them signed up to get a PhD online, as was the course modality for the second half of the spring semester.”

At the same time, she sees how resilient

**Continued on next page**

students are. Many were designing studies in her class during the spring semester that, like Casper's research, have taken a turn to explore the conditions of COVID-19. For instance, Casper said, one PhD student whom she is mentoring, Frederick Rice, was designing a study of entrepreneurs' well-being when the pandemic hit.

"We added new questions about the impact on entrepreneurs' businesses to examine how difficulties due to COVID-19 relate to entrepreneur well-being," Casper said. "Many students have done a great job turning lemons into lemonade."

#### RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

**TITLE:** *The jingle-jangle of work-nonwork balance: A comprehensive and meta-analytic review of its meaning and measurement.*

**CASPER'S SUMMARY:** This research publication won the William A. Owens Scholarly Achievement Award for the best publication in a refereed journal in the field of industrial/organizational psychology and was a top five finalist for the Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award for Excellence in Work-Family Research. The research analyzed and summarized 290 research papers on work/life balance with a focus on the various ways people have defined the term. The academic research has lacked agreement on what work/life balance is or how it should be defined, Casper said. "Work/life balance is not just one thing — there are different types of balance. Some definitions refer to work/life effectiveness — whether you do a good job at both home and work. Other definitions refer to satisfaction with how work and life fit together. These are very different notions," Casper said, "so it is important when you talk about work/life balance to be clear about what you mean. A person's balance effectiveness is important because people who are high on it receive better performance ratings from their supervisor. Yet balance satisfaction matters too given the average balance satisfaction of work team members is linked with better team performance. This research debunks the notion that work/life balance is not compatible with being a top performer at work. In contrast, being balanced is associated with better work performance for both individuals and teams."

**PUBLISHED RESEARCH:** *Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Journal of Vocational Behavior, Human Performance, Human Resource Development Quarterly, Human Resource Management, Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, Personnel Psychology, Journal of Business Ethics, Human Resource Management Journal,* among others.

Jingguo Wang's primary research focus is on cybersecurity. In his research, Dr. Wang often incorporates cross-disciplinary methodologies — applying models from fields such as criminology and psychology — as new approaches to studying the behaviors that are related to information security.

In 2019, for example, Wang authored a study on the risk of insider threats to financial institutions. "We mainly looked at how the insider can take advantage of an opportunity to try to access something that they cannot have access to," Wang said. The research extended criminal opportunity theory from criminology literature and was among the first studies to use behavioral logs to analyze insider threats to information assets.

Another study, published in February in the *Information Systems Journal*, analyzed how social influences at both individual and organizational levels weaken an organization's enforcement of information security policies. One is how well employees perceive a rules-adherence environment at the organizational level; the other is how well they observe practices through peer interactions. Wang and associates used employee survey data for the investigation.

Wang currently is revising a journal article on research that proposes new methodologies for addressing ransomware attacks. "We tried to understand how the defender responded to the ransomware attacks in terms of their investment, in terms of whether they pay or not, and if any policy interventions are effective," he said.

Although much of Wang's research is focused on business issues, he also applies information security perspectives to individual concerns. He just completed a study examining how parental online privacy concerns influence their children's self-disclosure behavior. "We collected data from the parents as well as from the children, and we looked into how parents' privacy concerns impact the children's privacy concerns and whether any parental mediation style can change behavior," Wang said.

From the personal level to a global scale, Wang employed his information systems and computer science knowledge and experience to study a large social issue, as demonstrated in his highlighted research on social media and emerging infectious diseases.

## Jingguo Wang, PhD

Professor – Information Systems and Operations Management

2007 - PhD, Management Science and Systems, State University of New York at Buffalo

2005 - MS, Operations Research, Industrial and Systems Engineering, State University of New York at Buffalo

1998 - BS, Computer Science, Fudan University, Shanghai, China

<https://mentis.uta.edu/explore/profile/jingguo-wang>



#### RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

**TITLE:** *Mutual Influences between Message Volume and Emotion Intensity on Emerging Infectious Diseases: An Investigation with Microblog Data*

**WANG'S SUMMARY:** This research, published in the June issue of *Information and Management* journal and conducted with collaborators in China, is a study of both the volume and emotional content of social media posts during an emerging infectious disease outbreak. In this case, the outbreak was the avian influenza (H7N9), which emerged in China in February 2013, but the findings have notable timeliness and significance to the current COVID-19 pandemic. "What we did in this article is that we looked into the social media during this outbreak period," Wang said. Researchers used computer science natural-language processing methods to analyze the emo-

tional content in 565,427 microblog posts on Sina Weibo, China's version of Twitter. "We looked into how the microblogs evolved over time ... the volume and the number of the posts over the time, and the emotion that was expressed in the message —how the emotion and the volume reinforce each other and play out over the time."

Wang determined that there is such a cyclical relationship between the volume of negative emotions, particularly fear, and the intensity of the fear expressed. "We also see there is a positive emotion here expressed in the content, but the positive emotions do not have such a kind of cyclical relationship between the message volume," Wang said. "The impact of the neg-

ative emotion, of fear in particular, on the message volume itself is going to be sustained longer than the positive emotion." From the findings, Wang and his colleagues noted that that emotions with high arousal could be more contagious, suggesting the importance of proper interventions because of the negative emotions that could build up over the course of an outbreak. Negative emotions influence the public to act in such a way that further increases the intensity of negative emotions, the researchers reported, pointing to the need to improve the efficiency of forecasting models that could predict the trend of the public's reaction and provide information for relevant stakeholders.

Wang and his associates proposed an approach and analysis framework for public health management to identify early signals in the public's reaction to emerging disease events that could potentially indicate the trends of the outbreak quicker and more reliably compared to traditional methods of public health reporting.

**PUBLISHED RESEARCH:** *Information and Management, Computers in Human Behavior, Information Systems Journal, Information Systems Frontiers, Decision Support Systems, European Journal of Operational Research, Journal of the Association for Information Systems, MIS Quarterly, Journal of Business Research, Information Systems Research, Journal of Management Information Systems,* among others.

# 2019-20 MavPitch Recognizes Student Entrepreneurs with Funding

A small device for targeting drug delivery in cancer therapy. A portable electrocardiogram (ECG) machine for real-time, cloud-based heart monitoring. Software that helps retailers improve processing of product returns. A technology system for enforcing hand hygiene in the medical, and perhaps food, industries. A bakery that produces 100 percent plant-based sweets.

These are some of the business ideas that have earned eight student teams \$180,000 in seed funding, which was awarded in August at the Grand Finale of the MavPitch Entrepreneurship Program and Award competition.

The money given to the 2019-20 academic year submissions raises the total awarded to student entrepreneurs to \$825,000, which has helped 42 teams since the MavPitch program began in 2018. About 430 students have participated in the competition.

“MavPitch has been a terrific vehicle to acknowledge the incredible entrepreneurial talent on campus,” said Jeff McGee, an associate professor of management who, along with Greg Frazier, Senior Associate Dean and professor of operations management, helps run the competition.

“This years' event has been particularly exciting because we can see tangible results. Two of the participants used the award to further develop their businesses and have actually generated revenues over the last few months.”

Each of the winning teams had to advance to Phase Two of the competition by convincing judges in a three-minute presentation that their entrepreneurial ideas were worthy of support. Some proposals were presented live to judges in the December

2019 Phase One, while the rest were presented virtually because of the pandemic.

At the completion of 2020 Phase One in May, judges awarded \$132,500 to 15 teams. Nine teams then advanced to Phase Two, but one dropped out. Judges voted to recognize all of the remaining eight teams with varying levels of funding.

The competition, which is organized by the Business and Engineering colleges but open to teams campus-wide, attracted more than 100 submissions this year. Dr. Frazier and Dr. McGee both hope the MavPitch competition will continue to grow and attract more students from varied disciplines.

“The goal is to identify and recognize entrepreneurs across the campus,” Frazier said. “The competition rewards teams from different areas. That’s what we intended to happen, to cultivate relationships across campus.”

This year’s winning Phase Two teams and funding amounts included:



## Ethereal Flow (\$25,000).

Team leader: Ali Haider Mohamedi. Ethereal Flow is a medical device company founded by a group of UTA bioengineers. The company specializes in developing devices for alternative medical therapeutics and diagnostics for a range of diseases. The team is working on a patent for a microfluidic system that can create targeted drug carriers for cancer therapy in a fraction of the time of most commercial machines. This device will be small enough to fit in a pocket yet hold the same capabilities as larger, more expensive machines.

**Frankly Good (\$25,000).** Team leader: Andrew Ridout. Frankly Good is a family-run business launched in 2019 that produces 100 percent plant-based cookies, brittle, muffins, and other sweets.

**Patturn (\$25,000).** Team leader: Dennis Gia Hoang. Patturn is software that empowers retailers to improve their returns processing capabilities. The software captures



Tyler Foust (opposite page) presents the Gel Zone proposal. The Cordis Health team (above) poses with the \$25,000 check received in Phase One. The team got an additional \$20,000 in Phase Two. Tesfaye Alemu and Mohamed Gbane (below) pose with a MavPitch poster after competing in Phase One.

a part of the reverse logistics supply chain cycle that is a key driver of profitability in the industry. Retailers will be able to improve their disposition strategies, and ultimately, add value to their returns and minimize waste.

**TinkaBox (\$25,000).** Team leaders: Brice Durbin and Phyo Sone. The startup focuses on creating quality, practical STEM projects designed specifically to empower students of all ages to become creators of technology.

**uStaff (\$25,000).** Team leader: Tiellen Constantino Da Fonseca. uStaff is a streamlined method of utilizing temporary talent, helping businesses fill temporary needs on a day-to-day basis without long-term commitment and allowing those in need for part-time cash to find a quick, easily accessible job.

**Cordis Health (\$20,000).** Team



leader: Victoria Messerschmidt. Cordis Health is creating a portable electrocardiogram machine that allows cloud-based real-time monitoring using machine learning algorithms to analyze data patterns and cross-reference them with a pre-existing dataset, and send the raw and analyzed data to a patient’s cardiologist for review.

**Gel Zone (\$20,000).** Team leader: Tyler Foust. Gel Zone has devel-

oped a device that actively enforces hand hygiene at the point of entry for the medical industry. The device uses motion sensors to detect entry into a patient’s room or other areas and emits an alarm if the individual crossing the invisible threshold fails to comply with hand hygiene protocols. The healthcare industry is the initial target market, but the device could have other applications, such as in the food service industry.

**Curator (\$15,000).** Team leader: Matthew Do. The company has developed an app, called We Curate You Create, that provides personalized recipes based on a user’s responses to questions and other varying factors such as their skill level and kitchen utensils available. The app would generate revenue through advertisement, affiliate redirect percentages, and premium subscriptions.

The UT Arlington College of Business has an Alumni population of 52,435, and we want to hear from all of you, including the 127 CEOs, 270 CFOs and 365 Vice Presidents among you. We would like to include a Class Notes section in future issues of the magazine. If you have a story to tell, send your information to [collegeofbusiness@uta.edu](mailto:collegeofbusiness@uta.edu).

or

[uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/business/contact](http://uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/business/contact)

# MAVS 100

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## UTA BUSINESS

We are proud to be celebrating the work and successes of Maverick entrepreneurs and will be holding our annual event on **February 26, 2021**. The MAVS 100 recognizes the fastest growing alumni firms.

[GO.UTA.EDU/MAVS100](http://GO.UTA.EDU/MAVS100)

Learn more and read about these exceptional companies at [GO.UTA.EDU/MAVS100](http://GO.UTA.EDU/MAVS100)