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# Business Futures



## Five Star Bank Steps UP

James Beckwith, President and CEO  
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SACRAMENTO STATE  
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION



## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

# Becoming a Catalyst for Innovation and Entrepreneurship



**T**he Capital Region is an interesting place to live and work. We aren't about big industry. Beyond government, our economy is focused primarily around small and medium-sized businesses, and family businesses in a number of industries. Given that, my goal is to make CBA a catalyst for regional innovation and entrepreneurship. In other words, we want to help regional businesses thrive, whether that business is a startup or an existing company looking to expand.

We are working very hard to accomplish that goal. Your College of Business Administration wants to become an integral part of the regional business ecosystem. We are doing that through our centers, such as our Center for Small Business (soon celebrating its 50th anniversary), our Center for Entrepreneurship, and our Center for Business Analytics, and through relationships with key regional business organizations like chambers of commerce, Municipal, State and Federal government organizations, para-government groups, economic development offices, small business development corporations and even the Governor's Office. Over the last few years we've worked hard to connect with these stakeholders. Those efforts are paying off, but we can do more.

The second way we are working to become a catalyst for regional innovation and entrepreneurship is to become more involved in

activities beyond the boundaries of our campus. Toward that end, we recently applied to become a host organization for the Small Business Administration. Should the CBA be selected (the announcement will be made in December) we would lead small business development efforts for a 23-county region that includes the entire northeast quadrant of California. It's an exciting opportunity, for sure. But even if we aren't selected, we still plan to play an important role in those efforts.

We also plan to expand our partnerships with our friends across the University. For example, we recently collaborated with the College of Education on ReinventEd, a 'shark tank'-like event to develop products and services to improve education in our schools. We are also exchanging ideas with leaders in the College of Engineering & Computer Science, Natural Sciences & Mathematics, and Health and Human Services among others.

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Although we have a heavy emphasis on regional business involvement and growth, we will also remain involved internationally. For example, we plan to send our Business Honors cohort to Taiwan soon. We have several faculty members doing work on Pacific Rim and Asian issues, and we are a strategic ally to the CalAsian Chamber of Commerce. Certainly, a strong regional leadership role is paramount but keeping an eye on the internationalization/globalization of business is also a must. Thank you to all the staff, faculty, students, alumni and friends that are helping us make it all happen.

Warm Regards,  
**Dr. Pierre A. Balthazard, Dean**  
*College of Business Administration*

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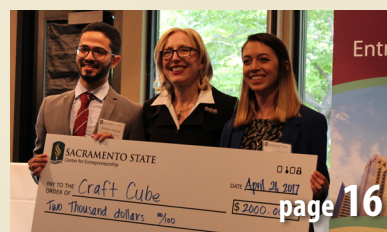


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## Business Futures Magazine

COORDINATOR  
**Michael Weagraff**

WRITER  
**Justine Brown**

PHOTOGRAPHER  
**Bruce Clarke**  
*Sacramento State Creative Services*

DESIGNER  
**Jim Molina**  
*Sacramento State Creative Services*

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csus.edu/CBA • (916) 278-6578

## College of Business Administration

### MISSION

The Sacramento State College of Business Administration develops engaged, responsible, and inclusive business leaders who enrich our communities.

### Vision

The Sacramento State College of Business Administration aspires to be the educational backbone of the Sacramento business community and an active force in creating a better future.

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**Pierre Balthazard**

ASSOCIATE DEAN (INTERIM) FOR  
 FACULTY & RESEARCH  
**Janet Hecsh**

ASSOCIATE DEAN (INTERIM) FOR  
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**Marty Wilson**



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# Latin America's Rising Star

Peru as had a tumultuous history. The country was the scene of military coups, political turmoil and radical reforms for several decades. And when a period of stability finally settled under the presidency of Alberto Fujimori, it didn't last long. Fujimori was forced to resign in 2000 following accusations of human rights violations and corruption.

In more recent years, Peru has stabilized and grown steadily. Today, poverty in Peru is declining, and a combination of economic modernization, natural resource abundance and continued improvements in economic governance and political stability have helped Peru emerge as one of the most stable economies in Latin America.

Last June, 23 Sac State Executive MBA (EMBA) students, staff and faculty traveled to Peru to experience the country firsthand. The trip included several corporate

visits to allow EMBA students to better understand how business is conducted in Peru. The students visited Tasa, a leading global producer and exporter of fishmeal and fish oil; Wayra, a startup accelerator associated with Telefonica, one of the largest telecom companies in the world; and global tire maker Good Year, which has a large presence in Peru.

The students also visited Banco Central De Reserva Del Peru, the Peruvian Central Bank, where the bank's president provided a financial, political and historical



overview of the country. The students found that visit particularly impactful.

"The visit to the Central Reserve Bank of Peru was humbling for me," said EMBA student Holly Gieske. "The factors that limit growth of productivity, the challenges with neighboring countries, the state of the economy and the sense of acceptance that the president shared was almost overwhelming."

EMBA student Eric Lintz agreed that the visit to the Central Bank was eye-opening.

"What is most interesting is that during the 1960s through the 1990s, like many South American countries, Peru was on the road to socialism," said Lintz. "Peru suffered from brutal Marxist terrorist groups. But today Peru almost stands alone in the region for pursuing democracy, freedom and a civil society."

In addition to the corporate visits, students also had a chance to tour several cities and visit historical sites.







Gieske said the trip ultimately changed her perception of Peru and of international business overall.

"I enjoyed the opportunity to visit the businesses in Peru and to understand the economic challenges the leaders are faced with," she said. "The trip also gave me another dimension of consideration when making global decisions. A person can study online, make phone calls, video chat and otherwise try to remotely learn about another country, but it is not enough. A business person should visit the prospective country to experience the culture, people, food, language, use of currency, faith/religion, weather, commerce, music, traffic patterns and general rhythm of the community that you cannot get from a remote connection."

Gieske and Lintz agreed that the international trip added to their knowledge of business and appreciation for the challenges of doing business in other countries.

"I think Peru has much more to offer the world than we realize," said Lintz. "The international trip was a significant catalyst for integrating our business learnings with our global mindset. I was struck by the industriousness and worthy ambitions of these intelligent, handsome, sophisticated and hospitable people." <sup>CBA</sup>





# Teaming Up to Enhance the Sacramento Brand

## What happens when two powerful Sacramento brands team up?

That's what assistant professor of marketing Jesse Catlin wanted to find out. So when it came time to give his MBA 240 marketing management students some real-world experience, Catlin turned to the Sacramento Republic FC professional soccer team.

"Sacramento Republic FC is one of the hottest up-and-coming local brands," said Catlin. "I thought it would be really cool to get CBA students involved with a local organization that is on such an exciting trajectory."

Catlin has a long-time interest in soccer and has followed Sacramento Republic FC since their debut in 2014. Since then, the club has seen remarkable success, winning the 2014 USL Championship and making the playoffs three consecutive times. Last January, the team submitted its official bid for expansion rights for Major League Soccer.

"Sacramento Republic FC is a young club, but they've done an extraordinary job building a brand and a dedicated fan base," said Catlin. "I

loved the idea of connecting Sac State and Republic FC and thought students would be excited and engaged in the project."

Catlin also believed connecting the two organizations could help elevate the Sacramento region overall. So he reached out to Sacramento Republic FC vice president of marketing and communications Erika Bjork and pitched the idea of a collaboration that would challenge students to come up with some new marketing ideas for the club.

### **Bjork agreed the idea made sense.**

"Jesse's invitation was compelling because it was putting forth a challenge to the students to come up with some creative ideas," said Bjork.

Soon after, Bjork visited Catlin's class to provide students background on the team and to explain how they built Republic FC's brand. She then asked students to generate ideas to increase exposure and awareness for the team, with an emphasis on promoting same-day ticket sales.

"As a club, we had had a lot of success in a short amount of time," said Bjork. "The downside of that was people assumed all the games were sold out. There was a perception that if you didn't get tickets a few weeks in advance, you couldn't get in."

But since then, the team expanded Papa Murphy's Park, adding about 3,500 more seats. They also began a practice of setting aside 100 tickets for walk-up purchases on game day. Bjork wanted to get the word out and change the perception that last-minute game tickets were unattainable.

Catlin's students spent a few weeks working on concepts. Then Bjork returned to the class and the students presented their ideas to her.

Bjork said she was impressed with the suggestions students came up with.





"Some of the ideas we are already doing, but others were new and very impressive," she said, adding that the team has already implemented some of the students' concepts and has incorporated parts of other ideas into their 2018 planning process.

"There were a lot of ideas on the digital side," said Bjork. "And there were some ideas that were really cool but too expensive for our current budgets (students were not tasked with developing a budget for their proposal)."

Bjork said overall students did a great job of thinking outside the box.

"The project got them creatively thinking and problem solving, and those are skills that will be important no matter what type of career they pursue," said Bjork.

MBA student Darren Lewis said the opportunity to work with an actual company was beneficial, especially a local company that is part of the fabric of the community.

"Real-world projects take the theoretical and make it real and

practical," said Lewis. "We met with the client, heard their concerns and issues and were able to work to come up with a real solution. Jesse did an excellent job of setting up the project in a real way by forgoing a number of the more typical scholastic deliverables and really putting the focus, time and effort on doing something that would actually make an impact for Republic FC."

Since the MBA program and Republic FC collaborated, the university and team have become official partners. The partnership is rooted in making Sacramento a better place to live, work and play.

"The way students choose college today is very different than in the past, where they selected a school based on what they wanted to major in," said Bjork. "Today, students choose college based on where they want to be or live. The

colleges and make Sacramento a place where students want to stay after graduation. Collaborations between local teams and colleges make everyone stronger."

Collaboration is also important to growing a thriving workforce. Republic FC recently began construction on a \$226 million stadium in The Railyards urban infill project. The stadium alone will generate over 2,000 temporary and permanent jobs and well over \$1.2 billion in investment. The goal is to open the new stadium in 2020.


In December, Republic FC anticipates Major League Soccer to select two new teams to join the league. Republic FC leads the pack with the most complete bid.

"Assuming that happens, our organization will certainly be growing and hiring more people," said Bjork.



Photo from, [www.indomitablecitysoccer.com](http://www.indomitablecitysoccer.com)

jobs are following the workforce instead of people following the jobs, so it's important for the Sacramento region as a whole to invest in local

"Staying connected to our local schools and universities is more important than ever as we grow our own workforce." 



# Learning *and* Giving Back: CBA's MBA IMPACT Consulting Program



Tracey Schaal & Michael Kohatsu

A few years ago, Stephanie Francis, CBA graduate career and development director, had an idea: what if there was a program that could help Sac State MBA students earn high-level skills and experience a consulting-style relationship while working on a project of economic and social impact?

Today that program, dubbed the MBA IMPACT Consulting Program, is a reality. Launched in fall 2016, the program enables MBA students to earn course credit by engaging with nonprofits in problem-solving projects that support local economic growth initiatives in underserved communities. The projects may include work in areas such as redevelopment, organizational development, workforce development, strategic planning, business incubation, sustainability, financing/fundraising or marketing. In exchange, partner organizations provide MBA IMPACT consultants opportunities to engage with high-level organizational leaders, expand industry knowledge and applied business acumen and strengthen consulting skills.

Michael Kohatsu is the latest CBA graduate student to take on the MBA IMPACT Consulting challenge.

"When I heard about IMPACT Consulting, I was intrigued by the potential to both have a learning experience

and to actually do something useful and meaningful for the community," said Kohatsu.

Kohatsu was assigned to work with Power Inn Alliance, a property-based business improvement district located in the southeastern quadrant of Sacramento. That area of Sacramento is home to over 10,000 businesses, creates over 29,000 jobs and produces over \$3.2 billion in annual economic output. It is also home to the future Sacramento Center for Innovation, a 240-acre area that will be a hub for clean, green energy and medical technology.

The goal of Kohatsu's project: to provide strategic planning support for development of the Sacramento Center for Innovation and the Power Inn Alliance's Economic Impact Analysis report.

"Working with Power Inn Alliance was appealing because they help underserved people in the community," said Kohatsu. "It was also appealing from an entrepreneurial perspective to be involved in the Sacramento Center for Innovation because it's all part of helping Sacramento become a stronger competitor in the area of innovation and technology."

From June through August this year, Kohatsu worked with Power Inn Alliance to conduct a broad range of economic development-related activities, including composing a white paper on a potential program for continuum of career pathways and education, a grant submittal, and the design of a website establishing Power Inn Alliance as the leader in the manufacturing sector for the city of Sacramento.

Kohatsu said the real-world experience he gained in the IMPACT program was invaluable.

"It's really different than learning in a classroom setting," said Kohatsu. "I was able to apply the concepts I learned in class in a real-world environment. Plus, the results I'm able to produce have the potential to make a real change, and I think that is inspiring."


Tracey Schaal, executive director of the Power Inn Alliance, said Kohatsu's background and expertise proved to be invaluable to her organization.

"The Alliance has an outstanding partnership with Sacramento State through many departments, but it was exciting to have our first MBA student intern work with us this year," said Schaal. "I would highly recommend other businesses and non-profits consider offering this type of opportunity. We benefitted exponentially from creating an internship in our organization."

Kohatsu said the IMPACT consulting experience is something he'd recommend to other students.

"It gives students an opportunity to learn how nonprofits and public private partnerships work, while at the same time providing value to those organizations," said Kohatsu.

Going forward, Francis said she plans to expand the program by enrolling more students, identifying more partners, and attracting financial support for student stipends.

"There's no question that all stakeholders benefit," said Francis. "MBA students get real-world learning and expand their professional network, nonprofit partners get high-level talent to address pressing needs, and the CBA fortifies its community engagement mission." 



# Center for Small Business Research project – Andrea Gabriel

## CSB Creates a Community Resource

Sac State's Center for Small Business (CSB) has a long history of providing free technical consulting services to local businesses. As the organization's reputation has grown over the last 48 years, the number of local businesses reaching out to CSB for assistance has grown as well.

But occasionally, the services a local business needs are not the types of services CSB students can provide, but closer to what a professional group or consultant would offer. For CBA student Andrea Gabriel, that sparked an idea.

"I noticed that many businesses needed assistance with problems that the CSB couldn't help them with, or needed solutions faster than we could provide them," said Gabriel. "But if you're a small business owner in need of help and you do a Google or Yelp search for local marketing agencies, you end up with a big mishmash of stuff. There's not one place you can go to for a list of all marketing-related organizations in the Sacramento area."

So Gabriel approached Brian Baldus, assistant professor of marketing, about creating a database of local marketing resources as part of an independent study course.

"The project was appealing to me because it seemed like something that could help local businesses easily connect to the resources they need to be successful," said Gabriel. "I chose to start with marketing because I'm a marketing major, but I hope to extend the database to other business areas in the future."

Baldus loved the idea.

"With a database of local organizations, if a business asked for something CSB couldn't provide, we could refer them to a central place where they could find an organization that could help them," said Baldus.

During the fall 2016 semester and into the spring of 2017, Gabriel worked to compile a list of hundreds of marketing organizations in the region, then called each organization to confirm they were still in business and to collect additional information about them and their level of interest in interacting with Sac State.

Following graduation last spring, Gabriel continued to volunteer her time to collect more information from

marketers. Today, the database contains validated information on over 100 local marketing resources. Once the database is finalized, Baldus says he plans to make it live and searchable through CSB so local businesses can find specialized assistance quickly and easily.

Beyond that, Baldus says the list will also help


CSB engage with and strengthen the local marketing community. Already, CSB has a list of about 50 marketers interested in participating as guest speakers on campus and about 60 businesses looking to hire CBA students for internships or as employees.

"Initial results have been incredibly positive," said Baldus. "I now have an MBA student reaching out to each of the organizations looking for help and getting them to submit job postings through the Office of Student Engagement's new job board. It's helping students find jobs and helping organizations that want to hire Sac State students but don't know how to connect with them."

The database will also serve as a template for future work in other subject areas.

"This is the first step in a much larger process," said Baldus. "Once we have the marketing database configured online, we can add other disciplines where people need help but aren't sure where to turn, like human resources, accounting, management, etc. It's just a matter of finding more students that are passionate about helping the local community and interested in working on this project. I'm really excited to see where it can go."

Gabriel, who is now conducting market research in the communications unit as an employee of the California Conservation Corps, said she'd recommend the project to other students.

"Creating this directory meant a lot more to me than just turning in a lengthy term paper," she said. "This was about making a real impact in the community." 





## Honoring the Entrepreneurial Spirit:

# FIVE STAR BANK STEPS UP SUPPORT FOR BHON

When CBA launched the Business Honors (BHON) program in 2012, it was an experiment to see how a cross-functional, integrated program could challenge top business students and prepare them to become highly-qualified leaders and managers.

Today, BHON has blossomed into a thriving and highly sought-after program that gives some of the top CBA students an opportunity to excel in enterprise planning, problem solving, decision-making and more.

The success of the BHON program has attracted the attention of regional businesses interested in working more closely with these

rising stars of the business world. Five Star Bank, a locally owned and run community business bank headquartered in Sacramento, is one of those businesses.

Five Star Bank already employs several Sac State grads, and recognized the value of the BHON program early on. But recently, Five Star Bank decided to take that interest a step further. The bank agreed to make a generous donation and become an official sponsor of CBA's BHON program.

Under the new partnership, Five Star Bank will sponsor four separate cohorts of BHON students over an eight-year period. But the partnership goes far beyond a financial

commitment. BHON students will get a better understanding of the role of venture funding in starting new organizations and in growing current businesses.

James Beckwith, president and CEO of Five Star Bank, said there were several reasons his organization wanted to get involved in the BHON program.

"We felt we could help enrich the BHON program and make it even better," said Beckwith. "We also thought it would be a good way to let students know about what's going on in Sacramento business as part of an effort to encourage them to start their careers here. As a community, we need talented young people to help us grow – we thought this was an interesting way of getting more involved."

Beckwith says in working with Five Star Bank, BHON students will connect with people actively engaged in the Capital Region's business community and thereby enhance their academic experiences and career development.

"I view it as a true partnership between the Business Honors program and the community," said Anne Fuller, BHON faculty director. "We have 25 students in the Five Star Bank cohort1, our largest cohort







Above from left to right:  
Stephanie Petrakos, Jason Saslow, Shelley Wetton, Mike Rizzo,  
Dean Pierre Balthazard, James Beckwith, President Robert Nelsen

to date, and they will all learn something about Five Star Bank and get an inside view of an important local business and what makes it tick.”

The new sponsorship will also help enhance the bank’s visibility on campus, particularly among high-achieving students.

“Over the course of eight years we’ll get to know between 100 and 150 students, and if we can make a positive impression on those students, that could be pretty powerful in terms of where they go from a career perspective,” said Beckwith. “This is about the long game, about our franchise, our brand and what


we can do for the community. If we can enhance what BHON students are doing from an academic perspective, we think that’s a really good thing for the community.”

Fuller says she hopes to use the Five Star Bank model to attract additional sponsors for future BHON cohorts.

“It’s an opportunity for our students to get to know a major community



Five Star Bank Cohort 1

partner,” said Fuller. “We are delighted that Five Star Bank made the commitment and we hope to build on this success to find other cohort sponsors.” 



# Meet Five Star Bank Cohort 1



Brian Abrams, ACCY



Ryan Ahyaee, MIS



Miguel Bendezu, FIN



Brett Benoit, ACCY



Courtney Bloom, ACCY



Noah Bowers, FIN/RMI



Mikayla Brettelle, MKTG



Stephanie Bribiesca, GM



Desmond Bryant, GM



Esmeralda Espinoza,  
FIN/FIN Plan/REAL TRS



Alec Franklin, ENTR/GM



Samuel Goldberg, ACCY



Diana Gonzalez Garcia,  
INT BUS





# Paying it Forward

CBA professors have been hard at work conducting research that will help lead us into the future. The following are summaries of research submitted for peer review in AY 2017.

## Beom-Jin Choi, Ph.D.:

### "Domain Specific Innovativeness and New Product Adoption: A Case of Wearable Devices"

Wearable technology has gained mass market attention, but the speed of adoption is not yet up to expectations. Understanding factors driving the adoption of new products by consumers is critical to the success of businesses. Dr. Beom-Jin Choi therefore recently teamed up with a professor in South Korea to study the effects of consumers' domain-specific innovativeness (DSI) on the adoption of wearable technology. Dr. Choi said when it comes to really new products, understand-

ing how early adopters behave with respect to the characteristics of new products is crucial. The study first conceptualized consumer DSI in the context of product possessing innovativeness and information-possessing innovativeness, then examined their effects on the attributes of wearable technology such as relative advantage, social image, aesthetics, novelty and consumers' purchase intention.

"The findings are important from a business point of view because businesses can now better understand what innovators are looking for in wearable devices," said Dr. Choi. "Using that information, they can determine different ways of connecting with innovators and different strategies that can help increase their chances of successful advertising and marketing efforts."

The study was recently published in *Telematics and Informatics*.

Dr. Choi said the research also sparked ideas for future research into the role personal innovativeness plays in other areas such as online learning. He hopes research in that area can provide insights into why some students struggle with online learning and perhaps help in the development of strategies to aid those students.



## Jesse Catlin:

### "Consumer Perceptions of the Social Vs. Environmental Dimensions of Sustainability"

Researchers have often treated sustainability as a uni-dimensional construct, overlooking important differences and thwarting a better understanding of consumer response. But Jesse Catlin and co-researchers recently demonstrated that consumers perceive the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability as psychologically distinct in important ways. Spe-





cifically, consumers associate the social dimension of sustainability more with affective, short-term and local considerations and the environmental dimension more with cognitive, long-term and global considerations.

“We often hear the term ‘sustainable,’ but what does that actually mean? We looked at people’s decision making and found if you have a choice between two products, the choice to buy a socially responsible product is driven more by emotional, short term and local considerations,” said Catlin. “But the choice to buy an environmentally responsible product is more of a rational decision with a longer-term and more global focus – that person is thinking they want to help the environment, even though it may be harder for them to visualize the precise impact of that decision.”

Those choices ultimately impact how people think about products and should therefore also impact how such products are marketed.

"In other words, not all types of sustainability are the same," said Catlin.

The study was recently published in the *Journal of Consumer Policy*.

## Oliver Liu:

# "How Many, How Often and How New? A Multivariate Profiling of Mobile App Users"

As smartphones become more mainstream, the use of mobile applications has grown as well. By the end of 2017, 4.4 billion people worldwide will use mobile applications on their mobile devices. More importantly, revenue from the sale of apps, in-app purchases and subscriptions across smartphones and tablets will reach an astonishing \$189 billion by 2020.

Surprisingly, however, few studies have been conducted to profile app users in a multi-faceted manner, which is why associate professor of marketing Oliver Liu and colleagues decided to tackle this topic.

Among the findings: people with more experience and knowledge of how to use a smartphone will have more apps installed on their smartphone and use apps more often. However, they do not necessarily have more recent apps than other users.



Liu hopes the study will help people understand that identifying the most valuable app users in the market is not a simple task.

“For managers of mobile application developers, our research provides some marketing insights,” said Liu. “For example, app developers in general should target consumers who have a higher degree of ‘stickiness’ to mobile devices. Such consumers are more likely to develop and accumulate experiences and knowledge that are needed for, and even lead to, the adoption of mobile apps.” 

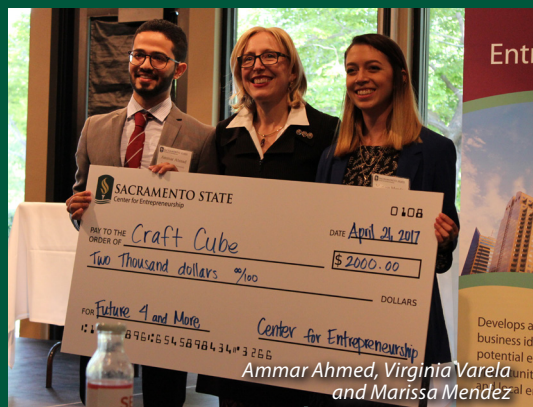


# Regional Entrepreneurial Competition Comes to Sac State



Since its inception in 2011, CBA's Center for Entrepreneurship has worked hard to foster entrepreneurial momentum and cultivate student entrepreneurship at Sac State.

"We encourage students to share their great ideas so we can support them in moving those ideas forward," said Center for Entrepreneurship Director Seung Bach.



Toward that end, Bach and representatives from three other CSU campuses – Chico, Humboldt and Sonoma – came together a few years ago to design and launch a regional entrepreneurship competition. The result -- Future Four and More – brings together the best

student-led entrepreneurial ideas from each of the four campuses to compete for seed money each spring.

At Sac State, it all starts with The Pitch competition held on campus in November. Based on the results of that contest, Bach chooses two teams to work with during the winter and into the spring. In April, those two Sac State teams take on teams from the other four campuses in Future Four and More.

The first three years of the competition were held at Chico State. But this year, the competition came to Sac State for the first time. On April 21, 2017, eight student teams gathered at Sac State's Alumni Center and presented their elevator pitch to a panel of judges comprised of business and government leaders. Five teams were awarded seed capital of between \$700 and \$3,000 from the Center for Entrepreneurship.

First place went to Hombots, created by a team from Humboldt State. Hombots surveys land and collects data via a small, unmanned plane to help timber industry officials determine optimum land use. Hombots also won the Most Social Entrepreneurship award.

Second place went to a Sac State team, which developed Craft Cube,

a user-friendly building machine that integrates four different machines (laser cutting/engraving, 3D printing, 3D scanning, and milling) in one.

Craft Cube team leader Ammar Ahmed said participating in the contest was one of the highlights of his college education.

"Taking an idea and turning it into a business plan and then pitching it to a panel of judges was a unique and valuable experience," Ahmed said.


Third place went to the other Sac State team for Kid Chariot Link, an apparatus that allows parents to run with their children in a safe, comfortable manner.

Finally, Chico State took home the award for Most Sustainable Business Idea.

Bach said Future Four and More is not only a great way to recognize student entrepreneurship, it also helps students remember that entrepreneurship is not only about Sacramento.

"It's important to work together, communicate and network with students at other campuses because in doing so we can have a much bigger impact on the entrepreneurship community," said Bach.

Ahmed, who has since graduated, said the Future Four and More competition and working with other campuses definitely helped him prepare for a future as an entrepreneur.

"Participating showed me the experiences entrepreneurs go through daily: risk taking, time and team management, analyzing business models and understanding customer needs," he said. "Those are all essential factors in an entrepreneurs' success." 



# Sacramento Business Review:

## Regional Economy Slowing, Despite National Trends

Despite an improving national economic landscape, Sacramento's regional economy is slowing. The reason: a combination of declines in goods-producing employment, fewer construction jobs and an aging workforce, according to the mid-year update of the 2017 Sacramento Business Review, released in September.

The Sacramento Business Review is an analysis of the regional economy conducted by 17 of Sacramento's best financial analysts and researchers, who conduct the work entirely as a public service to the region. The only publication that focuses comprehensively on the regional economy, the Sacramento Business Review is published twice yearly in partnership with CBA and the Chartered Financial Analyst Society of Sacramento. The publication has been produced for the last nine years. During that time, the Sacramento Business Review has evolved to become a guiding source for many business owners and leaders.

In addition to a slower labor market and the construction sector losing jobs for the first time in seven years, the Review's panel expects loan growth among banks

and credit unions to slow because of tightening credit conditions that affect local commercial real estate and deteriorations in the auto loan segment.

Sacramento also has the nation's fourth fastest-aging workforce, which is cause for concern among area employers.

"Business optimism appears to be fading, regional business sentiment has declined in the first half in contrast to the national sentiment that rose sharply, and regional consumers appear less optimistic about their financial outlook and regional economic conditions when compared to national statistics," said Professor Sanjay Varshney. "The region desperately needs to do something about developing or attracting higher paid jobs and diversifying the job mix."

But there are several bright spots in the regional economy as well. Services employment, which accounts for more than 90% of the region's employment, has continued to grow, led by the health care sector. The health care industry appears to have shrugged off the uncertainty around the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, with health care employment increasing 4.89% over the past 12 months.

Home prices are another bright spot. Home prices in the Sacramento region continued the recent trend of robust increases during the first


half of 2017. The median sale price for all houses in June 2017 was \$374,000, which is an approximately 7% increase both from the fourth quarter of 2016.

This makes it the 12th consecutive quarter in which prices increased between 6.8% and 9.7% year-over-year, with an 8% average increase in the last three years. Going back a couple more years, home prices in the Sacramento region have almost doubled since the median price bottomed at \$179,000 in late 2011.

The strength of the housing market is further demonstrated by the continuing decline in distress sales, said Varshney.

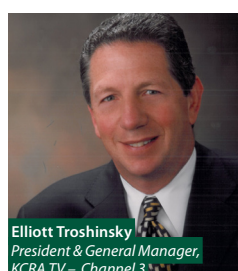
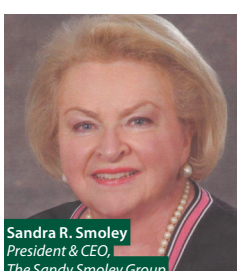
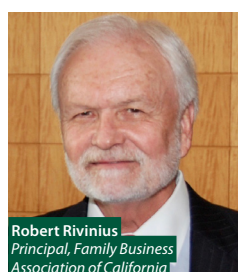
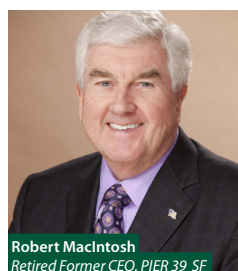
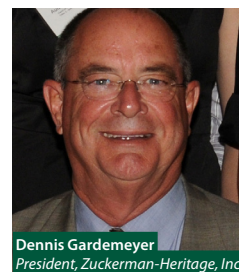
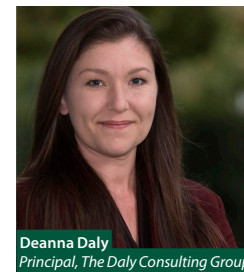
"The real estate owned by banks represented about 1 out of 40 of all sales in the first two quarters of 2017, while this number was 1 out of 20 even two years ago," according to Varshney.

The next issue of the Sacramento Business Review is expected in January.

To download a free copy of the report, visit: [sacbusinessreview.com](http://sacbusinessreview.com). 



# 2017-2018 College of Business Administration Advisory Council





# Introducing CBA's New Faculty and Staff Faculty

As CBA continues to evolve into an increasingly research-focused and community-centered organization, more faculty and staff are needed to fill new roles and help move CBA in exciting new directions.

The following faculty and staff have joined CBA over the last several months. We welcome them and are grateful to have them!

## Sadaf Ashtari, MIS

**Previous job:** Visiting assistant professor at Miami University, Farmer School of Business, Information Systems and Analytics



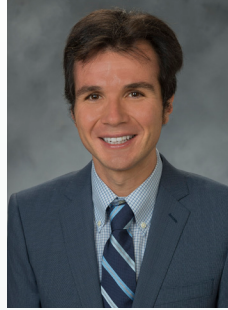
department, teaching "The Introduction of Computational Thinking" to freshmen business students.

**Education:** Ph.D. in Technology and Professional Services Management, Eastern Michigan University. Master's in Management Information Systems, Science and Research University of Tehran, Iran. Bachelor's in Information Technology, Qazvin Azad University, Iran.

**What do you like most about CBA so far?** The students. They are smart, well-prepared and hard working. They are paying attention and, unlike other college students, are not playing with their cell phones all the time. Also, the staff was very warm and friendly from the beginning. I never felt like a stranger here.

## Evren Eryilmaz, MIS

**Previous job:** Assistant professor of Information and Technology Management at the Bloomsburg University, Pennsylvania.



**Education:** Ph.D. in Information Systems and Technology.

**What do you like most about CBA so far?** I teach my courses in computer lab settings, which allows me to establish 1-to-1 relationship with the students. To the extent possible, I do not want anyone to memorize anything. Instead, I want my students to learn theoretical concepts via hands-on applications. I also got very interested in service learning type courses. I think such courses are a great opportunity for students to solve real-world problems by utilizing the skills they are learning. I would love to teach such courses in the future.

## Sargam Garg, Management

**Education:** Ph.D. from Rutgers University with four years of work experience in India and the U.S.



**What do you like most about CBA so far?** The direction the Dean is taking in moving it forward.

## Roslyn Roberts, Accounting



**Previous Job:** I commenced in academia in 2001 in Australia and moved from Australia to Arkansas four years ago where I have been teaching at Henderson State University in Arkansas since 2014. During my teaching career in Australia, I frequently traveled to Asia to teach financial reporting at a partner university in Hong Kong.

**Education:** Ph.D. in Accounting from the University of Sydney, Australia in 2015. My Ph.D. focused on accounting for goodwill impairment and my current research looks at business impairment due to climate change with additional research interests in accounting education.

**What do you like most about CBA so far?** I expected to be a little overwhelmed by the sheer size of Sac State, but have been pleasantly surprised by the family atmosphere of both the CBA and the university as a whole, despite that size. That has helped me to feel very welcomed! I have also been impressed by my colleagues and their warmth. It is my second week of teaching and I have found the students to be dedicated and hard working. Very impressed so far!

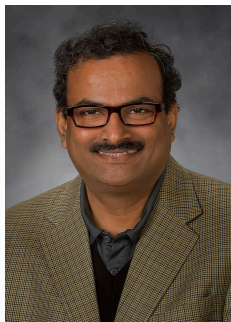
## Pooria Assadi, Management



**Education:** Ph.D. in Management from Beedie School of Business at Simon Fraser University.

**What do you like most about CBA so far?** The collegial and engaging nature of CBA and interacting with faculty and students.

## Ramakrishna Dantu, MIS



**Previous job:** Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Arlington.

**Education:** Ph.D. MS, and MBA from the University of Texas at Arlington, Master of Technology from the Indian Institute of Bombay, India.

**What do you like most about CBA so far?** I like the friendly atmosphere here. All the faculty members are very supportive and ready to help each other.

Staff

## Phillip Booth, Faculty Personnel Analyst



**Previous Job:** I've been on campus 11 years, but my previous job was working as the Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies in the College of Education.

**Education:** I graduated from Sac State in 2005 with a B.A. in Theatre and Dance.

**What do you like most about CBA so far?** All the staff are really nice and helpful.

## Nicole Zauner, Coordinator of Student Programs, Office of Student Engagement



**Previous job:** I worked here at Sac State in the Career Center as an Experiential Learning Coordinator briefly (temporary position) and before that I worked in Housing and Residential Life as a Residence Life Coordinator for three

years. I've also worked in Student Affairs at The Academy of Art in San Francisco and The Evergreen State College in Washington.

**Education:** B.A. in Child Development, minor in Music from Sac State, and MS in Higher Education Administration from Florida International University.

**What do you like best about CBA so far?** I really enjoy the positive energy in the Office of Student Engagement and our shared drive to truly support CBA students in increasingly effective and innovative ways.

## Sanita Kiep, Interim Administration Coordinator, Office of Student Engagement

**Previous Job:** I used to work as a student leader in the Office of Student Engagement for the College of Business Administration here at Sac State. After I graduated, I worked at Cal Expo in Expo Events.



**Education:** I just graduated from Sac State in May 2017 with my degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing. Prior to my Bachelor's degree, I received my AA degree in Visual Communications from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in San Francisco.

**What do you like best about CBA so far?** I love being a part of something larger that makes a difference. I was thankful for the Office of Student Engagement prior to my current position because of all the resources CBA offers business students. Everyone is very welcoming and are truly there to help students succeed.

Every day is different and I get to interact with such varied groups/people. It means I am always learning, and it also means that I am able to help students by providing the resources they need to be successful in their endeavors.

## Maria Anghel, Administrative Coordinator, Office of Student Engagement

**Previous Job:** Library Services Specialist.

**Education:** B.A. in Psychology.


**What do you like best about CBA so far?** The camaraderie, strong leadership and overall mission.



## Elizabeth Steiner, Administrative Analyst/Specialist and Assistant to the Executive Director for Executive and Professional Programs

**Previous Job:** Store Manager, Starbucks Coffee Company

**What do you like best about CBA so far?** I appreciate that the CBA has

positioned itself as the vital voice inspiring much of the growth and innovation we see across the Sacramento Region and beyond. It is a thrill to contribute to the advancing of our reputation as the principal purveyor of world class business education to our community, to nurture our positive impact, and to ensure our programs continue to charge forward efficiently. 





## Your Business Alumni –

# ASTRONGCONNECTED COMMUNITY

People often ask me why they should join the Business Alumni Chapter. My answer is always two-fold: why I joined and the reasons others join. Initially, it seemed that membership was simply a continuation of my participation in school...clubs, speakers, networking. It made sense. But as the years went by and the question came to me for the umpteenth time, self-analysis set in. Why was it worth the cost of membership as a new graduate? Broke, in debt, and strapped for time after starting a new job. What is its value now? Why is this community so important to me?

Enter a professor I barely remember. He was a boisterous card-carrying member of all his alumni associations and ours. And based on the amount of gray hair he sported, he clearly hadn't been in college in decades. He cited two reasons for his own memberships. First, he wanted to always know the value of his degrees. It's worth would change over time, increasing and decreasing with the program value proposition. The knowledge and skills of a new grad entering the workforce would define the merit of his degree – even if he earned it years before. Immediately, I was convinced that the value of membership far outweighed the cost. As a first-gen college student, my degree would provide an inflection point, providing career and financial opportunities that would shift my family's paradigm from poverty to comfort. At the time, my degree would be my most prized possession. His second reason was simple: it was fun. Fun to be part of a community with shared experiences, that sets value on diversity, that supports the region, and most of all that advocates for each other.

The reasons others join vary: networking, access to campus resources, staying connected, the license plate frame, and retail discounts on everything from car and house boat rentals to wine

and gym memberships. When asked, members make comments like, "I am a business major and wanted to have access to a community of likeminded individuals and professionals. I think that there are great networking opportunities provided and being a member also allows me to stay connected to the school and show some pride."

By contrast, I don't get asked why you should stay part of our Business Alumni Chapter. Many people find their value and participate at their own level of comfort. As a resume booster, a social group, a leadership opportunity, a sounding board, a job hunting tool, and/or a way to give back. I love hearing the reasons people stay involved. I get answers like, "For the friendship, these are people that will always have at least one thing in common with me: our pride to be a hornet. Stingers up!"

Some members drop out, but we strive to communicate and reconnect with these valued alumni. This group is wholly dedicated to its members. So, when someone doesn't renew, we take it as a personal challenge to understand their motives and then bridge the gap.

Last year we tackled several projects. We began increasing member communications by adding a newsletter to our existing methods (Facebook, email, Instagram, etc.). We amped up our collaboration by partnering with other chapters and outside organizations to provide members with more opportunities to prosper and grow among like-minded individuals. For example,

we co-hosted the Hornet Car and Bike Show with the Engineering and Computer Science Chapter and held a social mixer with the MBA Networking Association at Sac State.



Front row: Deanna Daly, Chelsea Boyd, Ilona Feschenko, Svetlana Solovyeva, Joseph Hernandez  
Back row: Shawna Weaver, Elena Dodi, Karen Gow

This year we are looking to hone programs based on membership feedback. Providing meaningful interactions with members is driven by our knowledge of program value. We will seek and use information from event participants, and the member community to craft events and programs. So, if you have great ideas, we're all ears. We hope you'll lend your voice to shape the future of our organization.

Visit our website and like us on Facebook for pics and info on events:  
<https://www.csusbusinesschapter.org>  
<https://www.facebook.com/SacStateBiz>

All the best,

**Deanna Daly,**  
*President, Business Alumni Group  
Faculty, College of Business -  
Sacramento State*

## Monica Perez

VP Finance, VSP Global

### Expanding Her Horizons

Monica Perez has worked in the finance division of Vision Service Plan (VSP) for 13 years. While she loves her job and the VSP company culture, Perez recently noticed a shift taking place within the finance field overall.

"I see the global marketplace growing increasingly more competitive, with new technologies and innovative ideas, which is requiring professionals to expand their skill sets," she said.

Perez has a Bachelor's degree in business from Chico State with an emphasis in accounting. Prior to joining VSP, she spent most of career in public accounting at PwC.

"My expertise had mainly encompassed technical finance related topics, rather than general business knowledge and strategy," she said.

"I believe there is an emerging need for finance professionals to perform more of an advisory role and be an active participant in business strategy, innovation and driving the business forward. I was at a point in my career where I wanted to broaden my scope, expertise and leadership experience."

To help expand her knowledge base, Perez enrolled in Sac State's Executive MBA (EMBA) program, where she says she found a wealth of knowledge and diversity among the professors and students in her cohort.



"The depth of experience and wide variety of industries and cultures represented among the professors and cohorts was the most valuable part of the program," said Perez. "We all embraced the opportunity to share and learn from each other, which significantly impacted our growth and personal development. The EMBA program enabled me to develop in new areas, increase my competitive advantage and help solve a variety of business challenges, as well as add value in new ways to VSP."

Perez's desire to expand her skills paid off. While still enrolled in the EMBA program, Perez was promoted to vice president of finance at VSP. She now has responsibility over

all accounting, financial reporting, internal controls and external audits for VSP Global and oversees a team of approximately 40 people.

Perez said her time in the EMBA program contributed to her promotion and enabled her to expand her professional horizons.

"In my new role, I really enjoy the fact that we have influence on the business and get to work with all areas of the company," she said. "We are a growing, unique and innovative organization, so every day brings new challenges and opportunities." 



## David Gilbert

### Making a Difference While Making a Living

Working full-time and attending an MBA program is enough to keep most people extremely busy. But for David Gilbert, it was also the perfect time to launch a business.

Gilbert had worked in residential care for 10 years. But as he moved up the ladder, eventually becoming an operations specialist in charge of six residential care facilities, he felt he was missing something.

"I learned a lot about business and leadership from mentors and peers over the years, but I started feeling like I needed a more formal business education," said Gilbert. "I was doing things the long way. When it came to things like accounting, I was getting there but it took way too much time and effort. My direct supervisor at the time had an MBA. He could complete projects in a couple hours that would take me days to complete."

Gilbert considered several online and traditional MBA programs, but ultimately selected Sac State's Executive MBA (EMBA) program.

"I liked that Sac State offered a cohort approach where I could attend with 35 or so other people for a year a half," he said. "It sounded challenging and fun."

As part of his final project in the EMBA program, Gilbert launched a training and consulting company with his wife, a certified HR specialist who assists residential facilities with legal and regulatory compliance. Their new company, Express Training Solutions LLC, offers continuing education classes for managers, nurses and other residential care



employees required to maintain annual continuing education units.

After going through a certification process with the state, the couple launched the business last July. Now, Gilbert and his wife deliver training classes to residential care workers around California. The company has also partnered with the American Red Cross, and is an authorized provider of First Aid and CPR training for individuals and companies in any industry.

"I use a lot of the skills I learned in the EMBA program when I teach others," Gilbert said. "Risk management and decision-making theories, for example, are always very important. I love passing that knowledge on to others."

Despite the demands of building a new company, Gilbert also maintains his full-time job as a regional director at Willow Glen Care Centers.

"I spend a lot of time on the road and that allows me time to be on the phone with perspective clients for my own business," he said. "I'm fortunate that my employer has been great about allowing me to do my own thing on the side."

As if that isn't enough, Gilbert has also served as an adjunct philosophy instructor at Sacramento City College since 2010.

"I really enjoy residential care and I love teaching," said Gilbert. "Some people think working in residential care can be emotionally draining, but I've always liked it – you are a bright spot in people's days. I get to help people and make a difference while making a living."

Gilbert and his wife are currently working hard to grow Express Training Solutions LLC into a known commodity in the residential care training world.

"When you are the new guy on the block, it's all about building name recognition and developing a great reputation," he said. 📍

To find out more about Express Training Solutions LLC, visit their website at [www.catchtheexpress.com](http://www.catchtheexpress.com)

## Intel #11 Cohort EMBA Graduating Cohort - Congratulations to our 22nd EMBA Graduating class!



**Rita Alajajian**  
Real Estate Agent  
Alajajian Properties

**Sandra Belmares**  
Specialist, Student Success and  
Support Program, Sacramento  
City College

**Jessica Castillo**  
Assistant Nurse Manager  
Sutter Medical Center

**Nelson Chu**  
Pharmacists Intern  
Anderson Brothers Leader  
Pharmacy

**Tracy Cook**  
Vice President -  
Marketing and Sales,  
Precision Flight Controls, Inc.

**Robert Forsberg**  
Sales Rep,  
Nestle-Dreyer's Division

**Steve Ghadiri**  
Associate Electrical Engineer  
California Energy Commission

**Cristina Gonzales**  
Bondar & Associates  
Business Development &  
Marketing Manager

**Amy Harbridge**  
Service Unit Manager  
Kaiser Permanente

**Jeffrey Hibbard**  
Analytics Manager- Asset  
Protection, Risk and Safety  
Raley's Family of Fine Stores

**Sudheer Isanaka**  
Director of Software  
Engineering, SambaSafety Inc

**Anthony Kokologiannakis**  
Sales Manager, Nationwide

**Margaret Lednicky**  
Facilities Planning &  
Engineering Specialist  
Los Rios Community College  
District

**James Martin**  
CEO - Donate Life California

**Karen Mendoza**  
Project Manager  
California Chamber of  
Commerce

**Miraben Patel**  
Design Automation  
Engineer, Intel

**Connie Radford**  
Financial Coach and Military  
Support Specialist  
CLC, Inc.

**Rochelle Roberts**  
Director of Marketing  
Advisors Gateway and Melton  
Financial Group

**Joseph Silvia**  
Systems Analyst/Sr. IT Project  
Manager, Intel

**Lisa Wade**  
Senior Manager, Program  
Management,  
Aerojet Rocketdyne

**Kimberly Wagenman**  
Accounts Receivable Specialist  
Cascade Orthopedic Supply, Inc.



## Joseph Hernandez

Community Relations Specialist,  
Premier Healthcare Services

### Moving Forward, Giving Back

Joseph Hernandez developed a passion for giving back when he was very young.

Hernandez has family members with special needs, so he developed a knowledge and understanding of that population when he was still a child. Today, as a community relations specialist for Premier Healthcare Services, Hernandez focuses on populations with intellectual and developmental disabilities, interacting with other organizations in the healthcare industry and the community to organize events designed to better serve that community.

Hernandez covers Northern California, a territory that reaches from Visalia to the northern border of the state.

"I also represent the company when it comes to stakeholder meetings within my region," said Hernandez. "The interaction with people is my favorite part – having that dialogue about services, things going on in the industry and new opportunities we can offer and create."

Prior to joining Premier Healthcare Services, Hernandez worked for a local non-profit. But when he reached a dead end in that position, he began looking for a new challenge. To expand his business and marketing skills, Hernandez enrolled in the MBA program at Sac State.

"I liked that it was a very hands-on, friendly learning environment where you can engage with profes-



sors and classmates and where you can be more than just another face in the classroom," he said. "Everyone knows each other. That really helped with active learning."

While enrolled in the MBA program, Hernandez was offered the job at Premier Healthcare Services. Today, Hernandez says he applies the marketing strategies he learned in the MBA program constantly.

"The entire program was great, but the marketing strategies I learned were the most applicable to my field," he said. "I learned how to facilitate personal interactions and how to effectively get my message across to different audiences."

Hernandez is also passionate about getting involved. He currently sits

on the Business Chapter of the Sacramento State Alumni Association Board of Directors and is the Political Action Committee Chair for Metro EDGE, a program of the Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce.

"The MBA program gave me a lot of opportunities I didn't have before," he said. "But it's all really about how much you put into it."

Hernandez's advice for others: "Be open to opportunities and be proactive – join a board, get involved and give back." 

## Serena Kallas

### Raising the Bar

Serena Kallas enjoys racking up “firsts.” So far, she’s the first woman in her family to attend college, the first to become an attorney and the first to run multiple businesses simultaneously.

“I was nervous about school in general at first because I didn’t have anyone to ask questions to or explain the process with, but I realized it was important to face my fears so that I could achieve all I needed to in order to help people the way I wanted to,” said Kallas. “I also wanted to pave the way for the generations after me, so I went after it with a lot of passion and urgency.”

Kallas was born and raised in Folsom. She began attending Sac State in 2008 after two years at Folsom Lake College. After receiving degrees in business finance as well as risk management in December 2009, she finally felt like she had what it took intellectually to keep up with her academic goals.

“Sac State gave me the confidence to apply to law school and make my dreams come true,” Kallas said.

In 2011, she enrolled at the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law and in 2012 in Sac State’s MBA program, going from campus to campus while juggling work as a vice president and CFO at a mediation firm.

Kallas received her Juris Doctorate in May 2014 with concentrations in business law and tax law and her MBA degree shortly after in December 2014.




Soon after finishing her MBA, Kallas launched her own small business. But after passing the Bar, she turned the company over to a sibling and launched her own law firm, Kallas Legal, APC, which focuses on business law and supporting small businesses in different capacities such as legal formation, contract negotiations and creation, and employee and contractor issues, as well as representing businesses in litigation. She’s now concentrating exclusively on growing her law firm, which has offices in both Sacramento and San Jose.

Not all business attorneys pursue an MBA as well as a law degree, but for Kallas it was important to fully understand business and to see how the law can affect the bigger picture.

“I don’t think I’d be the business attorney I am today if I didn’t get

my MBA at Sac State,” Kallas said. “Everything I learned in the MBA program I now apply as an attorney to counsel my clients so they understand what it means to be a business owner and how to operate a business in a more human way. I can give them the whole picture, both operationally and legally.”

Kallas said getting involved in on-campus networking and tutoring organizations was a huge benefit to her while pursuing her MBA.

“It was a great way to grow professionally and as a human,” she said. “It helped me get to know other people that are now business people in the community. The campus resources helped build long-lasting relationships and create a solid professional foundation for the future.” 



## Bill Dimopoulos

Instructor at Sierra College & American River College

### An International Edge

Bill Dimopoulos has an enormous amount of business experience. Over his 63 years, he has held positions such as a corporate controller, regional operations and credit manager for a Fortune 50 company, and accounts receivable manager for a large home builder -- all without a college degree.

Despite his many successes, Dimopoulos always wanted to earn a college degree in accountancy, so eight years ago, he reentered college for the fifth time.

"I started college in 1972," said Dimopoulos. "Then life happened. Whether it was kids or a job or a whole range of other excuses, I just never finished."

As it turns out, the fifth time was a charm. Dimopoulos enrolled at American River College where he earned three associate degrees. In Fall 2012, he transferred to Sacramento State and earned a degree in accounting. However, Dimopoulos was not done yet. In 2015, he was accepted into CBA's International MBA (IMBA) program.


"Originally, I planned to do the regular MBA program," he said. "But then I heard about the IMBA program, where students can complete a degree in 10 and a half months instead of two years and attend during the day instead of at night. Additionally, I would have the opportunity to study and learn alongside international students, which was very exciting to me."



Dimopoulos completed the IMBA program in September 2016.

"The whole program was very intense," said Dimopoulos. "The classes were only three weeks long, but encompassed the same amount of work as a 15-week course. Students came from Jordan, Peru, Iran, Russia, Romania, China and Taiwan. I learned about educational and business differences from my peers, which as an invaluable global experience."

Now that he has completed his education, Dimopoulos is teaching accounting and business classes at Sierra College and says the international experience he gained in the IMBA Program will definitely enhance his interactions with students.

"Business has become so international, it's no longer just about what goes on in the United States," he said. "Because of the IMBA program I'm better able to communicate and zero in on some of those issues than someone who doesn't have a background in international business." 

## Tamara Ballensky

### Finding a New Path

Tamara Ballensky started down a much different path than the one she ended up on. After receiving a degree in Social Science from California State University, San Marcos in 2006, Ballensky went to work as an executive assistant for the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club outside San Diego. Ballensky worked at that organization for multiple years in a variety of positions. But when the organization's accounting department had an opening, Ballensky found her calling.

"I realized I really liked accounting," Ballensky said. "It fit my personality, and I loved the organizational aspects of it. Math was never a strong point for me, and I had a misconception from a young age that accounting equated to math. I found out it certainly does not."

Ballensky liked accounting so much, she eventually decided to go back to school. But given job and family obligations, as well as the prospect of long commute times and parking challenges, she knew attending CSU San Diego would be difficult.

Instead, Ballensky chose to attend the MSA in Accountancy program at Sac State. The fully online program meant Ballensky could study from home and have the flexibility she needed to make it all work.

Ballensky loved the fact that Sac State's MSA program was very broad.




"It was good to get a base in all aspects of accounting, because I don't know where I'm headed long term," she said. "I also liked that they did one class at a time so I could focus on it while balancing other obligations. Trying to juggle deadlines for multiple classes at once is much more difficult."

Shortly before graduation, Ballensky received an offer from EY. She began working in EY's diversified staff group last July.

"Most people are in the diversified staff group for the first three years of employment at EY," she said. "It gives you an opportunity to work on different types of entities – partnerships, LLCs, corporations, S corps,

etc. -- in different industries. That gives you a foundation before you choose where you want to specialize and means you don't get pigeonholed in one category and never get to learn anything outside of that."

Though she found her calling later than she might have liked, Ballensky said doing it all in reverse worked out perfectly for her. And though she's not yet sure which area of accounting she plans to specialize in, she's currently taking the CPA exams and sees lots of opportunities ahead.

"The great thing about accounting is there are so many ways you can use a degree," she said. "I don't feel limited at all." 



## Danielle Saunders

### Putting New Skills to the Test at a Startup

Danielle Saunders has a passion for entrepreneurship and education. Those two loves landed her at a startup called Eclastic, a company on a quest to empower global talent through communication and critical thinking skills training.

"Our mission is to target employers' skills gaps around communications and critical thinking," said Saunders. "That tends to be something all employers need from their employees."

Eclastic courses focus on practical career skills, taught in a compact format that caters to the new generation of learners.

Saunders' arrival at Eclastic was put in motion when she met founder Matthew Vendryes at a networking event.

"Matt offered to bring me on to the team as a learning experience designer," said Saunders. "He likes to use the startup to build people's resumes, so the company is mostly comprised of students."

Two years later, Saunders is now a partner at Eclastic, where she focuses on operations and content.

Saunders says it's an exciting time to be on the ground floor of the company, as the team of five prepares to launch a new online learning platform.

"One of my main interests is the learning sciences – cognitive science affecting how we store and organize and retrieve information in our



minds," said Saunders. "I think any time you're building a learning environment one of the top priorities should be understanding how that process works for different people."

Saunders graduated in May 2017 with a degree in business and an emphasis in entrepreneurship. She was part of the Business Honors program and during her last semester, Saunders was honored with the Dean's award.

"Studying entrepreneurship and being on the ground floor of Eclastic at the same time was a great experience," she said. "I got to apply everything I learned at CBA pretty much right away."

Saunders said her first accounting class was a particularly impactful part of her experience at CBA.

"That class helped me make sense of a lot of things, and it gave me a framework through which to think about business," she said. "Since then I've noticed that people that don't have a business education don't have that same framework."

Saunders said her time at Sac State also prepared her well for the rigors of working with a diverse clientele at a startup.

"It's a really big investment in yourself when you join a startup, because so much rides on your ability to learn quickly and execute," she said. "It's a big experiment, and that makes it hard to predict what's next. That can be stressful, but it's also part of the fun." 

## John Davidson

Undergraduate Alumni Profiles

### How to Make Skateboarding and Marketing Mix

John Davidson's first true love was skateboarding.

During high school and following high school graduation, Davidson passionately pursued his dream of becoming a professional skateboarder. Although he saw significant success, Davidson's professional skateboarding dream ultimately didn't pan out.

Davidson also always harbored an interest in marketing. So, once it was clear his professional skateboarding dream was over, he enrolled at Sac State. For him, delaying college turned out to be a huge benefit.


"I think it was an advantage for me that I didn't start college until I was 24," Davidson said. "By that time, I really knew what I wanted to do. I had all this life and job experience, and when I learned the principles and the marketing lessons in class, they immediately had real life applications. It helped bring it all together."

Today, Davidson has turned his love for skateboarding and his marketing education into an exciting career in the gaming business. As head of partnerships for GameStop, a \$10 billion Fortune 500 company that operates more than 7,500 stores across 14 countries, Davidson manages partnerships with non-endemic brands and leads the company's e-sports strategy and influencer marketing.

"It's a new role for the company, so I'm enjoying creating the position and shaping it," he said. "I'm blessed to work with other great brands and to meet with big sports companies

and organizations like Red Bull, the NBA and NASCAR. I love seeing how brands achieve success. To be able to connect with all these successful companies is a dream for me."

In addition to his job, Davidson also enjoys motivational speaking. Last February, he returned to Sac State as a guest speaker in several CBA marketing classes and participated in a Business Pathways to Success luncheon. This fall, he'll return as a speaker at TEDxCSUS, where he'll share some of the lessons he's learned on his unique path through skateboarding and marketing.

"Business is a great major, because it teaches you how to make money doing what you love or, sometimes more importantly, how to avoid going into business doing what you love, because it doesn't make any money," he said. "You will not be ill served with a business degree, no matter what you end up doing in your career." 





# Class Notes

## 2010s

**Jason Lofing** (BS Business Administration (MIS), 2017) has been hired as an associate consultant at Kiefer Consulting Inc.

**Esmeralda Peña** (BS Business Administration (HR/OrgBeh), 2002 & Masters of Business Administration (EMBA), 2016) has been hired as the human resources director for Vanir Group of Companies Incorporated.

**Patrick Vue** (BS Business Administration (Finance), 2015) has been hired as a Realtor at the Natomas office of Lyon Real Estate.

**Justin Henry** (BS Business Administration (Marketing), 2010) has been hired as an account executive with Precision West Technologies.

## 2000s

**Graciela Saldana** (BS Business Administration (Marketing), 2009) has joined Re/Max Gold as a realtor in the midtown office.

**Timothy Muraki** (BS Business Administration (Marketing), 2005) has been promoted to Chief Operating Officer at APEX Investigations.

**Scott Sachs** (BS Business Administration (Accountancy), 2004) has been promoted to partner of audit services at Crowe Horwath LLP.

## 1990s

**Kristi Potthast** (BS Business Administration, 1994) has been promoted to senior marketing manager at Java City Inc.

**Richard Slechta** (BS Business Administration (Accountancy), 1993) has been hired as realtor at the Fair Oaks office of Lyon Real Estate.

**Rebecca Fabisch Miller** (BS Business Administration (Int. Bus.), 1993) has been hired as the SVP, regional director of commercial banking at Umpqua Bank.


**Ronnie L. Cobb** (BS Business Administration, 1992) has joined Search Pros as Sr. Director of Human Resources, Staffing & Partnerships.

## 1980s

**Roger de Lusignan** (BS Business Administration (Accountancy), 1986) has been hired as a principal and chief operating officer with Owen-Dunn Insurance Services.

**Ray Artinian** (BS Business Administration (Accountancy), 1982) has joined Re/Max Gold as a primary agent in the Roseville Office.

## 1970s

**Walter Borland** (BS Business Administration (Strategic Mgmt.), 1974) has been hired as a loan officer with Mason-McDuffie Mortgage Inc. 

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Business Job Board





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## CBA Events



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1 Spring 2017 Graduating Student Send-Off. Pictured: Spring 2017 Graduating MBA Students, Current MBA Students, Faculty and Staff

2 Spring 2017 Graduating Student Send-Off. Pictured (left to right): Leonora Chryssafis, Arianna Keith, Jennifer Meyer, Ryan Grooms, Michelle Vyvlecka, Chelsea Wilhite, Dr. John LaRocco, Cody Pepper, Fiancé of Cody Pepper

3 Scott Syphax'91, receiving the Alumni of the Year Awarded at the annual CBA Awards Banquet

4 Proactive business students attend the "Game of Credit – Debt is Coming" workshop to learn how to strategize for a successful financial future. Hosted by the Office of Student Engagement and presented by Life on Track.

5 MBA Welcome Event at the Julia Morgan House. Pictured: MBA students, alumni, staff and faculty and prospective students

6 The 2017 Outstanding Student recipients being recognized at the annual CBA Awards Banquet

7 Intel 11 Cohort graduation ceremony



6



7

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