



NELSON RUSCHE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

RUSCHE REVIEW

» HIGHLIGHTS



Center plans network for local entrepreneurs



CBER receives rural innovation grant



SBRH assists businesses at NEDCO fair



BCS helps orgs grow with student, faculty expertise

I STUDENTS EXPLORE BUSINESSES IN PORTUGAL

Twenty students from the Rusche College of Business traveled to Portugal in May to explore businesses and unique sites in the country. They included a company that has made hand-painted tile the same way for 400 years, a small shoemaker who produces shoes by hand with 30 employees, and the largest producer of cork products in the world.

“For many of the students, it was their first opportunity to experience another culture and learn the fine art of international travel,” said Dr. Matt Lindsey, chair of the Department of Management and Marketing, who led the trip with Dr. Mikhail Kouliavtsev, chair of the Department of Economics and Finance.

They met with a representative from the American Chamber of Commerce in Portugal and visited a variety of businesses and cultural locations. Those included Sant’Anna, a producer of ceramic tiles; Hotel Mundial, where students received a behind-the-scenes tour with operations manager Joao Monterio; the University of Coimbra, a public research university founded in 1290; the Quinta da Pacheca wine estate in the Douro Valley; the D’Origem olive oil museum; Mariano Shoes; and Amorim Cork.



Rusche College of Business students and faculty members visited the University of Coimbra, a public research university founded in 1290, during their study abroad trip to Portugal.

At Amorim Cork, the students discovered the importance of sustainability. The cork oak tree has been protected in Portugal for over 1,000 years, so cork is harvested without killing the tree. After 40 years of tree growth, the cork can be harvested from a tree every seven years for centuries.

Kathryn Duncan, a Master of Business Administration student from Plano, said she was impressed by Amorim Cork’s process.

“When they are finished with the production of the bottle stoppers, they can then take the waste from that production and turn it into so many different products, one of the largest being flooring,” she said.

“This was one of the most ethical businesses we visited, and seeing how successful they are with such a clean business model gave me a lot of ideas on how to implement this structure in the work that I want to do.”

Students also visited cultural sites, including St. George’s Castle in Lisbon; Jeronimos Monastery; the National Coach Museum of horse-drawn carriages; the historic towns of Sintra, Cascais and Estoril; the medieval town of Obidos; the Douro River; and Clerigos Tower, São Bento Railway Station, and other important points in Porto, Portugal.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Greetings, friends!
I hope your summer is off to a fantastic start. Our spring semester was certainly excellent,

and we are already busy gearing up for a great new academic year!

Optimism and impact are two words that come to mind as I consider the future of our college. My optimism is due not only to our affiliation with The University of Texas System but also to the many exciting initiatives we have developed that are already making a significant impact on the lives of our students and the communities we serve. In the months ahead, keep an eye out for even more stories about the impact our college is having through our Small Business Resource Hub, our Center for Business and Economic Research, our Business and Community Services office, and especially through the many developments taking place within our Greg Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship. I know you will be pleased to see your college continuing to make a very real impact in so many ways.

Even with all of these exciting new developments, some things will never change, such as the incredible talent of our students, the dedication of our outstanding faculty and staff, and our commitment to helping students succeed “one Lumberjack at a time.” Thank you so much for all that you do to help us advance our mission. Great things are in store for SFA and the Rusche College of Business!

Axe 'em!

Sincerely,
Tim Bisping, Dean

STUDENTS GAIN EXPERIENCE AT FINAL FOUR

When the NCAA selected Houston as the location for its 2023 men’s basketball Final Four, a request for volunteers was sent across Texas in January. Several sports business students answered the call for the tournament held March 31 through April 3.

Responsibilities included checking in guests, assisting with event activations, scanning tickets and helping fans meet basketball players at the fan fest.

“People were being sought in all areas to assist in putting on an unforgettable experience in Houston,” said Dr. Robert McDermid, senior lecturer in the sports business program. “We knew SFA students would be a great fit.”

Kailey Leighty, a senior from Waco majoring in sports business, volunteered to help with logistics and operations.

“My role was to assist in fan fest activities and ensure that the event was running smoothly,” she said.

Leighty said her career goal is to work in sports events.

“An event like the Final Four is exactly like something I want to be a part of,” she said. “Plus, I got to see celebrity basketball players like Magic Johnson do meet-and-greets at the fan fest.”

Jake Walston, a senior from Cypress majoring in sports business and management, gave guests directions, kept people in designated areas and scanned tickets for entry at the Final Four. He also networked with sports business professionals and other college students who have similar interests and career goals.

“I met some awesome people already working in sports, and I was able to make some great connections,” Walston said. “My volunteering experience showed me the different opportunities out there in the sports world.”

For more information on SFA’s sports business program, visit sfasu.edu/mgtmkt.

DOWNING GIVES MAY COMMENCEMENT ADDRESSES

Jason W. Downing '92, SFA alumnus as well as principal, Deloitte and chief operating officer of its clients and markets business unit, gave the commencement addresses during the university’s four graduation ceremonies in May.

Downing, a certified public accountant who earned a Bachelor of Business Administration at SFA, began his career at Deloitte in its audit subsidiary and later transferred to the consulting subsidiary. He has spent the last 31 years in a variety of management and client service roles serving some of Deloitte’s marquee clients that range from middle-market, high-growth companies to the Fortune 50.

Downing also serves on the boards for Deloitte US, the United Way Foundation of Metro Dallas and the SFASU Foundation. He’s a member of the Young Presidents’ Organization,



Jason W. Downing, SFA alumnus and principal, Deloitte

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and National Association of Corporate Directors.

FINANCE STUDENT PAYS HER WAY THROUGH COLLEGE

A wish to one day own Great Wolf Lodge in Grapevine during a childhood visit to the indoor water park sparked Alura Lovell's interest in college at age 8.

"My dad told me, 'Well, sweetie, start saving,'" said Lovell, a finance sophomore from Burleson. "The little girl with the big dream is who started saving, but, with age, I realized I may need to start with a college degree."

Lovell's parents paid their own way through college, so they told their daughter she should expect to do the same. As soon as she turned 16 years old, Lovell began working 30 hours a week until right before she left for college. During the summers, she held down three jobs to get as many hours as possible. She also worked with her father to pinpoint her interests and goals.

"I love math, solving problems and helping people, so my dad suggested financial advising and helped me apply for an internship at Truist Bank," Lovell said. "It was a great way to see that finance is so much more than numbers."

Lovell's father introduced her to Larry Milton, the financial advisor at the Milton-Garcia Financial Group of Truist Investment Services who mentored Lovell. "Mr. Larry," as Lovell calls him, earned a Bachelor of Science in agricultural business from SFA in 1984.

When Lovell needed to select a university that fit her both academically and financially, Milton suggested she visit his alma mater, where he played on the offensive line under SFA football coach Jim Hess in 1982 and 1983.

"For me, SFA was the perfect school at the perfect time," said Milton, who continues to be active in the SFA Alumni Association. "SFA works for everybody."



Alura Lovell, finance sophomore from Grapevine

Lovell toured many colleges and applied to over 20 different schools, but at SFA, "I found so much peace, and I knew that this was where I needed to be."

Now earning a 4.0 GPA while taking 21 hours and participating in student organizations and church activities, Lovell is still saving up through on-campus and summer jobs. After earning her finance degree with a minor in computer science, she plans to fund her Master of Business Administration.

Like Milton, Lovell said she would recommend SFA.

"Everybody wants different things, but SFA is just right — not too much, and not too little. I have never had a class where I didn't feel seen or valued."



The Rusche College of Business Executive Advisory Board, a group composed almost entirely of RCOB alumni, held its spring meeting in April at SEA's Culinary Café.

RUSCHE FACULTY SCHOLARS

Dr. Justin Blount

Dr. Pam Rogers

Marie Kelly

Dr. Stephen Shrewsbury

Dr. Suhjung Lee

Dr. Drew Thornley

Dr. Wenjing Li

Dr. Jay Vega

Dr. Chris McKenna

Dr. Carol Wright

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MATTHEW SMILOR NAMED ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER DIRECTOR

Matthew Smilor, former director of the award-winning Values and Ventures program for the Neeley Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Texas Christian University, has been named director of the **Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship**.

During his leadership, Values and Ventures became the No. 1 undergraduate venture creation program in the United States.

“It is an exciting time to be an entrepreneur, and ACE is going to be there to help, guide, cheer, support, educate and encourage,” Smilor said.

Launched last summer, ACE houses SFA’s Small Business Resource Hub and is working to implement entrepreneurship programs for the community, including the soon-to-be-launched Piney Woods Entrepreneurship Network, to help develop Nacogdoches as an entrepreneurial city through educational initiatives.

“The network will bring together lawyers, accountants, bankers, investors, entrepreneurs and students,” Smilor said. “It will be a good learning environment for the students.”

Through the center’s entrepreneurial programming and experiential exercises such as internships, workshops, competitions,



Matthew Smilor, ACE director

mentoring and trips, ACE will help train students to create, explore, invent, pioneer, imagine and innovate.

In addition to helping launch a new center with the support of business faculty and staff and benefactor Greg Arnold, a 1987 SFA graduate and CEO of TAC - The Arnold Companies, the city of Nacogdoches was a big draw for Smilor.

“It is wonderful to have a community that is so interwoven with the university, takes a true interest in its people and wants to take an active role in ensuring success,” he said.



The Small Business Resource Hub, part of the Arnold Center for Entrepreneurship, participated in the inaugural NEDCO Small Business Resource Fair hosted by the Nacogdoches Economic Development Corporation. The fair is designed to connect small businesses with experts including local financial institutions, real estate brokers, insurance companies, attorneys, accountants, government contract advisors and city officials. More than 50 attendees gained knowledge to help their businesses grow. Pictured, from left, are Gloria Montes, SBRH administrative assistant, and Larry Cain, SBRH director, who signed up several new clients for the hub.

SFA STUDENTS PITCH BUSINESS IDEAS AT LEC



ACE hosted the second annual Lumberjack Entrepreneurship Competition, inspired by ABC’s TV show “Shark Tank.” The first-place prize of \$5,000 went to Clarity Vape Filters, a one-size-fits-all filter for electronic cigarettes by Walker Ridgeway, a senior in entrepreneurship from The Woodlands (back row, left). Management exchange student Bacem Ben Daly from Tunisia (back row, right) earned the \$3,000 second-place prize with Salve, a social networking app that matches locations and similar interests. The \$1,500 third-place prize went to business junior Abbi Williams of Nacogdoches (back row, middle) for Conceal What Matters, a line of modest, conceal-carry athletic wear. Pictured front row, from left, are Matthew Smilor, director of ACE; finalists Isaiah Turner, Katie King and Quinton Williams; and Dr. Raymond Jones, associate professor and director of the entrepreneurship program.

CBER RECEIVES RURAL INNOVATION GRANT

SFA named the [Center for Business and Economic Research](#), directed by Dr. Mikhail Kouliavtsev, chair of the Department of Economics and Finance, as one of the 2023 recipients of grants issued through its Center for Applied Research and Rural Innovation.

CARRI's steering committee selected nine proposals with awards totaling more than \$280,000. Now in its second year, the CARRI grant program is part of SFA's effort to support innovation and entrepreneurship in the university's 12-county coverage region.

"The faculty research grants provide an opportunity for faculty and students to engage with the local community in a variety of ways," said Mary Ann Rojas, CARRI's executive director. "The applications were selected through a competitive process, and each applicant demonstrated economic impact, measurable outcomes and student engagement."

CBER received a \$23,660 grant to establish and maintain a set of metrics that CARRI's staff members can use to measure

the economic contribution of CARRI activities to the region. Data collected from various government agencies as well as local sources will be compiled into a dashboard, which can be used to assess and measure the benefits of CARRI and its impact on the local area.

Support for undergraduate students will ensure that they can provide services as interns to smaller communities where local officials may not be able to afford a paid intern.

"We hired four students as interns who are already working on the grant's projects," Kouliavtsev said.

Economics major Chareese MacDonald is directly engaged with the city while working 20 hours per week at the Nacogdoches Economic Development Corporation. She works another 10 hours per week with CBER.

Economics major Clay Patrick and finance major Dan Nguyen are compiling the data for the dashboard as well as helping host a dozen rural forums with local county officials to discuss economic development.



Dr. Mikhail Kouliavtsev, CBER director and chair of the Department of Economics and Finance

Lastly, economics major Ryan Knights is working on two economic impact assessments. The first will show the impact of The Cole Art Center @ The Old Opera House on the Nacogdoches economy, and the second will show the impact of SFA's affiliation with The University of Texas System on the local economy.

Watch for updates in the winter 2024 issue of Rusche Review.



The Division of Student Affairs announced Curtis Tran, a finance major from Nacogdoches who graduated in May, as one of four recipients of this year's Best of SFA Awards. Tran was a Jack Walker, a member of the Rusche Business Mentor and Mentee Program, and an intern at Oakwood Management. His dream job is to be a chief financial officer for a real estate company and help better the community by offering and being able to build homes for all.



The Rusche College of Business held its annual College to Career Conference in April. The event featured representatives from more than 30 companies offering guidance to SEA students on branding, business ethics and communications, social media, networking and other topics. Melanie Northcutt, pictured left, is an SEA alumna and owner of Sugar Magnolia Properties in Longview who served as keynote speaker. Pictured with Northcutt is Dr. Laurie Rogers, assistant dean for academic and career success in the college's Office of Student Services, which organizes the conference to promote student career development.

BCS UPDATES: SEASONINGS, SERVICE

After launching last fall, [Business and Community Services](#) quickly went to work matching student and faculty interests and expertise with three Texas projects during the spring semester.

“Our goal is to seek win-win relationships to provide real-world experiences for our students while leveraging the expertise and resources of the Rusche College of Business to aid the East Texas region and beyond,” said Dr. Marcus Cox, BCS coordinator and associate professor of management.

First, marketing graduate students worked with Texas Sundown Seasonings, a small business in Nacogdoches that produces food seasonings and sells its product in 82 Brookshire Brothers stores as well as through Amazon. The students analyzed the seasoning industry and the company’s marketing efforts to develop a strategic marketing plan for growing the business.

Another group of graduate students examined enrollment and retention data, analyzed fundraising and marketing efforts, conducted a survey of faculty and staff, and then proposed revised strategic plans for St. Patrick Catholic School in Lufkin. These plans featured projected financial impact information to help the school build on its rich legacy.

Students who expressed interest in nonprofit management worked as unpaid interns for American Red Cross offices in Dallas, Houston and East Texas. They received class credit and gained experience in volunteer recruitment, volunteer management and recognition, and budgeting.

Next up for BCS is developing more internship and class project opportunities with the college’s corporate partners including Fastenal, Mustang Cat and Smith



Dr. Marcus Cox, BCS coordinator and associate professor of management

Sawmill Service. In addition, MBA students enrolled in the strategic management class are working with a nonprofit in South Africa to develop a for-profit business that will provide jobs for local South Africans while raising funds to benefit orphans in the area.

MCDERMAND RECEIVES TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

Dr. Robert McDermand, a senior lecturer of sports business who joined SFA in 2011 and began teaching full time in 2019, was named one of the seven SFA faculty members who received a 2023 Teaching Excellence Award.

The selection is based on knowledge of subject matter; quality of lectures and assignments; enthusiasm for teaching; interest in and availability to students; sensitivity to the learning environment; effectiveness

as a teacher as assessed through student, peer and alumni evaluations; commitment to continuous improvement of their own classroom teaching; and contributions to the quality of teaching within the university through assistance and encouragement of other faculty members.

“I feel honored to be considered for this recognition,” he said. “It is a wonderful and humbling surprise, and I am grateful to those who’ve supported me.”

McDermand teaches management principles, principles of sports business, sports analytics, college sports, and advanced sports management, among other courses. Though he focuses primarily on teaching the management side of sports, he also works to promote a broad understanding of the sports industry to encourage his students to pursue careers in that field.

“I believe strongly in the value that sport plays in today’s robust consumer economy, and the role that well-trained professionals in the sport industry can play in advancing the field and enhancing experiences for fans and athletes,” he said.

McDermand said his goal in teaching is to prepare students to engage in their professional careers with the skills necessary to be successful and to embrace growth and future innovation. They develop these skills through real-life examples and enthusiastic classroom interaction, he added.

“I have established two primary philosophies as an instructor: to get my students to think about sports and sports business as subjects worthy of serious academic consideration, and to make the in-class learning experiences in my sports business and management classes relevant to students by connecting conceptual theories to contemporary examples through case studies, the latter of which has proven to be an effective teaching strategy, and a plan for preparing students for jobs in the sport industry.”



PANEL STRESSES VALUE OF COMMUNITY BANKS

Local banking experts discussed the variety, flexibility and security offered by banking industry careers with business students in April. They also stressed the industry's focus on giving back to the community through serving, advising and lending.

The Bank on Your Future event, sponsored by SFA's [Chadwick Family Banking Program](#), featured one-on-one meeting opportunities with nearly 20 Texas banks and bank regulators from the Texas Department of Banking and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency. It also included a panel discussion that focused on careers in banking and recent headlines.

From Y2K and the 2008 economic meltdown to creating Paycheck Protection Program loans during the COVID-19 pandemic and watching the Silicon Valley Bank collapse in March, panelists said the banking industry will always weather tough times.

"We don't believe Silicon Valley Bank's collapse will result in additional bank failures and a recession," said C Welch, a certified fraud examiner and assistant deputy comptroller for midsize and community banks with the OCC in Longview. "If it does, we'll figure it out. That's what Americans do."

She went on to stress the importance of community banks in keeping a local community and its economy thriving.

"Community banks are the heart and soul of our communities," Welch said. "Drive by the local high school and see which banks are advertising on the scoreboard. Bank with them because they focus on what is important locally."

Malcolm Deason, another panelist and Lufkin market president of Cadence Bank, has been working in the banking industry for 25 years.

"Banking is all about relationships," Deason said. "The most rewarding aspect of my career is being involved in the community I grew up in."

Panelists described their experiences trying to make PPP loans as fast as possible during the pandemic because banks were the only conduit to distribute this money to businesses and people in need.

"I helped a woman who was turned away elsewhere get a loan so she could pay her six employees," Deason said. "Now I see her at stoplights, and she lowers her car window and yells, 'We're still in business!'"

In addition to providing financial guidance and serving on local boards, banking industry professionals enjoy good salaries and a healthy work-life balance, said Justus Corley, panelist and senior vice president of Woodforest Commercial Banking in The Woodlands. He added that the Chadwick Family Banking Program serves as a springboard for students into the industry.

"This banking program is a shot in the arm," he said. "Students graduate with the analytical knowledge they need to speed up their careers."

Sean Doyle, panelist and senior vice president of Texas First Bank in Galveston, said the industry needs a variety of people with different skills, from analytical to communication to people management. It's ultimately "about finding the right fit. And if you're willing to do the work, the sky's the limit as far as salary."

SFA Regent Judy Larson Olson, a 30-year career commercial banker and mortgage lender as well as producing branch manager at Supreme Lending in The Woodlands, moderated the panel. She summed up banking careers by saying, "No matter your title, be it CEO or personal banker, your job is to gather deposits, make loans and give back to the community."

VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

Two new videos are available to show college-bound students who are interested in business.

For the first video, the Rusche College of Business hired Rustic River Media owner and SFA alumnus Joshua Milligan '14 to create a new video showcasing all that the college has to offer. It is available at sfasu.edu/cob.

The second video features the college's five-year Bachelor of Business Administration in accounting/Master of Professional Accountancy program. Dr. Nikki Shoemaker, assistant director of the Schlief School of Accountancy and MPA program director, talks about the benefits of the program with BBA and MPA student Ryan Hookstra as well as two of the college's MPA alumni, Lewis Madsen, controller for the Houston Rockets and the Toyota Center, and Cheryl Montgomery, affiliate at Targa Resources. The video is available at sfasu.edu/acct/academics/mpa.



Samantha Hall, a management and marketing senior from Queen City, and Tanzi Stafford, a marketing senior from Gonzales, Louisiana, received the Top Scholar Award for the Rusche College of Business for their paper "Why Has the Dropout Rate at SFA Increased?" Their sponsor was Dr. Wenjing Li, assistant professor of marketing, who received the Faculty Mentor of the Year Award. Pictured, from left, are Hall, Li and Stafford.

SAM EARNS AWARDS AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Students in SFA's chapter of the Society for Advancement of Management received several awards in March at the first in-person SAM International Business Conference since the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the conference in Nashville, Tennessee, students from around the world competed in categories ranging from business pitch and extemporaneous speech to a case competition.

The team of four business students from the Rusche College of Business gained exposure to competing at an academic conference and extended their professional network, said Dr. Gina Harden, associate professor of management and marketing and faculty advisor for the group.

"They represented SFA with honor and class," Harden said.

SFA's team won first place for the Campus Chapter Performance Program. That team included Jorge Huerta Caratachea, SAM chapter president and management senior from Tomball; Gabriella Garza, marketing junior from Dallas; Andrew Mares, management junior from Murphy; and Seth Rigby, management junior from McKinney.

In addition, Caratachea was named Outstanding National Student, Garza was named Outstanding Regional Student, and Mares was awarded third place in the extemporaneous speech category.

"Never would I have thought throughout my time in college that I would be awarded such a high honor from an international collegiate organization," Caratachea said. "I wouldn't have gotten this award if it wasn't



Students, faculty and alumni received several awards at the Society for Advancement of Management International Business Conference in Nashville. Pictured, from left, are Dr. Gina Harden, Andrew Mares, Jorge Huerta Caratachea, Gabriella Garza, Mikala Groshong, Corey Johnson and Seth Rigby.

for my wonderful advisor, Dr. Harden, my mentors, and my SAMily at SFA."

The students weren't the only Lumberjacks earning honors. Harden was named Outstanding Faculty Advisor.

"This award means the most to me among other academic honors for teaching, research or service since it is a nomination from my SAM students," she said. "I am humbled not only by their generosity toward me but also by their professional growth through their participation in the SAM competition. It is really the most rewarding part of my job, and I am so proud of each one of them."

Two SFA alumni and former SAM members, Corey Johnson and Mikala Groshong, also attended the conference.

Johnson, a talent development specialist for Pilot Company based in Nashville, earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from SFA in 2017 and 2022 and is a temporary committee member for the national SAM board of directors.

Groshong, an operations accountant at MUFG Capital Analytics in Dallas, earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from SFA in 2020 and 2021 and is the first Lumberjack to serve on the national SAM board. Also the youngest member ever to serve on the board, Groshong received the Bronze Leadership Award at the conference for her service as a director.

For more information on SFA's management program and SAM chapter, visit sfasu.edu/mgmtmkt.



In April, the Rusche College of Business Career Passport Program celebrated its 2022-23 scholarship winners. They are, from left, Ngoc Hoang, economics and finance sophomore; Roman Farias, management and marketing junior; and Brady Deese, management and marketing senior. Not pictured is Evan Stewart, a management and marketing freshman.



Students in Dr. Lucia Sigmar's leadership communication class presented SFA information to around 100 students at Nacogdoches High School in March. Pictured, from left, are Dr. Drew Thornley, associate professor of business law; Angelica Rocha, English senior from Arlington; Jake McDonald, finance senior from Allen; Sigmar, associate professor of business communication; TKai Lloyd, general business senior from Houston; and William Hartwell, business communication and corporate development senior from Houston.