

# CARLSON

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

FALL 2023



## Jamie Prenkert Aims High

New Dean Jamie Prenkert is ready to harness the many opportunities he sees at the Carlson School.



THE MAGAZINE  
FOR ALUMNI  
AND FRIENDS



## Welcome, Class of 2027!

Nearly 1,000 new undergraduate students joined the Carlson School this fall. The class includes 700 incoming first-year students and 250 transfer students. After move-in August 28-29, students participated in the annual Welcome Week activities, including taking the Block M class photo at Huntington Bank Stadium, Convocation ceremony at Northrop Auditorium, and College Day celebrations. Here, first-year students in matching T-shirts are all smiles as they ride from Northrop to the Carlson School where they will be welcomed with a “hype tunnel” of cheering students, faculty, and staff before an official welcome from Dean Jamie Prenkert, the Undergraduate Program, and Business Board – Undergraduate Student Government.

Altogether, the incoming class of students (undergraduate, graduate, and PhD) totals almost 1,500, the largest and most diverse class in school history. Across 18 graduate programs, nearly 600 new students from 30+ countries are enrolled.

During several orientation sessions, including a new combined experience for MBA and MS students, the energy and enthusiasm of these new students were powerful. In his welcoming remarks to each program, Dean Prenkert encouraged students to shape their own course and take advantage of all the school has to offer, including world-class faculty, unmatched experiential learning opportunities locally and globally, and a strong alumni network of more than 60,000 in 100+ countries.

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THE CARLSON SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT  
MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

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**DISCOVER** | **START-UP NEWS**

**U of M Interim President Has Deep Ties to Carlson School**



Top: Interim President Jeff Ettinger's official portrait.  
Bottom: Ettinger (left) and Professor Mark Bergen pose for a photo in 2017 when they co-taught MKTG 6090 Challenge in Agribusiness, nicknamed "Food Fight."

One of the last times Jeff Ettinger was on the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus, there was a food fight. Before becoming interim president of the University in June, Ettinger co-taught MKTG 6090: Challenges in Agribusiness—nicknamed “Food Fight”—with Professor Mark Bergen. The course, taught in Fall 2017 and 2018, examined critical issues facing the industry with Ettinger providing tangible, real-time analysis as a former Hormel Foods executive. “Co-teaching with him was one of my favorite and most exciting learning experiences I have had the opportunity to be part of during my career,” Bergen says. “He was interested in making a real difference in students’ lives, and willing to do what it took to do the class right.”

Ettinger reflected on the course fondly, saying, “[Mark is] an energetic, talented and respected member of the Carlson School team. It was such a joy to work with Mark in the classroom in highly interactive sessions with great students.”

**“Co-teaching with him was one of my favorite and most exciting learning experiences I have had the opportunity to be part of during my career. He was interested in making a real difference in students’ lives, and willing to do what it took to do the class right.”**

PROFESSOR MARK BERGEN

The Board of Regents selected Ettinger for the interim president role following Joan T.A. Gabel’s departure for the University of Pittsburgh. Most recently, Ettinger had been the chair of The Hormel Foundation Board of Directors—a position from which he’s taking a leave of absence while leading the U of M. The Hormel Foundation is one of Minnesota’s largest community foundations and grant makers.

From 2005-2016, Ettinger was CEO of the Hormel Foods Corporation, responsible for a \$9 billion annual budget and 20,000 employees. He became CEO after 16 years with the company in roles ranging from corporate attorney, marketing manager, treasurer, and president of the Jennie-O Turkey Store. A candidate for U.S. Congress in Minnesota’s First District in 2022, Ettinger has also served on the boards for a number of public and private companies.

Ettinger’s time with the Carlson School came through the Executive Leadership Fellows Program, which invites highly accomplished leaders from the public, private, or nonprofit sectors to enhance the school’s academic environment. Ettinger has also been a guest lecturer in Carlson School courses and at other universities, in addition to co-teaching with Bergen.

As interim president, Ettinger plans to use the strategic plan in place, MPact 2025, to better serve students, increase financial stewardship, increase sustainability, and positively impact the state during his stead. **C**

## Remembering Professor Emeritus Mike Houston



A dedicated leader with a passion for instilling a global business mindset in students, Mike Houston played an instrumental role in expanding the Carlson School's footprint, both locally and internationally.

Houston died April 10, following his battle with brain cancer.

In 1986, Houston joined the Carlson School as the Marketing Department chair. He would go on to serve in multiple leadership roles, including as the associate dean of faculty and research, founding academic director of the Carlson Brand Enterprise, Ecolab-Pierson M. Grieve chair in international marketing, co-interim dean, and, perhaps most notably, as associate dean of global initiatives until his retirement in 2020.

Houston always cited the Carlson School's global education initiatives as one of its key strengths. He led the Carlson Global Institute (CGI) and helped usher in the school's international experience requirement for all students in 2008.

In addition, Houston served as academic director of the Warsaw and Vienna Executive MBA programs, which expanded access to the Carlson School's world-class education. For his dedication to CGI, he received the University of Minnesota Global Engagement Award in 2012.

He earned his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

## Zeke Jackson Named Tomato Can Loving Cup Award Winner

For his commitment to academic excellence, leadership, and community service, Zeke Jackson was named the winner of the 2023 Tomato Can Loving Cup Award, the most prestigious award the Carlson School bestows on an undergraduate student.

"College has been an incredible journey of personal and professional growth," says Jackson, '23 BSB. "Receiving this award feels like validation that I'm asking the right questions and working on the right problems."

Throughout his time at the University, Jackson, an Ecolab Carlson School Scholar, has left a lasting impact both on and off campus. An Entrepreneurship and Political Science double major, Jackson served as the student body vice president and as the executive director and CEO of People for PSEO, a nonprofit he helped start while in high school that promotes, defends, and expands opportunities for high school students through the

"College has been an incredible journey of personal and professional growth. Receiving this award feels like validation that I'm asking the right questions and working on the right problems."

ZEKE JACKSON

Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program.

The award is the oldest given at the Carlson School. It was awarded for the 95th time this spring, which, per the engraving on its side, is "presented annually to that person who in the course of the year has rendered the most distinctive service to the school."

By winning the award, Jackson is eligible for a half-tuition scholarship to the Carlson School Full-Time MBA program, following two years of professional work experience.



## Analytics U Takes Data On a Thrill Ride At Mall of America

The twists and turns of amusement park rides gave high school students an action-packed introduction to the power of data science during the Carlson School's Analytics U program this summer. The camp is a weeklong pathway program aimed at those underrepresented in STEM fields.



Students went to Nickelodeon Universe at Mall of America and collected data by tracking the rides they rode. Teams then analyzed the numbers and presented their findings to the mall's data scientists. The winning team noticed what they called "The Lunch Effect."

"After lunch, we rode rides like the Carousel, which is a very slow, chill ride, so we were like, 'I wonder if the other teams experienced that,'" describes Aneesa Dahir, a senior at St. Louis Park High School. "[Looking at the data], we were

really surprised. The Pepsi coaster had a big decline after lunch even though it's the most popular ride."

Phil MacDonald, the mall's director of data analytics, business intelligence, and application development, says he hopes the experience encourages students to imagine new career possibilities.

"Perhaps this will help some people decide data science is what really resonates with them, and this is what they want to go into," MacDonald says.

Throughout the weeklong camp, students also conducted company site visits and received college readiness guidance. While participation in Analytics U does not guarantee acceptance into the University of Minnesota, the program aims to provide students with exposure to lifelong skills.



## Rescuing and Rehoming Retired Racing Greyhounds



"I just want to make a positive impact on animal adoption and build a loving community for the dogs and their owners."

TRACY KEELING

Tracy Keeling's search for a pet led to a life-changing journey.

It was 2009 and Keeling's apartment complex decided to allow dogs. As she looked for a four-legged companion, she stumbled upon Greyhound Pets of America's (GPA) booth at a dog show.

That moment set in motion a lifetime commitment for Keeling, the associate director of admissions operations for MBA and MS Programs at the Carlson School.

GPA Minnesota is a Twin-Cities-based, volunteer-run greyhound adoption organization, dedicated to placing retired racing greyhounds in loving forever families.

After reading up on the breed's unique characteristics and considering the lifestyle change, she welcomed her first greyhound, Buddy, into her life. The joy and fulfillment of this adoption journey didn't stop there. Within a year and a half, they welcomed another greyhound, Pearl, into their family, proving that adopting greyhounds can be addictive—"like potato chips," Keeling jokes.

Keeling's passion for greyhounds didn't stop at adopting. She soon became actively involved in GPA's meet-and-greet events. Gradually, her commitment deepened and she became the organization's president.

"This really was the perfect dog for me," she says. "And I became incredibly passionate about GPA's mission and helping lead the organization. I just want to make a positive impact on animal adoption and build a loving community for the dogs and their owners."

As GPA's involvement with international greyhound rescues grew, Keeling spearheaded efforts to bring in retired racing greyhounds from Ireland and Australia, ensuring more dogs found loving forever homes. Over the years, the organization has successfully rescued and rehomed countless dogs, contributing to the end of the unfortunate practice of euthanizing retired racing greyhounds.

Courses at the Carlson School cover a wide range of topics. Here's a 60-second breakdown of one of the many classes leaving an impact on students.



## BA 1021 Design Your Life

This course allows students to customize their college experience to get the most out of it. Using a process rooted in Design Thinking, a framework developed by Stanford University, the course equips students with tools to create and test a journey that best aligns with who they are and what they hope to get from college. Students explore the purpose of higher education; reflect on personal value and strengths; explore diverse perspectives and mindsets while re-framing limiting beliefs; and engage in experiential learning by applying design thinking methods for problem-solving and educational wayfinding. By facilitating deep discussions through thoughtful activities, the instructors aim to help students develop a sense of belonging at the Carlson School.

### TAKEAWAYS

The course, required for all students and taken in their first year, was developed as part of the Undergraduate Program's redesign, which launched in Fall 2022. The revamped curriculum was honored with a 2023 Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Innovations That Inspire award.

The course is designed to help students develop skills that will help them make thoughtful choices about classes, internships, student groups, and, more generally, how to spend their energy.

92 percent of students surveyed after the class found it helped them expand their idea of what is possible in college, as well as process and reflect on the transition to college.

Nearly 84 percent said they felt more comfortable sharing their personal thoughts about their hopes, dreams, fears, and goals.

In a post-class survey, one student shared, "I think the curriculum was highly inclusive, allowing students to talk about their lives and personalities."

## 3 PEOPLE, 3 QUESTIONS

### 1. What are you reading?



**Adenike Afolabi**  
Current MHRIR student

I just finished Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime*, a humorous and poignant autobiography about his upbringing in apartheid-era South Africa. The book serves as a reminder that, even in the darkest of times, humor and love can be powerful tools for survival and growth.



**Dharshini Anugu**  
'23 BSB

I just finished re-reading *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi. It is a phenomenal autobiography about a neurosurgeon diagnosed with lung cancer. It's a book I find myself returning to every couple of years. It follows Kalanithi's journey battling mortality and serves as a reminder that each day is not promised. I absolutely love Kalanithi's writing style and how he wrestles with life's many unanswered questions. It is definitely a must-read and puts into perspective what's important in life.



**Carla Pavone**  
Lecturer, Strategic Management & Entrepreneurship

This is embarrassing, but I rarely read books. I'm an avid reader of *The Wall Street Journal*—not just the news and business stuff, but especially the color stories about obscure topics that can be surprisingly amusing or touching.

### 2. What is your favorite website?

**Netflix.com.** I love watching foreign TV shows, especially K-Dramas.

My favorite website has to be **Pinterest.** I would like to think I'm a relatively organized person and Pinterest makes it so easy to create various boards for all my different interests. I have boards for my dream home, future travel plans, go-to easy recipes, and so much more! I can get lost on the site for hours!

Another embarrassing admission: I LOVE **Instagram!** Besides friends and family, I follow celebrities, practical info about useful tech (@forgoodcode) and Excel (@thecheatsheets), fitness tips (@twintownfitness and @humble\_hustle\_life), photography (@dguttenfelder), and indulge in silliness (@zillowgonewild). And yes, I'm a sucker for Instagram ads, too.

### 3. What is your dream job?

My ultimate aspiration is to be part of a **purpose-driven business** that adopts the impact investing model.

I would love to be an **event planner** when I'm older. Whether this be planning weddings, charity galas, or corporate fundraisers, I think I would have so much fun creating specialized events for any occasion! I also think that this job is so dynamic and gives you so much flexibility that it would lead to a great work-life balance. It's definitely a job that would not feel like work!

I've had multiple dream jobs and now I **have my dream life.** The challenge was to juggle work with my roles as a mom, wife, sister, daughter, and friend. When I led MIN-Corps, I was on an unending field trip learning about world-changing inventions by brilliant scientists. It was a joy to educate them about business to help commercialize their innovations. Today, in my "soft" retirement, I continue to teach Carlson School students and Midwest scientists, and I have more time to devote to the people I love.

## Can AI Help You Land a Job?

BY GENE REBECK

ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence tools can make job seeking easier—if you know how to use them.

Just four months ago, Lakshit Bajaj, '23 MSBA, joined New Jersey-based software and data analytics company Axtria as a decision sciences project leader. While he credits his hiring primarily to his training and degree, Bajaj also received crucial help from artificial intelligence. Specifically, an AI-driven chatbot that has exploded on the scene since its launch in November of 2022.

To call ChatGPT a “chatbot” understates how astonishing its capabilities are. By “conversing” with it online through “prompts” that specify what you’re seeking, you not only can get answers and information—you also can have it help you write just about anything, even magazine articles (not that we did). Bajaj says he used ChatGPT to improve the existing language in his cover letters and résumés. “You can give it a prompt and ask it to fix the grammar or make it sound more professional or more enthusiastic,” he says.

There are other, similar AI-powered technologies out there, such as Google Bard and YouChat. But ChatGPT has rapidly emerged as a widely used tool for job seekers such as Bajaj.

“We have seen students use ChatGPT for everything from résumé and cover letter [support], [searching for] jobs to apply for, answers for potential interview questions,” says Maggie Tomas, executive director of the Carlson School’s Business Career Center (CBCC). This year, she says, “our team has tried to soak up as much knowledge as possible that’s out there.” The goal? “Give students best practices for using ChatGPT and things to avoid—because we know that they’re going to use it,” she says.

It isn’t just recent grads who can benefit from ChatGPT’s ever-evolving powers. But despite some of the scary predictions

about AI, at this point, at least, it can’t replace the human factor—including those attributes that make you distinctive as a professional and a colleague.

With that in mind, here are some of the benefits and pitfalls of using ChatGPT in the job search.

### BENEFITS

**The technology is quickly improving.**

One reason why ChatGPT has boomed: The more people use it, the more it learns and the better it gets. And AI isn’t completely new: For several years, the CBCC has been using a digital tool called VMock, which uses AI to review and evaluate résumés. For instance, Tomas notes, it can help determine how “compelling” résumés are.

**It can help overcome writer’s block.**

Cover letters “can feel like the heaviest thing for students to write,” Tomas says. Using ChatGPT speeds up the writing process, so there’s less time spent staring at a blank page and more time fine-tuning your message. As Bajaj discovered, ChatGPT can help come up with usable phrases for specific positions and employers. “You can also train it in the way you want your cover letter to look,” he says. Bajaj trained ChatGPT to create a version of his cover letter’s opening paragraph that expressed why he was interested in the company and how he could best use his skills. He believes the final product was better than what he had on his own.

**You can specify your search more easily.**

People have long been using Google for locating and investigating potential employers. But compared with that search engine, Tomas says working with ChatGPT “is like having a conversation.” As the user and the chatbot interact, “it will continue to filter. Whereas you might type a new query into Google, it will erase

what you typed in before.” Bajaj says using ChatGPT is “like talking with a teacher or a friend. And you can ask clarifying questions about the links it gives.”

### PITFALLS

**“The output is only as good as the input,”** says Will O’Brien, the CBCC’s associate director. Simply asking for “a good cover letter” won’t get you very far. ChatGPT needs specific prompts to deliver the best results.

**ChatGPT doesn’t provide an authentic voice.** It’s artificial intelligence, after all. Ask it to generate even a highly specified cover letter, and “it will come up with something that doesn’t quite sound human—or it sounds like someone else wrote it,” Tomas says. Bajaj noticed this himself, finding that in ChatGPT-generated text, he had to modify the language to make it sound more like himself. That said, he says he found it didn’t take long to make those fixes.

**ChatGPT can’t be used on its own for doing research.** For one thing, the information it gathers from its digital sources isn’t always reliable. “You can’t take [ChatGPT] as a source of truth,” Bajaj says. You need to cross-check. “We have heard worst-case scenarios from recruiters where a student had ChatGPT write a résumé,” Tomas says. “Then the hiring manager asked questions about what was on the résumé and the student wasn’t able to answer them very well. We won’t let that happen to our students.”

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In other words, AI should always be supplemented with non-AI resources. O’Brien advises job seekers to “leverage AI tools.” For example they could ask ChatGPT to search for Carlson School alumni working at a specific company. Then, “they can pop over to LinkedIn and search for those same names” to build connections.

Like AI in general, O’Brien and his colleagues in career guidance and coaching are still learning—about ChatGPT and how to help job seekers make the best use of it. One thing it (probably) will never be able to do: take the place of a career counselor. Or, for that matter, of a job seeker. **C**

Despite some of the scary predictions about AI, it can’t replace the human factor—including those attributes that make you distinctive as a professional and a colleague.



**Maggie Tomas,**  
executive director  
of the Carlson  
School’s Business  
Career Center



**Will O'Brien,**  
associate director  
of the Carlson  
School’s Business  
Career Center



**Lakshit Bajaj,**  
'23 MSBA





# JAMIE PRENKERT AIMS HIGH

*“This is the right place, and the right time.”*

BY ERIN PETERSON

Jamie Prenkert was immersed in a meeting on his first full day as the Carlson School of Management’s new dean this past July when he heard a knock on the conference room door. He turned toward the door’s frosted glass window and immediately recognized the surprise guest. “I saw the shadow of Goldy’s big head and I laughed out loud,” he recalls of the moment.

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PORTRAITS BY NATE RYAN



Above: Dean Jamie Prekert talks to attendees during a faculty and staff ice cream social at the Carlson School over the summer.



The meeting adjourned, and during the next half hour, **Prekert gamely posed for photos with Goldy, including one where he hoisted the mascot onto his back.** “It was manic in the best possible way,” he says.

Prekert will likely be featured in plenty of photo ops in the coming months, but few may serve as a better metaphor than this one. After all, Prekert is a man who has spent his entire career finding ways to elevate the people, the programs, and the ideas around him. Perhaps it’s no surprise that he found a way to lift even Goldy to a higher level.

**OUTSIDE VOICE**

Prekert steps into a role that Professor Sri Zaheer held for more than 11 years. (Zaheer has transitioned back to a faculty role at the school.) He knows he has big shoes to fill, and is quick to praise his predecessor’s tenure. He calls her extensive work with the local

business community nothing short of incredible and praises the school’s innovative undergraduate curriculum.

Coming in as an external leader—Prekert was most recently executive associate dean at Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business—he knows he will have to lean on different strengths to excel in his new role.

There is no question he has a long track record of success. He turned heads while earning a political science degree at Anderson University, where professors at the small liberal arts school in Indiana urged him to think big about his next steps. He did, earning admission to Harvard Law School, where he graduated *magna cum laude*.

Prekert went on to spend three years as a senior trial attorney for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Indianapolis, where he honed skills that would later prove useful in his academic roles. “My fellow attorneys always laughed at me, because they all hated the

research and writing,” he says. “But I was volunteering to do it.”

Prekert realized that the academic world was a better fit for those specific strengths, and in 2002, he joined the Kelley School as an assistant professor of business law. He quickly racked up accolades and achievements: He coauthored a top business textbook, *Business Law: The Global, Ethical, and Digital Environment*, which is now in its 18th edition. He won four teaching awards and a handful of national awards for his research. And during his 20-year tenure at the school, he methodically ascended from assistant professor to executive associate dean.

When the opening for the dean’s position at the Carlson School crossed his desk last year, he felt confident that he could use the formidable skillset he’d built to lead an already-strong school to even higher levels.

**FUELING EXCELLENCE**

Prekert’s résumé is chock full of accomplishments and awards, and the Carlson School search committee took note of the ways he made the most of the opportunities he saw for the Kelley School: he was instrumental in helping the school build perhaps the most renowned business law and ethics department in the country, and he played a key role in the launch of wildly popular short-term international trip programming for undergraduate students. Colleagues credit Prekert for developing a teaching professor rank for instructional faculty, and he has been a champion of and leader for many of Kelley’s diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

These successes were the result of Prekert’s ability to focus not on his own achievements, but to support the efforts of many others. “One of the things that has really fed me as I have moved into administrative roles is helping other people be the most excellent that they can be,” he says. “I want to find ways to encourage that, to support that, and to recognize that.”

Josh Perry, the Kelley School’s executive associate dean for academic programs who calls Prekert “a mentor and guide,” expects that the Carlson School will thrive under Prekert’s leadership. “Jamie brings many qualities to a leadership role, but at the top of the list are humility and a sincere desire to do the right thing,” Perry says. “He is reliable, prepared, thoughtful, and the kindest person you will ever meet.”

The sentiments are echoed by the University of Minnesota’s Dean of the

College of Science and Engineering Andrew Alleyne, who led the search committee for the position. “It is clear that [Prekert] genuinely cares about organizations and the people therein,” says Alleyne. “That type of ‘servant leadership’ is well suited to maximize the significant talents of the outstanding faculty and staff within the Carlson School.”

Prekert’s wife, Deb, adds that these qualities aren’t just professional ones. She has known him since high school, and says his desire to support

Below: The Prekert family poses for a photo on a bench in the backyard of their home. L-R, Calvin (22), Deb, Grant (18), and Jamie.

*“One of the things that has really fed me as I have moved into administrative roles is helping other people be the most excellent that they can be. I want to find ways to encourage that, to support that, and to recognize that.”*

DEAN JAMIE PREKERT







*“Jamie brings many qualities to a leadership role, but at the top of the list are humility and a sincere desire to do the right thing. He is reliable, prepared, thoughtful, and the kindest person you will ever meet.”*

JOSH PERRY, KELLEY SCHOOL'S EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

others and help them achieve their goals is core to who he is as a person.

She recalls that when their older son, Calvin, was eight years old, Prenkert started a blog with him, and every night they would write an entry together. **“[The blog] showed our son how to be a writer at a very early age, and was featured in *Indianapolis Monthly* magazine,”** she recalls. (This fall, Calvin, 22, will start a master's degree program at the Carlson School.)

The Prenkerts have also been deeply attentive parents for their younger son, Grant, 18, who has a mitochondrial disease that affects areas including his neurological functioning, vision, and balance, as well as an intellectual disability related to a mutation in his HUWE-1 gene. “I had to learn a whole new language, an entirely different approach, to connect with Grant,” Prenkert says. “When he was young, it was finding the right tune to sing that made him smile. Today, it includes sitting poolside with him for hours on end, because the swimming pool is clearly where he feels the most fully embodied and physically at ease.”

**To support the therapeutic horseback riding that Grant had benefited from, Jamie joined the People and Animal Learning Services board of directors** in his community to ensure that there would be inclusive recreational opportunities for special populations in Indiana for years to come.

#### OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

Prenkert is thrilled to join a school that is already on solid footing, and plans

to focus the early part of his tenure on getting to know the institution deeply. “I’m a firm believer that you don’t come into a place that’s functioning well and make assumptions about how to make it better without really understanding what’s going on,” he says, noting that he has many internal and external constituencies to balance as he looks ahead.

That said, he is hopeful he will be able to lean on his past experiences to capitalize on some of the clearest opportunities. For example, *U.S. News and World Report* named Kelley’s online MBA program as the best of all 344 it ranked in 2023; Prenkert hopes to use the lessons from his time in Indiana to strengthen the Carlson School’s online options. Prenkert was also instrumental in helping to build Kelley’s top notch reputation—a school that punches above its weight in both national and international reach, particularly given its location in a small city in south central Indiana. He aims to make even bigger waves at the Carlson School.

This vision—even in this preliminary state—is a tantalizing one. Prenkert is ready to make it reality.

But he also knows he is just getting started. At the end of his first day, as the very last person to leave the office, Prenkert paused for a moment on the second floor of the Carlson School building to take everything in. He peered out into the quiet atrium and took a deep breath. “As I exhaled, I was so calm. I knew that this was the right place for me, and the right time,” he says. “What a privilege.” **C**



#### GET TO KNOW THE DEAN: THIS OR THAT?

We asked Prenkert to weigh in on a few lighter matters.

- **LinkedIn** or TikTok
- **Tennis** or pickleball<sup>1</sup>
- Phone call or **email**
- **Introvert** or extrovert
- *The Fabelmans* or ***Everything Everywhere All at Once***<sup>2</sup>
- **Straight stitch**<sup>3</sup> or blind stitch
- Coffee or **Diet Coke**
- **Optimist**<sup>4</sup> or pessimist
- **Poet**<sup>5</sup> or quant
- Pineapple on pizza or **no pineapple on pizza**<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tennis. Nonetheless, I think pickleball is really fun. (But I’d absolutely deny I ever said that to my tennis friends!)

<sup>2</sup> Prenkert, who says he might have tried to write a screenplay if he hadn’t gone into academia, was happy to weigh in on the Oscar-nominated movies. “I want a movie that is completely out there and totally ambiguous,” he says.

<sup>3</sup> “My mom owned a sewing machine and fabric store when I was growing up, so when I was young, I learned to sew. In [junior high] I was named Junior Fashion Review Champion at the Elkhart County Fair for the dress pants and shirt that I made myself.”

<sup>4</sup> “I like ‘realist’ better. Can I say realist?”

<sup>5</sup> “Ultimately, it’s those broader interests—beyond the quantitative—[that are important] and can bring us together.”

<sup>6</sup> “Pineapple on pizza? Who are these monsters?”



MENTORSHIP

# *MENTORS* WHO MAKE US

EXPLORING THE MANY WAYS  
FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENT  
LEADERS MAKE AN IMPACT ON THOSE  
ATTENDING THE CARLSON SCHOOL.

BY WADE RUPARD  
ILLUSTRATION BY NEIL WEBB



**“He was more than a career coach for me. He was the closest thing to myself that I saw at the school, especially in the first year.”**

*Malik Day, '18 BSB*

**The challenges of college are difficult to navigate alone. Within the Carlson School, a culture of mentorship thrives, fostering an environment where students are not just set up for success but molded into principled, compassionate leaders.**

**Here, mentors take many forms—from the world-class researcher guiding the next generation of talent to the friendly upperclassman showing new students the ropes. These stories and more highlight the indelible mark of powerful mentorship.**

**BUILDING A SUPPORT SYSTEM**

In her first semester at the Carlson School in the fall of 2020, Nini Dang, '23 BSB, joined Carlson THRIVE, a program for first-year students who are first-generation or from historically underrepresented groups to help them transition to college. The program provides each student with a mentor and Dang's was then-sophomore Michael Abdon, '23 BSB. Dang, who graduated in three years, started college at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when most classes and activities were done online. “I struggled a lot that first year,” she recalls. “I’m a people person, so having everything virtual really wore on me. But when I met Michael and

started talking to him, I felt like I had known him for the longest time.” Abdon's positivity helped Dang find her footing at the Carlson School—not just with academics. “I remember one time I forgot my credit card and I was stuck inside a parking garage,” Dang says. “I called Michael and within five minutes, he was there to help me.” The two checked in with each other throughout their time at the school, and Dang says Abdon was always there to support and help her in ways big and small. In fact, Dang says he served as her “hype man,” as she navigated college, including when she ran for leadership positions in the business fraternity Delta Sigma Pi. “Nini is one of the most amazing people I’ve ever met,” Abdon says. “Her energy was infectious from the first time I met her. She had so much ambition and so many ideas on how to leave the Carlson School, her fraternity, and the University in a better place than when she got here.” That sense of paying it forward continues to drive Abdon. Since graduating, he's now teaching English as a second language in Latin and South America. “This sense of mentorship and giving back has always been so important to me,” he says. “I always want to be the person who uplifts others.”



*Jontue Austin, senior academic advisor*

**FINDING BELONGING**

Malik Day, '18 BSB, also found the transition into the University and the Carlson School difficult. The first person in his family to graduate high school and attend college, Day walked through the halls and did not see many students who looked like him. “A lot of times I was the only Black person in my class,” Day says. “It was a tough transition. Luckily, I found Jontue.” That is Jontue Austin, senior academic advisor in the Undergraduate Program. The two men quickly bonded. “He was more than a career coach for me,” Day says. “He was the closest thing to myself that I saw at the school, especially in the first year. He was very helpful in helping me transition into college socially. I’m not sure other people would have helped me in the ways Jontue did.” Austin's guidance continued throughout Day's time at the Carlson School. In particular, recommending classes to take, programs to get involved in, and connections to make



**“It was great to engage with MBA students, learn from a more mature audience, and see firsthand how finance careers can develop.”**

*Derek Dukart, '17 BSB*

to support Day's goal of entering the investment banking field. “Malik was one of the first students I had the pleasure of mentoring as an academic advisor,” Austin recalls. “He is so smart and so driven. I did my best to give him the resources to succeed and reach his goals.” Day graduated and worked in the finance industry before pivoting and attending a UCLA graduate program for computer science. He now works as a software engineer at Netflix. Austin, of course, wrote a letter of recommendation to help him get in the master's program. “Jontue has always been there for me,” he says. “We still catch up every few months. I'm not sure where my academic or professional career would be without his mentorship and support.”

**LEARNING THE TRADE**

Derek Dukart, '17 BSB, jumped at the chance to join the David S. Kidwell Funds Enterprise. “When I got to college, I wanted to take as rigorous of coursework as possible,” he says. Being part of the Funds Enterprise as an undergraduate was a golden opportunity to soak up insights from real-world finance professionals. Working alongside graduate students, Dukart and his peers managed a \$50 million investment portfolio—one of the largest student-managed investment funds in the country. “It was great to engage with MBA students, learn from a more mature audience, and see firsthand how finance careers can develop,” he says. Dukart points to Susanna Gibbons, the fund's managing director, as an instrumental influence during his time as a student. “She's always been so helpful, so thoughtful, and so kind,” he says. “Anytime I had a question, she always walked me through it and got me thinking in a different way. She's someone I still



*Susanna Gibbons, managing director of David S. Kidwell Funds Enterprise*

reach out to from time to time to get advice and talk about the markets.” Dukart has taken his experience and used it to launch a successful career in trading and portfolio management. For Gibbons, seeing students like Dukart go on and succeed is the reason why she teaches. “I love seeing the progress students make throughout their time here,” she says. “Students like Derek come in, really eager to learn, working hard to connect everything from their classes, and then I get to help them piece it all together. To even be part of a piece of that is an incredible feeling.”

**THE RESEARCH CONNECTION**

The bond between a doctoral student and their advisor is built over years of data collection, analysis, and seemingly never-ending revisions. Christina Jeong, '23 PhD, experienced this all firsthand with her advisor Jason Chan, associate professor of Information & Decision Sciences. After coming to the Carlson School from South Korea, Jeong developed a

connection with Chan over a shared interest in his research, which focuses on business and policy insights on emerging internet phenomena and social outcomes. The two worked on three research papers together—two working papers and one that is under review by an academic journal. “The relationship between a PhD student and a faculty member is much different than that of master's students or undergraduates,” Chan says. “You're seeing each other almost every day and you're working together very closely on things like research. You really get to know each other very well.” For Jeong, this was instrumental in developing her career. “Jason's mentorship meant a lot to me,” she says. “I learned a lot from him about how to approach research and approach being a professor. I couldn't have done it without him.” When Jeong began applying for faculty positions, Chan proved to be a big help. “Interviews for faculty members can be really tough,” Chan says. “So we would walk through how to keep your composure and how to answer questions in a confident way.” The coaching paid off. This fall, Jeong is starting at the University of Hawai'i as an assistant professor. **C**



**Who was your mentor at the Carlson School?** Scan the QR code and share your story with us. We may feature it in a future issue!



**“When I met Michael and started talking to him, I felt like I had known him for the longest time.”**

*Nini Dang, '23 BSB*



*Michael Abdon, '23 BSB*



**“I learned a lot from him about how to approach research and approach being a professor. I couldn't have done it without him.”**

*Christina Jeong, '23 PhD*



*Associate Professor Jason Chan*



After a seven-year transition plan, fourth-generation Red Wing Shoe Co. CEO Allison Gettings, '17 MBA, takes the family business by the laces.

S U C C E S S I O N

BY KATIE DOHMAN

**ALLISON GETTINGS BREEZES INTO HER CORNER OFFICE NESTLED ON THE PICTURESQUE BLUFFS OVERLOOKING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER IN RED WING, MINNESOTA. “SORRY FOR THE MESS,” SHE APOLOGIZES, BUT THE ONLY ABERRATION IN HER OTHERWISE SPOTLESS OFFICE IS SOME TISSUE PAPER AND PACKAGING FROM A GIFT, A CRYSTAL DRAGON THAT JUST ARRIVED IN THE MAIL.**

Her life is streamlined for efficiency: She opens her Full Focus paper planner and therein lies her day’s priorities, notes, and don’t-misses—she says this is to eliminate distractions and checking her phone during meetings. It’s an understatement to say she has a lot of those: Her Outlook calendar is a sea of pale red overlapping boxes. In late June, her next opening is, optimistically, a slot in August. October is already very busy, she notes. She laughs and shrugs, not in apathy, but cheerful recognition of her job description.

It’s the life of the newly minted CEO, just getting settled in her sixth month on the job. “The first 100 days, the first six months, you do a lot of listening and learning,” says Mark Urdahl, her predecessor as the former CEO of Red Wing Shoe Co. “I told her, ‘That will be important information for you, but also instill confidence [in employees] you’re listening to their ideas.’”

The onslaught doesn’t seem to rattle Gettings, 41, who is intensely focused on conversations when she’s in them, her eyes trained on her conversational partners, telegraphing a quiet confidence despite her humble affect. Some might say she was born for it.

#### THE FAMILY BUSINESS

After all, her family has owned the company since 1919. Gettings, who is a married mother of two and the first woman to take the seat, is the fourth generation to walk in these tall boots. She follows her great-grandfather, JR Sweasy; grandfather, WD Sweasy; and father, WJ “Bill” Sweasy, ’76 BSB, who remains chair of the board.

Despite growing up in and around the HQ, writing on white boards and stopping in on summer afternoons to say hello between trips to the library, her father “very intentionally” never pressured her, or her brother, to join the family business. She first attended college for psychology and neuropsychology, but realized that working in a lab didn’t suit her disposition, which she says is geared toward collaboration, travel, the human

element. However, mixing business and family was, of course, more complex than it seems from the outside.

“Family businesses can be tricky,” she acknowledges. “The people that you are working with on a day-to-day basis—you may also be calling them tomorrow to babysit your kids. How you navigate that is a challenge for everybody I know in a family business.” Gettings says how those who led the company previously—by simply being good to people and never treating them like a number—has long influenced her. She says her father counseled: “Remember, you’ll see them at the grocery store.”

So, when she finally told her dad she was interested in running the company someday, he was moved. She tears up, reliving the moment.

But it wasn’t a given. Sweasy told Urdahl his daughter would have to earn it, same as anyone else. Urdahl says she was part of a seven-year succession plan that included 30 different checkpoints and a cohort of other CEO candidates while exposing her to every angle of the company.

One such requirement was to earn a Carlson Executive MBA (CEMBA) degree. She enrolled in the fall of 2015, balancing schoolwork with a six-month-old child, in the midst of launching Red Wing’s women’s Heritage line, and with a husband traveling every week for his own job. “My whole career has been about figuring out new worlds,” she says, seemingly undaunted by the challenges of leading an organization. Plus, she adds, laughing, “I’m in a way better place now than I was then.”

She notes the CEMBA program organized her educational life, which made going back to school at such a hectic time possible—and, crucially, broadened her thinking. “I had views from being around the [Red Wing Shoe Company] business, but that’s not the same as expanding your mind and understanding all the different business perspectives,” she says of

the experience, which left her with a cohort of women friends who still meet regularly to talk shop.

Gettings says the entire seven-year plan benefits her now.

“I’ve had an [atypical] career path because I bounced around from one department to another department so frequently,” she explains. “The skills and experience I got from one part of the organization, I leverage[d] in the next area and [gained] a more holistic view.”

What struck Urdahl was her ability to balance her strengths with those of her employees’. “I told her, ‘Every room you walk into there’s someone who knows more than you do, but what you bring to the table is strategy, vision, and people development,’” he says. “She’s got the ability to be able to do that.”

#### THE POWER OF PEOPLE

Now, leading a business with 2,200 employees, offices on six continents, 700 retailers, and manufacturing plants around the world, Gettings is bringing to bear her talent for building culture and making transformational change. “Without fail, every single day employees tell me—I had six today—that what they’re most excited about me stepping into this role is they know how much I care,” she explains. “It’s not because I know my finances so well, it’s not because of my focus on executional excellence. It’s not because, boy, I really know how to make a shoe or I understand the finer points of marketing personas. What matters more is how I relate to people.”

That includes touches she’s already started to implement, such as improving the mothers’ room at the HQ by adding a sink, and making space by making her own motherhood visible within the company—in the past, she’d end a meeting by announcing she needed a break to pump. It also includes maintaining the company’s legacy in town by concentrating the vast majority of its corporate social

*Above: Antique tools of the trade appear on display at the company’s flagship store.*

*Below: The Red Wing Shoes logo as seen inside the main retail store in Red Wing, Minn.*



responsibility work within view of their own office windows.

Because, even with a worldwide footprint, the heart of this company still resides in the headquarters on literal Main Street in a town that looks immaculate and new, yet beamed in from some bygone era. And that promise-with-a-handshake feeling persists outside city limits, too: She once met with a longtime Red Wing dealer who had saved a handwritten note from her grandfather and made sure to show it to her when she visited. “It meant so much to [him],” says Gettings of the moving moment. “He’s had it in his drawer, and he wanted to show it to me. All of these little pieces make up why Red Wing is so special.”

#### LOOKING AHEAD

As CEO, Gettings knows she is entering a brave new world. It’s not exactly easy running a global business today. She ticks through a list of new factors without batting an eyelash—economic shifts including inflation,

post-pandemic uncertainty, eroding trust in brands and government, the artificial intelligence explosion, and different expectations from the rising Gen Z consumer—just to name a few.

“And it’s all happening in the blink of the eye,” Gettings says matter-of-factly, while drawing on her experience in the business and the classroom. “We have to keep a beat on the consumer as we eat, sleep, and breathe. And we have to be able to make hard decisions on where to focus and re-energize our brand. We also can’t just count on organic incremental growth by investing in our business the same way we have in the past...if we want to grow, which we do.”

Gettings says challenges have tested the company before and it’s always come out a step ahead. “We’ve been down this road before. We’ve already been through pandemics and two World Wars—and we’ve survived and thrived,” she says. “Legacy can tie you down because it becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that is relevant to our future. The good news is, for us, who can imagine a future where we don’t have to strap boots on our feet? That’s timeless, and for that, I’m thankful.” **C**

*Gettings, left, chats with her cousin during an impromptu meeting at the Red Wing Shoes retail store in Red Wing, Minn.*



# THE SECRET LAB

## INFLUENCING **MED TECH** —

### *BY DESIGN*

The goal was simple, yet audacious: “Marshal students from diverse disciplines to scrutinize, evaluate, and advance groundbreaking medical technologies,” says Carlson School Professor Stephen Parente. Achieving the goal has required more perseverance than anyone expected. But, 15 years, five cities, four countries, and hundreds of projects later, the results for students and health care companies are exceeding anyone’s expectations.

Parente is an economist by training with deep expertise in health finance and policy. His career has consistently focused on one overarching problem: “Healthcare innovation is at a crossroads, and it’s critical to bridge disciplines to maximize potential breakthroughs,” says Parente, who is also the associate dean of global programs.

With the Carlson School nestled in Minnesota’s Medical Alley, a global hub for medical device development, Parente saw an opportunity for his students and these companies.

The result: The Carlson School’s Medical Industry Leadership Institute (MILI) Valuation Lab.



# HOW THE LAB WORKS



**Stephen Parente,**  
Carlson School  
professor, Minnesota  
Insurance Industry  
Chair of Health Finance

The short version is that students engage with prominent healthcare and technology organizations, using top-notch collaboration and sharp analysis skills to judge whether a company's fresh concept is market-ready.

It may sound familiar, but there are small, important changes that make the Val Lab, as it is popularly known, unique. One is by using interdisciplinary teams, combining perspectives from nine different schools at the University of Minnesota.

"We have full-time students, part-time students, business, engineering, and medical students, and more," explains Jessica Haupt, MILI's managing director. "This rich diversity cultivates a fertile ground for out-of-the-box thinking and a truly innovative approach to addressing medical industry challenges."

Students, who may take the two-credit, graduate-level elective course multiple times throughout their degree program, sign a non-disclosure agreement for what they'll learn.

That's because they gain insider access to cutting-edge tech, aiding global powerhouse companies in deciding if a new device or technique is worth their investment—or the world's. That life-changing medical implant? It might've hit the market only after Val Lab students sifted through the data and context, giving it the green light.

The lab allows students to examine technology from a kaleidoscopic vantage point and learn the industry's intricacies. The course is thoughtfully structured to encapsulate the complex journey of evaluating a medical technology project. It begins with a deep dive into each case, allowing students to grasp the technology's premise and potential impact fully. From there,

**IT BEGINS WITH A DEEP DIVE INTO EACH CASE, ALLOWING STUDENTS TO GRASP THE TECHNOLOGY'S PREMISE AND POTENTIAL IMPACT FULLY. FROM THERE, THEY CONDUCT THOROUGH RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS, EVALUATING THE PROJECT'S POTENTIAL FROM EVERY ANGLE—TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY, MARKET VIABILITY, FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS, AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS.**

they conduct thorough research and analysis, evaluating the project's potential from every angle—technical feasibility, market viability, financial implications, and legal considerations.

With a team of students from different disciplines, each evaluation becomes a rich exchange of ideas and viewpoints.

"It's like assembling a jigsaw puzzle with pieces from different sets," Haupt says. "Each perspective brings a unique edge, and it's in bringing them together that we get a comprehensive picture."

Each semester, students delve into three distinct cases. Working on three analyses consecutively familiarizes them with the nuances of different projects and ingrains in them the comprehensive evaluation process, priming them to become future medical industry leaders. It also puts them head and shoulders above

other job candidates and influences how they work inside their roles, says Lab Director Mike Finch, who's taught there since its inception. "It is reflected in how they ask questions, draw connections, and prepare themselves. It's incredibly rewarding to see the transformation unfold."

Today, the Val Lab completes 30 to 40 projects each year, working tirelessly to shape the future of medical technology. Projects span from Minneapolis to Shanghai, Stockholm to Palo Alto, and most recently to Cambridge in the United Kingdom. Reflecting on the lab's future, Parente envisions an innovation investment pipeline and alumni becoming their own investor group. "These students are creating an ecosystem and driving it themselves."



**Jessica Haupt,**  
MILI managing director



**Mike Finch,**  
MILI Val Lab director

## ALUMNI SUCCESS STORIES

# FROM THE LAB TO BEYOND



### DAN'S DEVELOPMENT

Dan Gilbertson, '12 MBA, a sales marketing professional with an international mergers and acquisitions (M&A) background from the automotive manufacturing industry, had a vision: to pivot into the medical device sector.

"I went all in on the MILI Valuation Lab," Gilbertson says after taking the Val Lab three times. "The real-world experience of evaluating actual medical devices for investment was incredible as I worked to enter the industry."

Gilbertson recalls working on a new cardiac device, assessing its market viability, potential societal impact, and healthcare policy implications. This comprehensive lens proved transformative, instilling a deep understanding of what is needed to bring a successful medical product to market.

Today, Gilbertson works for Medtronic at the forefront of the medical device investment as a leader on the corporate M&A team, following roles in strategy and M&A for the neuromodulation business and the European region. His unique experience and pragmatic decision-making, honed in the Val Lab, help him navigate the complexities of this rapidly evolving field with ease and efficiency.

"The skills I acquired at MILI didn't just enable my transition; they redefined my approach," Gilbertson emphasizes. "Whether evaluating a potential investment or contemplating a new strategic initiative, I do it with the comprehensive and in-depth understanding I cultivated at the MILI Lab."

**"I WENT ALL IN ON THE MILI VALUATION LAB."**



### ARCHANA'S ASCENT

Archana Desai, '11 MBA, began her journey by fostering a deep appreciation for mission-driven organizations, particularly those dedicated to improving patient lives, through her work in finance at companies such as GE Healthcare. However, she yearned for growth and a broader understanding of the medical industry.

Enrolling in the MILI Valuation Lab was not merely an academic pursuit for Desai, but a significant leap toward adding a holistic understanding of the medical industry to her toolkit. "What you're doing in that lab is not just looking at your silo," she says. "It's a hands-on approach to multidisciplinary evaluation."

Today, Desai brings this lens to her role as director of strategy for Image-Guided Therapy Devices at Philips. She focuses on creating long-term growth strategies, fostering successful technology adoption, and partnering to bring more holistic solutions for patients.

**"IT'S A HANDS-ON APPROACH TO MULTIDISCIPLINARY EVALUATION."**

"MILI's comprehensive evaluation approach equips you with the confidence to ask the right questions," Desai says. "It enabled me to stay objective internally, even when an end goal is in sight."



### BETH'S BREAKTHROUGH

Beth Lindborg, '12 MBA, started her professional career as a research scientist after graduating from the University of Minnesota's Molecular, Cellular, Developmental Biology and Genetics Program. As her career progressed, Lindborg recognized the value an MBA could provide in bringing scientific innovations to patients and was naturally drawn to the MILI Valuation Lab.

**"IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT I HAD THE CHANCE TO COLLABORATE WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH A WIDE RANGE OF PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERTISE."**

Lindborg took the project-based course several times to obtain more exposure to different medical technologies and understand the challenges each poses. "It was the first time that I had the chance to collaborate with individuals with a wide range of professional backgrounds and expertise," Lindborg says. "This gave me different viewpoints and perspectives I wouldn't have gained without taking the course."

As the CEO of Sarcio, Lindborg has utilized the full range of expertise, experiences, and network from the MILI program. "At Sarcio, we are working to bring a completely new regenerative treatment to people suffering from osteoarthritis. MILI helped equip me with some of the tools and knowledge I need to progress the company." **C**



*[ Sustaining History ]*

*A Carlson School  
alumni couple runs  
a history-making  
vineyard and  
winery in  
Oregon.*





BY STEVE HENNEBERRY

## *Björnson Vineyard, a 107-acre property, is nestled in the Eola-Amity Hills near Salem, Oregon.*

It features two distinct areas: a 28-acre vineyard and winery is situated to the east and south; forest, creek, and wetland—including a 20-foot waterfall—make up the north and west. Mark Björnson, '86 BSB, '92 MBA, often walks along an old logging trail next to King's Creek, absorbing the land's history via moss-covered rocks, Douglas Fir trees, and dozens of native plants. While checking on the cedar trees he planted to diversify the forest, Mark stops when he notices lemon balm on the trailside. He has no idea how it got here.

Given the fertile soil in this part of the state, it's no surprise things like to grow. Oregon's Willamette Valley is one of the most productive agricultural lands in North America. It took shape over millennia. About 15 million years ago, vast lava flows created the volcanic soils that now comprise Björnson Vineyard. Relatively recently, about 15,000 years ago, the Missoula (Montana) Floods contributed the sedimentary soils at lower elevations in the valley. Experts at Western Oregon University say that roughly 40 times during a 2,500-year period, an ice dam on glacial Lake Missoula ruptured, sending water rushing down the Columbia River. The Willamette Valley flooded each time, leaving behind volcanic and glacial soils that, combined with an ideal climate, allowed crops to flourish on the valley floor.



Today, this history is underground, but not forgotten: It resurfaces in hazelnuts, Christmas trees, nursery plants, and many more crops. Mark and his wife, Pattie Björnson (née Knight), '86 BSB, say their grapevines, the roots of which extend down 20 to 25 feet, pull water from the fractured bedrock beneath the rich volcanic soil. At the Björnsons' second vineyard, Pamar, Mark recently found granite and gneiss rocks, brought in on ice floes by those floods, on the lower parts of the vineyard.

For the Björnsons, respecting the history of their land and sustaining it are priorities. They are certified Salmon-Safe and sustainable by Low Input Viticulture and Enology (L.I.V.E.). They use solar power and electric vehicles. They practice sustainable farming across more than 50 acres of plantings. These actions, and more, live out the first part of the Björnsons tripartite mission statement: "Care for the land."

*The Björnson tasting room, built in 2017, is open daily and features a limestone fireplace. Mark funded college by working as a stonemason while in high school.*

The last two parts are: “make exceptional wine” and “enjoy the journey.” The Björnsons are doing that, too. Married for 34 years, they’ve worked side by side running a vineyard and winery business for nearly two decades.

**CARLSON SCHOOL MEET CUTE**

In 1985, as a new member of Delta Sigma Pi, the co-ed business fraternity, Pattie Knight had to interview active members. Up first: Mark Björnson. Born and raised in Bismarck, N.Dak., Mark came to UMN Twin Cities for the “warm weather” and to study business. “The last two questions were [about] short-range goals and long-range goals,” explains Pattie, who hails from Owatonna, Minn., and has familial roots in the state stretching back seven generations. “He didn’t know what his short-term goals were, but long-term, he said he wanted to live out in the country. He wanted to have a big garden. He wanted to build his own house... He wanted to have a large family. I just sarcastically answered, ‘Wow, look me up when you want to get married!’”

A few months later, they were dating. When they married in 1989, Mark’s job with Prudential prevented an immediate honeymoon. It wasn’t until September 1993, after Pattie was an established programming consultant, that they took a life-changing trip: riding a tandem bicycle rigged with a middle seat for their then-two-year-old daughter, Kaitlyn, 1,500 miles around Europe. Renting rooms at small wineries clarified their future dreams, swapping orchards and hobby farms for vineyards and wine.

**THE OREGON TRAIL**

The location for this future operation was always Oregon, a place Mark often visited as a child, experiencing its stunning coastline, mountains, and rolling hills.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the Björnsons focused on their corporate careers while raising four children in Minnetonka. But, the vineyard was never far from their minds. On a drive home in 2000, Pattie remembers telling Mark, “You have got to quit telling people that we’re going to move to Oregon, buy land, and plant a vineyard. Everybody thinks you’re crazy.” Mark’s immediate reply: “Well, I don’t care what they think.”

By 2005, Mark was president of the west region for United Health Group’s Medicare Advantage product and the family of six moved to Portland. The hunt for land, and knowledge, was on.

**PLANNING AND PLANTING**

What the Björnson dream had in optimism, it lacked in understanding of what it takes to run a successful vineyard, so they added to their business education and experience by enrolling in the Wine Studies program at Chemeketa Community College in Salem. There, they learned about viticulture, farming, winemaking, and more while gaining hands-on experience in the school’s working vineyard.

During their studies, they made friends with fellow winemakers and found land “that checked all the boxes.” The old timber farm property had potential for a vineyard with four soil types and elevations ranging from 440 to 560 feet. It also offered a stunning view of Mount Hood and Mount Jefferson in the Cascade Range with the hills of Oregon wine country stretching out in the foreground.

After removing hundreds of trees and at least 1,000 tons of rock, planting began in Fall 2006 and now covers four blocks, each named for one of their children. The vines grow pinot noir, chardonnay, auxerrois, and gamay noir grape varieties.



Top: Gouais blanc grape buds bloom with little flower clusters called inflorescences.

Above: Björnson Vineyard produces about 250 barrels of wine per year and rents space to make another 300 barrels to other wineries.

Opposite: Mark and Pattie Björnson pose for a portrait inside their tasting room.



*“Care for the land, make exceptional wine, and enjoy the journey.”*

“We didn’t quite realize—I’m not sure anybody really knew—just how great this property would be for producing tremendous grapes and wine,” admits Mark now.

**BUILDING A BUSINESS**

Not everyone could consider starting a vineyard and winery as a side hustle—they describe it as “all-consuming”—but that’s how the Björnsons did it. “The most important point is to keep the day job,” says Pattie. “It’s very capital intensive,” adds Mark, who only

last year left his full-time role at Catholic Health Initiatives.

With support from Pattie’s parents to help with their children, the Björnsons built a three-part business: growing grapes (agriculture), making wine (manufacturing), and selling both (retail). The business school fundamentals they learned played a key role. “We [do] a lot of short-term planning and long-term planning and budgeting,” Pattie says, who spent three years learning winemaking from Ben Casteel at nearby Bethel Heights Winery.

The pair describe working together, sarcastically, as being a “seamless team” that “always gets along beautifully.” More seriously, they’re aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Mark is the farmer and vineyard manager, and is especially busy during the fall harvest. That’s when Pattie’s job as winemaker picks up. She’s also serving as CEO. “They complement each other really well,” says Nancy Morrow, general manager of Björnson Vineyard. “They’re kind, respectful, good listeners, and will help you problem-solve. It’s a family here [for staff].”

That vibe extends to the many vineyards across the Willamette Valley, a community the Björnsons say welcomed them with open arms, is very collaborative, and believes that a “rising tide lifts all boats.” Both Mark and Pattie now serve as volunteer leaders in nonprofit organizations supporting the region.

**MAKING HISTORY**

The Björnsons share a deep appreciation for roots, both familial and grape. Their winery is full of reminders, including a wall in the tasting room featuring 29 black-and-white photos of more than 50 relatives going back five generations. Each variety of pinot noir is named after an ancestor (such as Art, Isabel, Magnus). And every bottle label features an artwork called

Fire and Ice, meant to represent “their Icelandic heritage as well as the magnificent volcanic and glacial forces that created our soils.”

They can also hold a lengthy discussion on grape genealogy. So, it’s only natural that the Björnsons now have the only commercial planting in the western hemisphere of a rare, historically significant grape that has wine geeks and industry folks turning up to give it a taste. The gouais (pronounced “goo-ay”) blanc is the parent of a whopping 81 different grape varieties, including chardonnay, riesling, and aligoté, among many others.

Widely planted in the Middle Ages in Germany and France, gouais blanc was almost extinct. The French believed it produced inferior wine and banned it in the 1700s. “It was the wine of the peasants,” says Mark. But scientists at the University of California, Davis doing DNA testing on common varieties today, discovered its important genetic contributions. “In France, when they found that gouais blanc was a parent of chardonnay, it went over like a bad paternity test,” says Mark, who received a few cuttings of the vines for himself.

The half acre is planted at Pamar Vineyard, a property the Björnsons bought in 2013 located in the Van Duzer Corridor, 20 minutes west. The lower elevation allows gouais blanc, and several other boutique varieties, to grow well. “It’s easy to see why the peasants liked it so well—it had these great big clusters [of grapes],” says Mark.

The Björnsons describe the taste as “very crisp and citrusy,” adding it’s “the perfect oyster wine,” and “a great wine for acid lovers.”

With deep roots in place, Mark and Pattie are living out each part of their mission statement. No matter what the future holds, you can raise a glass to that. **C**

## Advancing Excellence with Our New Dean, Jamie Prenkert



What an exciting time it is for our Carlson School community! This summer, we welcomed a new dean, Jamie Prenkert, who has eagerly jumped into this community of students, faculty, staff, alumni,

benefactors, and friends, and has begun building on the legacy of Carlson School distinction.

Since our founding more than 100 years ago, we have been a powerhouse in developing business leaders and talent. We have educated and inspired leaders who have shaped the economy in the state of Minnesota, across the country, and beyond. Our faculty have introduced management concepts and innovative practices to the global business community. Additionally, our programs and outreach have ensured that the benefits of the research, innovation, and education happening here have an impact locally and worldwide.

Dean Prenkert has spent these early months meeting and listening to internal and external stakeholders, learning more about the unique qualities that set us apart, and observing how our alumni are critical contributors in the regional headquarters economy and are leading the way in an ever-changing global business environment. He is using these insights to identify opportunities to raise our profile even further. Having observed Dean Prenkert's enthusiasm for the school, and hearing a bit about his early plans and initiatives, I am excited about our path forward together and the continued excellence of the Carlson School.

We have always been a community with big ideas and excellent outcomes, and I invite you to join us for the big things to come!

Sincerely,

Jess Kowal  
Assistant Dean for Institutional Advancement

Leadership skills and training have long been integral to a Carlson School education, and the latest numbers show our alumni capitalizing on those skills in their professional lives and service to the Carlson School.

### One Big Number

# 17

Companies on the current *Fortune* 500, S&P 500, or *Forbes* Largest Private Companies rankings represented on the Carlson School Board of Advisors.

### MORE NUMBERS

## 12+

Number of *Fortune* 1000 companies with Carlson School graduates in the CEO, CFO, or CTO role, making the Carlson School one of the top public business schools in the country for this metric.

## 400+

Alumni currently sharing their time and talents with their alma mater through service on Carlson School advisory boards and alumni councils.

# ENGAGE

## New Scholarship Aims to Support Changing Circumstances



Memories of business school dreams put on hold serve as the inspiration for one of the Carlson School's newest endowed scholarships. Awarded for the first time this fall, the scholarship aims to help students keep their academic goals on track.

Carol\*, the benefactor, vividly remembers the financial challenges she experienced while attending the University of Minnesota "B-School" in the mid-1950s. An active student with a

love of numbers, she became the president of Phi Delta, a now-defunct business sorority, while funding her own education.

"After several years, I ran out of money and left school before completing my degree," Carol says. "Then life got busy with my growing family. Eventually, I finished my accounting degree elsewhere because it was less expensive. My goal in establishing this scholarship is to make it possible for students to stay at the Carlson School and complete their studies."

The scholarship aims to support upper-division (sophomore standing or higher) undergraduates. While many students with financial need earn scholarships starting their first year, changing circumstances may lead students to seek funding in subsequent years. Decreased financial support from family, the need to reduce work hours to pursue extracurricular and experiential learning opportunities, or the desire to focus more intently on academics are all reasons cited by students when applying for upper-division scholarships, which may be awarded on merit in addition to need.

Recently, Carol was back on campus—and inside the Carlson School—for the first time in many years. She brought her son, Brad, a fellow UMN alumnus with a degree in Civil Engineering, and also a donor to his mother's scholarship, to celebrate her meaningful gift to the school.

\*Last name withheld by request

## Philanthropy Powers Dedicated Alumni Career Coaching



Support for Carlson School alumni continues after graduation through lifelong career coaching. The school recently doubled down on this commitment by hiring a career coach dedicated to the alumni population, made possible through a philanthropic investment from the Carlson Family Foundation Supporting Organization. This generous gift recognizes the great value of supporting alumni beyond their time as students.

Nicole Centanni brings 20 years of experience serving diverse student populations as a career exploration and development specialist. Most recently, she taught a career counseling course for graduate students.

Alumni will now see more career-related programming, and individual support for their professional journeys with career exploration, job search strategies, networking, résumé review, interview preparation, offer evaluation, and negotiation advice. Request an individual coaching appointment with Nicole at [z.umn.edu/alumni\\_coaching](https://z.umn.edu/alumni_coaching).

# Diversifying the Investment Industry

BY WADE RUPARD

New undergraduate scholarship aims to fill the gaps.

For decades, there has been a lack of diversity throughout the finance and accounting sectors. Still today, the financial planning industry remains about 83 percent white and 76 percent male, according to the Certified Financial Planner Board. A new undergraduate scholarship at the Carlson School is the latest effort aiming to close that gap.

Mairs & Power, a St. Paul-based investment advisory firm, established the scholarship this year to support those working toward finance and accounting degrees, with a preference toward women and students of color. It builds on a similar scholarship already offered for MBA students.

“We value diversity and we recruit for that,” says Mark Henneman, ’90 MBA, chairman and CEO of the 91-year-old firm. “But when we look around, historically, there has been a lack of diverse candidates. Our hope is that this scholarship can raise awareness of Mairs & Power, as well as the investment industry in general.”

Henneman, who came to Mairs & Power in 2004 from U.S. Bancorp, points to a common experience for those who desperately want to make change, knowing women add valuable perspectives to investing.

“We wanted to get more female representation on our investment committee,” he explains. “But there were so few women in finance. If we had an opening, 50 people would apply and only one would be a woman. So, it was a frustrating experience initially to begin making our team more diverse.”

Chief Operating Officer Melissa Gilbertson became a firm shareholder in 2015. The next year, Mairs & Power hired its first female investment professional, Michelle Warren, who is now vice president and investment manager.

To support these younger and more diverse candidates, Mairs & Power established the Equity Research Associate Program. The two-year program is targeted at graduating college seniors wherein those selected will support investment managers in their research efforts. The goal, says Wendy Lee, an equity analyst who leads the program, is to identify and train for future hiring needs and create an avenue for people from underrepresented backgrounds to get crucial exposure to the investment industry.

“We have found that it can be hard to get into this industry unless you learn more about it, you know people in it, or you have strong experience,” Lee says. “So this is our way of opening that door a little wider.”

As a Carlson School graduate himself, Henneman sees how those from the school can benefit Mairs & Power and the industry at large.

“The Carlson School is a great school and we want its students to be curious, incredibly smart, and focused,” he says. “We’re excited to support them in their journey to hopefully joining the investment community.” **C**

# A Culture of Philanthropy

BY WADE RUPARD

New student board gives back to the Carlson School.

Giving back doesn’t have to start after graduation. A new student group is encouraging peers to establish a habit of giving, while they are still enrolled.

The newly formed Institutional Advancement Student Board (IASB) is working to build a culture of philanthropy among students, faculty, staff, and alumni. While gaining practical board experience, students learn about and promote the importance of philanthropy at the Carlson School, design and manage a comprehensive fundraising campaign, and build connections with alumni and donors.

“We love to see students get involved and give back while they’re still at the school.”

ALEAH VAN HORNE, ’15 BSB, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ANNUAL GIVING AND PROGRAM LEAD

Senior Jasmine Nguyen joined the board last year. Hailing from the Washington, D.C., area, Nguyen chose to attend the Carlson School in large part because of the scholarship support she received.

“I wouldn’t be able to attend the Carlson School if I had not earned that scholarship,” Nguyen says. “So I looked at the Institutional Advancement Student Board as a way to give back and gain a greater appreciation of how much of our experience as students happens because of donors.”

During its first year, board members organized and encouraged student involvement in events and activities that foster a lasting awareness and appreciation of philanthropy at the Carlson School. That includes Gopher Gratitude, Give to the Max Day, and Farewellcome. In addition, they educated fellow students throughout the year about how philanthropy affects their student experience and what philanthropy makes possible at the Carlson School. And they planned, managed, and solicited peers for gifts to the Carlson School as part of the annual class gift campaign.

“It’s important to understand where these resources come from,” Nguyen says. “There is a lot of work done by people behind the scenes to bring us mental health services, support efforts in DEI, and so much more. I was so happy to be part of this board and help support the causes that are most important to me as a student.”

“We love to see students get involved and give back while they’re still at the school,” says Aleah Van Horne, ’15 BSB, the assistant director of annual giving and program lead. “All of the students on the board are passionate about the Carlson School and committed to its success as a leader in business education.” **C**



# Adapting Through the Decades

BY WADE RUPARD

Over his 40-year career in banking, Mark Jordahl, ’94 MBA, saw the industry change dramatically.



Jordahl leaves a lengthy career as he retires from his role at U.S. Bank, where he’s worked since 2001. Under

his leadership as president of wealth management, the bank launched a digital investing platform and ventured into new markets, among other initiatives.

He spoke to the Carlson School about his career and what advice he would give those entering the workforce.

**As you look back, what are you most proud of?**

When you go through retirement, you do get kinda reflective. You spend a fair amount of time on [this] question. With the kinds of positions I’ve had, commercial success isn’t optional, so you start with the pride around the commercial result. But I take pride in feeling like we went about things the right way. At the end of the day, you want to look back on what you did in life and feel like you did something meaningful, and I did that. And I did that with people that I admire and respect.

**What are some of the biggest changes you’ve seen in the financial sector during your career?**

I remember the days before Microsoft Excel, there was a thing called Lotus 1-2-3, which was one of the earliest forms of spreadsheets. And I thought, ‘How are any of these older people going to keep up with somebody that knows these tools?’ The kinds of tools that we have available to us have continued to grow and expand on a mind-boggling scale. So one bit of advice I have for anyone starting their career is to be a lifelong learner because I’m going to guess the changes that I saw in my career are going to pale in comparison to the change that recent graduates will see in theirs.

**Do you have any other advice for Carlson School students?**

Be curious, continue to learn, and be worthy of trust. Your career will have peaks and valleys, always be learning something new and exercise good judgment. **C**

**Mark Jordahl**  
**’94 MBA**

**TITLE**

Former President of Wealth Management at U.S. Bank

**HOMETOWN**

Austin, Minnesota

**HOBBIES**

Playing tennis and hockey, hanging out with family, and reading

# Cheerleader for the Carlson School

Craig Schmidt gives back as much as he can to the school he loves.

BY WADE RUPARD

The first time Craig Schmidt, '03 BSB, walked into the Carlson School building, he felt like he had made it.

"I remember getting this 'shock and awe' feeling that I was attending this gem of a university and this gem of a school," he recalls. "It's one of the most elite business schools in the country, and I couldn't believe I was here."

Since that moment, Schmidt has been one of the school's biggest advocates. After serving as the Alumni Board president for the past three years, Schmidt's term ended in July.

Throughout his tenure, the board and the school went through major changes—the board grew to 30 members, supported the school in navigating the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, helped launch the annual MBA Reunion event, established a Give to the Max Day match program for the board, and began a new subcommittee on diversity, equity, and inclusion, among many others.

"I think we were able to accomplish a lot of important things and leave the Carlson School in a great spot going forward," he says.

Serving as Alumni Board president was one example in a long line of ways Schmidt has given back to the school since he arrived at the Carlson School as a transfer student from the University of Minnesota Morris.

"My dad was a Gopher and was the first one in my family to attend college; I was the second," he says. "I knew I wanted to study business and the Carlson School was always high on my list because of the family legacy."

He landed a job at Deloitte after graduation. From the coursework to the career services, he says he felt the Carlson School set him



up to succeed in his career.

"It's imperative that all Carlson School graduates take a step back and realize how fortunate we all are," he says. "Not only were we accepted into the U, but we were selected into the Carlson School from thousands of other students that apply. We should be grateful and thankful for all of that. So it was important for me to give back to help the school maintain its status as one of the best public business schools in the country."

Schmidt began giving back immediately. He started as a mentor, joined the GOLD (Gophers of the Last Decade) Board, then the Alumni Board.

"I thought it would be tremendous to find bigger ways to give back and make a bigger impact," he explains. "I thought I owed it to the school because of the success I've had in my career. It all has roots back to the Carlson School."

Now working as the head of global regulatory reporting at Citibank, Schmidt has also used his financial

**"Craig has made a lasting impact on the Carlson School. His dedication and leadership helped us navigate unprecedented challenges during his tenure."**

*Sarah Oehler, senior director for alumni relations and annual giving*

resources to support the Carlson School's Dean's Excellence Fund, which is used to address the highest priorities and pressing needs to bolster the school's core strengths.

Though he's stepping away from the Alumni Board, Schmidt plans to continue to find ways to be a cheerleader for the Carlson School in any way possible.

"Having the Carlson School on your résumé, that's forever," he says. "I take great pride in the school and being a Gopher. It was important for me to pay it forward however I can for future generations." **C**

Scholarships help provide opportunities for students to attend a leading business school and gain skills, leadership experience, and connections to help them use business as a force for good. Philanthropy from alumni and friends of the Carlson School makes a positive impact, extending far beyond the campus.



## Maitri Ajmera

'24 BSB

I originally chose to study finance because my family has directly experienced it being used as a force for good. My family is in the United States today because 50-plus years ago, my grandmother received a microloan for a small business in India to weave and sell fabric. While I'm interested in its technical applications, my passion for finance comes from its ability for social impact.



## Dylan Hansen

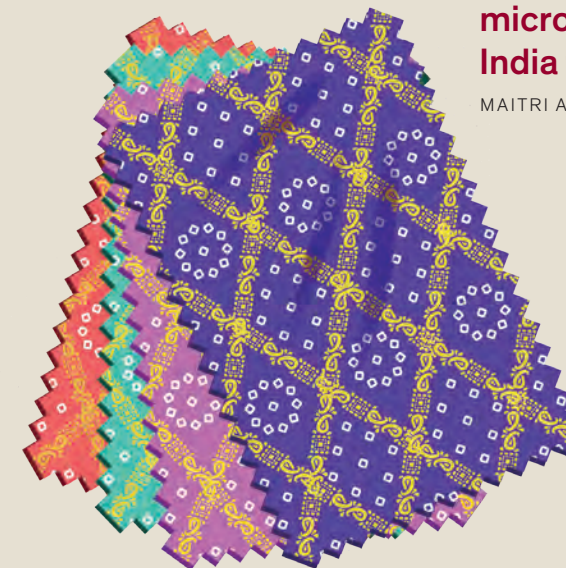
'25 BSB

Being a Carlson School student means being immersed in a community filled with people who are pushing you to be your best and grow beyond your comfort zone with the help and guidance you need to do it. Many classes are oriented around group work, so I truly feel connected to many other high-achieving students who are constantly pushing me to do my best and learn how to use business as a force for good.

I'm grateful that my scholarship funding has allowed for my pursuit of higher education to be more affordable and given me more freedom to explore college outside of classes, pursuing leadership roles within the school as an Undergraduate Ambassador and a Carlson Crew Leader, as well as in other student organizations such as Alpha Kappa Psi, a professional business fraternity on campus. It's been an honor to fully embrace being a Gopher from learning in the classroom to "rowing the boat" on gameday. Ski-U-Mah!

**"My family is in the United States today because 50-plus years ago, my grandmother received a microloan for a small business in India to weave and sell fabric."**

MAITRI AJMERA



I'm grateful for the support of the Carlson School's benefactors as I pursue my education. Not having to worry as much about paying for school has given me the ability to focus on being impactful and leaving behind a legacy at the Carlson School, including in my work on Carlson Business Board—Undergraduate Student Government. Ever since I started as a first-year student, I knew that the Carlson School was the right place for me and I'm incredibly thankful for my time here.

Every event brings new insights, experiences, and connections for alumni and friends of the Carlson School. Here are some highlights:

## MBA Reunion Weekend

MBA alumni and friends celebrated their reunion this May with a weekend of reconnecting and reminiscing. On Friday, keynote speaker Annie Young-Scrivner, '03 MBA, CEO of Wella Company, inspired the audience with a presentation on leadership that highlighted successes of her classmates from the Carlson Executive MBA program.



Saturday, attendees heard a memorable presentation on transformational leadership from Roxie Wen, '02 MBA, CFO at Invitae Corp., and presentations from favorite faculty. The celebration closed out with campus tours and a reception at Huntington Bank Stadium. Success for the two-day event isn't possible without the many alumni reunion committee volunteers giving of their time and talent—thank you!



The Carlson School looks forward to celebrating May 3-4, 2024 with the classes of 1969, 1974, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2023.

## Scholarship Reception

Nearly 150 benefactors and scholars came together to meet, mingle, and network at the largest scholarship reception to date. The room at McNamara Alumni Center was filled with laughter, stories of transformative Carlson School experiences from both alumni and current students, and heartwarming expressions of gratitude. Philanthropic support accounts for more than \$6.5 million in scholarship funding annually.

## 1st Tuesday with Lili Hall

Lili Hall, CEO of Minneapolis-based creative agency KNOCK, led an inspiring 1st Tuesday Speaker Series in June. Hall shared her story as a woman, person of color, and business owner, overcoming cancer while still leading her company, and becoming an advocate and mentor for up-and-coming entrepreneurs. Hall works closely with the Gary S. Holmes Center for Entrepreneurship to give back to the community that served her as she grew her business.

Dean Jamie Prenkert will be our 1st Tuesday speaker on December 5.

Learn more about the 1st Tuesday Speaker Series at [z.umn.edu/1stTuesday](https://z.umn.edu/1stTuesday).



## Congratulations, Class of 2023!

We celebrated Class of 2023 graduates this spring and welcomed a new class of alumni into the Carlson School alumni network with various events and festivities. For the first time, the University of Minnesota held University-wide commencement ceremonies and stage crossing events. The Carlson School gave the traditional alumni mug as a graduation gift, graduates from Carlson School China and Vienna Executive MBA and the Medical Industry MBA-China programs traveled to campus to celebrate, and more.

Welcome to the alumni family, Class of 2023!



## Community Events: Juneteenth and Twin Cities Pride

Thanks to partnership through the University of Minnesota community, the Carlson School was involved in both the University's Juneteenth Celebration and Twin Cities Pride. The Carlson School's Center for Inclusive Excellence was a sponsor of the second annual Juneteenth Celebration on June 17, which began with a commemorative march and was followed by a community festival.

The next weekend, volunteers from Carlson Alumni Pride gave their time at the University of Minnesota booth at the Twin Cities Pride festival. Learn more about Carlson Alumni Pride at [z.umn.edu/carlsonpride](https://z.umn.edu/carlsonpride).

## Alumni & GOLD Boards

Carlson School Alumni Board and Gophers of the Last Decade (GOLD) Board held joint meetings this spring for the first time ever. Board members were able to meet each other in person—many for the first time. Volunteers completing their terms were honored the evening before at a celebratory dinner. Thank you, volunteers, for your service to the Carlson School!

## Carlson School Across the Country—And Beyond!

The Carlson School is coming your way! Last month, John Hartmann, '84 BSB, and his wife, Beth Hartmann, hosted an alumni event in Chicago headlined by Dean Jamie Prenkert, and we're just getting started. Meet Dean Prenkert and connect with Carlson School alumni in your area at the following upcoming events:

November 7 – Seattle


November 9 – San Francisco


November 13 – New York City

Connect With Us!

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 carlsonschoolumn

Let your classmates know what you've been up to since graduation. Submit a Class Note for publication in the alumni magazine: [carlsonschool.umn.edu/Share](https://carlsonschool.umn.edu/Share).

## 1960s

**Tom Teresi**, '64 BSB, started a new role as treasurer of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Twin Cities. Tom's son Mike Teresi, '80 BSB, and grandson Jeffrey Teresi, '05 BSB, are also Carlson School graduates.

**Tom Watson**, '68 BSB, is a long-serving city council member and former mayor of North Oaks, Minn.

## 1980s

**Lisa Erickson**, '85 BSB, is now chief financial officer at Medica.

**Gary Moheban**, '85 BSB, started a new role as senior implementation consultant—climate initiatives at Wells Fargo.

**Gregg Prest**, '85 BSB, recently relocated to Morris, Minn. to become the CEO/CFO of Joe Riley Construction.

**Rick Nelson**, '86 MBA, retired from the *Star Tribune* last year after a 24-year career as the newspaper's restaurant critic and food writer. He is co-author of *The Great Minnesota Cookie Book*, a James Beard Award winner, and actively shares his foodie finds on social media.

**Larry Morgan**, '87 MHRIR, received the Friend of the Profession award from the Minnesota Society of CPAs for his work in assisting members with human resources issues over the past 10 years. He was awarded the Lifetime Recognition Award from the Twin Cities Compensation Network earlier for his contributions to the compensation profession. Morgan has also served on the Carlson School's HRIR Alumni Board.

**Jeff Shelstad**, '87 BSB, was appointed as vice president and general manager of the higher education business unit at XanEdu.

**Jamie Katz**, '88 BSB, '92 MBT, started a new position as director of tax at Creative Planning.

**Michael Zechmeister**, '89 MBA, chief financial officer of C.H. Robinson, was appointed to the Board of Directors at Hormel Foods. Zechmeister is a member of the Carlson School Board of Advisors.

## 1990s

**Asif Rizvi**, '90 MBA, is the CEO and director of Lucky Motor Corporation Limited. He was recently selected as one of the Top 100 Performing CEOs in Pakistan.

**Brett Reynolds**, '91 BSB, '99 MBA, was appointed chief financial officer at EndoGastric Solutions Incorporated.

**Joel Becker**, '94 MBA, was appointed as president & CEO of NeuroPace, Inc.

**Sholom Blake**, '94 BSB, was appointed trustee at Blandin Foundation.

**Reva Chamblis**, '94 BSB, was reappointed as a member of the Metropolitan Council. Chamblis is also the founder and president of Northwest Community Building, which aims to educate voters and increase civic engagement.

**Bill Gould**, '96 BSB, '06 MBA, was appointed president and chief operating officer at Trustmark.



**Laura Newinski**, '94 MBT, deputy chair and chief operating officer at KPMG, recently appeared on *Golf Central* on NBC Sports while at the Women's PGA Championships at Baltusrol Golf Club. After playing in the ProAm that morning, she spoke with the commentator about KPMG's performance analytics program and advances that it has facilitated recently for players in the LPGA, utilizing data analytics insights to improve their games. Newinski is a member of the Carlson School Board of Advisors.

**Michael Happe**, '96 MBA, president and CEO of Winnebago Industries, was named Executive of the Year by *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal*. Happe is a member of the Carlson School Board of Advisors.

**Niki Montgomery**, '96 BSB, '05 MBA, is now chief growth officer at The Butterfly Network, Inc.



**Joy Lindsay**, '99 MBA, was named the University of Minnesota 2023 Entrepreneur of the Year. Lindsay, a co-founder of two of the country's first women-founded venture capital firms, is being recognized for her outstanding contributions to entrepreneurship. The award was presented at the Founders Day event hosted by the Carlson School. Lindsay's current role as a managing partner at Sofia Fund, a Minneapolis-based angel firm, showcases her ongoing commitment to supporting innovative ventures.

**Jim Sheets**, '97 MBA, is now group president of Centura Health, a multi-state health system.

**Carla Haugen**, '99 MBA, is now senior vice president of enterprise finance at Best Buy.

**Daniel Jedda**, '99 MBA, was appointed chief financial officer at Roku Inc.

**Janet Johanson**, '99 BSB, was named a 2023 CEO to Admire by *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal*. Janet is the founder and CEO of BevSource, a beverage development, sourcing, and production solutions company.

**Bradley Stewart**, '99 BSB, was appointed to the board of directors at Schwazze.

**Krissy Wright**, '99 BSB, was appointed executive vice president of regulatory affairs at Cleerly.

## 2000s

**Rita Groneberg**, '00 BSB, started a new role as a realtor at RE/MAX Results.

**Lenny Krol**, '00 BSB, started a new role as head of professional services, Americas for Check Point Software Technologies.

**Dirk De Clerq**, '02 PhD, earned a Goodman School of Business Award for Excellence in Teaching from Brock University.

**Kevin Gish**, '02 MBA, is the administrator of the Bemidji Veterans Home in Minnesota. Gish will lead the home, opening this fall, and team of over 160 employees to provide excellent care for veterans.

**Zachary McGillis**, '02 BSB, '09 MBA, started a new role as a business broker at Sunbelt Business Advisors of Minnesota.

**Sue Sun-La Savage**, '02 MHRIR, started a new role as chief human resources officer at Hyzon Motors.

**Kevin Ballinger**, '03 MBA, was appointed to the board of directors at Shockwave.

**Chad Roberg**, '03 BSB, started a new role as strategic planner of key accounts at Surest.

**Sung (Jong) Lee**, '04 MBA, is now director of the program management office in research and development at Tennant Company.

**Rachael McKinney**, '04 MBA/MHA, is now president of greater Sacramento at Sutter Health.

**Noel Nix**, '04 BSB, director of community initiatives at the City of Saint Paul, was selected as a 2023 Bush Fellow. Bush Fellowships support accomplished community leaders to take their leadership to the next level. Nix plans to address supporting public service workers with mental health resources.

**Jason Campana**, '05 BSB, was appointed chief operating officer at Lifespeak, Inc.

**Stacey Churchwell**, '05 MBA, started a new role as vice president and general manager of cardiovascular diagnostics and services at Medtronic.

**Jed Gorlin**, '05 MBA, is now chief medical officer at America's Blood Centers.

**Scott Grawe**, '05 MBA, was appointed dean of the College of Business at Mississippi State University.

**Myles Mjolsnes**, '05 BSB, '19 MBA, started a new role as senior digital marketing manager at Ameriprise Financial Services.

**Ryan Arnholt**, '06 MBA, started a new role as director of sales at TopRank Marketing.

**Roy Bodayla**, '06 MBA, is now currency converter director at Amazon.

**Jennifer Frisch**, '06 MHRIR, started a new role as chief people officer at Vuori.

**Gaurav Gaur**, '06 MBA, joined the Board of Directors of the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota. Gaur is the CTO and co-founder of ProcessBolt.

**Levi Kary**, '06 BSB, is now executive director at the Huron Regional Medical Center.

**Kathryn Montbriand**, '06 BSB, founded two businesses: Montbriand Services, which offers fractional chief of staff support, and Lived and Loved, which helps people tap into their personal stories for both career and personal use.

**Brad Pogalz**, '06 MBA, is now vice president of finance at Donaldson, a promotion from finance director.

**Raj Purmessur**, '06 BSB, is now managing director and global head of alternative fund services product development at J.P. Morgan.

**Katelyn Sandfort**, '06 BSB, was appointed to Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers' Judicial Advisory Committee.

**Branden Chen**, '07 MBA, started a new role as chief financial officer at Sharp.

**Kirsten Lindell**, '07 BSB, is now a digital business operations manager at Southern Glazer's.

**Nathan Smith**, '07 MHRIR, started a new role as manager of talent management at the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities.

**Ariane Wotzka**, '07 BSB, started a new role as a senior project manager in the Digital Experience Design (DXD) group at the architectural firm Gensler.



**Bruce Henderson**, '08 MHRIR, started a new role as vice president of HR—global supply chain at Nike.

Note: While we welcome alumni news, the Carlson School does not verify Class Note submissions and is not responsible for the accuracy of the information contained in Class Notes.

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**Maureen Arbogast**, '08 MBA, started a new role as director of data & analytics at Second Harvest Heartland.

**J. Michael Edwards-Toepel**, '08 BSB, started a new role as an account executive at Emergent Software.

**Frederik Eliason**, '08 MBA, is now director of strategic accounts at Neogen Corporation following their merger with 3M Food Safety in September.

**Matthew Frauenshuh**, '08 MBA, CEO of Fourteen Foods, successfully acquired the Dairy Queen located in Lafayette, Tennessee. Fourteen Foods now owns and operates more than 240 Dairy Queen Grill & Chill restaurants in 13 states, employing more than 9,000 employees.

**Adam Morgan**, '08 MBA, was appointed chairman of the board at Heron Therapeutics.

**Dr. Janine Sanders Jones**, '08 PhD, was appointed associate dean for faculty scholarship, teaching, and service excellence at the University of St. Thomas Opus College of Business.

**Anna (Kinard) Picchetti**, '09 MBA, was recently announced as the new vice president of marketing & strategy for Uponsor North America. She is also a member of the company's senior management committee.

**Amaza Reitmeier**, '09 MBA, is now vice president and general manager of brain modulation at Medtronic.

**Andrew Rose**, '09 MBA, is now information technology supervisor at Hennepin County, a promotion from senior project manager.

**Toni (Toborg) Tornell**, '09 BSB, is now vice president of corporate finance & controller at United Language Group, a promotion from controller.

**2010s**

**Yashodhan Dhore**, '10 MBA, started a new role as business and innovations director at Kaiser Permanente.

**Matthew Hanzlik**, '10 BSB, started a new role as director, global people strategy and HR chief of staff at Converse, which is owned by Nike.

**John Rozanski**, '10 BSB, started a new role as chief growth officer at Mission Driven Meat and Seafood.

**Jill Haspert**, '11 MBA, CEO of Foxtrot Media Group, purchased the company from investors Mille Lacs Corp Ventures in March 2023. Foxtrot Media is a provider of online company stores and branded merchandise.

**Amina Kanwar**, '11 BSB, is now the accounting manager at Northern Tool + Equipment.

**Jesse Ng**, '11 BSB, started a new role as an actuarial consultant with Optum.

**Jenny Wade**, '11 MBA, started a new role as senior vice president of investment banking at HJ Sims.

**Erik Carlsen**, '12 MBA, started a new role as senior vice president of sales at Meriplex.

**Noah Gilbertson**, '12 BSB, started a new role as head of solution strategy, payers at Qualtrics.

**Alina Hagness**, '12 BSB, '14 MBA, started a new role as a senior manager at Global Tax Network.

**Jennifer Hawkins**, '12 MBA, was appointed vice president of strategic initiatives at Minnesota State College Southeast and executive director at Minnesota State College Southeast Foundation.

**David Ly**, '12 BSB, '21 MBA, started a new role as business initiatives senior manager at ReFED.

**Michael Orlando**, '12 BSB, started a new role as chief strategy officer at American Health Network, Optum.

**Christina Sanfelippo**, '12 BSB, was recently elected chair of the Chicago Network of the International Women's Insolvency & Restructuring Confederation (IWIRC) and U.S. programs committee co-director of the IWIRC international board. Sanfelippo an associate in Cozen O'Connor's Bankruptcy, Insolvency & Restructuring Practice.



**Meghan Stiling**, '15 MBA, was honored as a 2023 Notable Woman in STEM

by *Twin Cities Business* and recognized with a 2023 Women in Business award from the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal*. Stiling has been a leader on technology solutions and strategy at multiple companies in the Twin Cities, where her expertise has made a significant impact on the technology industry and business community.

**Jennifer Sargent**, '12 MBA, was appointed to the board of directors at Minnesota Milk Bank for Babies.

**Chris Van Schooneveld**, '12 BSB, was appointed director at Eisner Advisory Group LLC.

**Qurat-Ul-Aen Tariq**, '12 MBA, started a new role as a senior associate at BDO.

**Samuel Kemp**, '13 BSB, started a new role as a startup mentor at Minnesota Emerging Software Advisory.

**Joshua Sletten**, '13 BSB, is now vice president of corporate development and strategy at Lakeland Industries.

**Erik Greene**, '14 MBA, started a new role as co-founder at G-Works, an internal venture studio within General Mills, where teams work as start-ups to identify new market opportunities.

**Jacquelyn Grimes**, '14 BSB, is now the principal product manager at Donaldson.

**Thomas Seeba**, '14 BSB, started a new role as director of strategy at Capital One.

**Erin Dady**, '15 MBA, chief marketing officer at Bremer Bank, was appointed to the board of directors at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts.

**Whitney Heber**, '15 MBA, started a new role as senior marketing manager at Schwan's Company.

**Keith Lawrence**, '15 MBA, started a new role as tax lead at Under Armour.

**Justin Schlitz**, '15 BSB, started a new role as general manager at Otter.

**Gurvinder Singh Kahlon**, '15 MBA, was appointed vice president and general manager at Stratasys.

**Logan Falck**, '16 BSB, is now finance manager at Pentair.

**Emily Hennig**, '16 MBA, started a new role as a product owner at AiRCare Health.

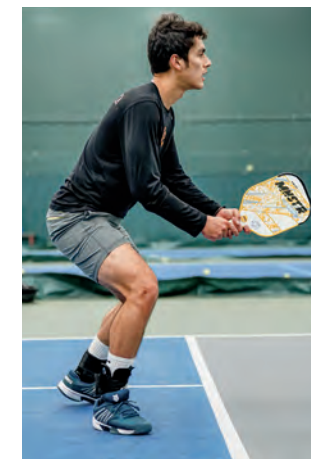
**Shelby Banks**, '17 BSB, started a new role as brand manager for EGO POWER at Chevron North America Inc.

**Zach Brauer**, '17 BSB, was appointed finance partner in the life science division at Google Ventures.

**Marcel Chinen**, '17 MBA, started a new role as a senior product manager at Blue Diamond Growers.

**Juhyun Kwon**, '17 BSB, is now senior manager of commercial model development at Albertsons Media Collective.

**Kristen Resman**, '17 BSB, started a new role as a product manager at Weill Cornell Medicine.



**Ananik Lohani**, '20 BSB, is an exceptional talent in the world of pickleball. This past spring, he finished 7th at the Professional Pickleball Association Indoor National Championships, and is ranked in the top 50 nationally. Lohani credits his ability to balance his professional and personal pursuits to the education and experience he gained during his time at the Carlson School. He maintains a full-time job as a data engineer for U.S. Bank while pursuing his passion for pickleball, and his rise in the pro scene is demonstrated in his talent and hard work.

**Matthew Burandt**, '18 BSB, '23 MSF, started a new role as an investment research quantitative analyst at Ameriprise Financial.

**Hanna Okhrimchuk**, '18 BSB, is now the project manager at Dragons Lake.

**Billie Pritzker**, '18 MBA, started a new role as senior manager of owned brand innovation engine at Target.

**Harpeet Sandhwalia**, '18 MBA, is now vice president of digital products at the *Star Tribune*.

**Katherine Spicuzza**, '18 BSB, started a new role as an internal audit manager at UnitedHealth Group.

**Holly Williams**, '18 BSB, started a new role as a functional engineer at Kimberly-Clark.

**Tricia Wright**, '18 MBA, started a new role as the executive director of Onward Eden Prairie.

**Steven Kibaya**, '19 MBA, started a new role as vice president of integrated risk management at Wings Financial Credit Union.

**Alex Lumsden**, '19 BSB, started a new position as a master scheduler at GE HealthCare.

**Dana Steinman**, '19 MSBA, started a new role as a data advisor at Cargill.



With the generosity of my scholarship benefactors, I can focus on exploring my passions and future careers through classes and experiences without worrying about the financial burden.

Irine Kurian

'26 BSB

Scholarships have a direct and meaningful impact on a student's Carlson School experience. You can support students like Irine by making a gift today at [z.umn.edu/aforce](https://z.umn.edu/aforce)

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## 2020s

**Kyle Burkhardt**, '20 MBA, started a new role as senior vice president of strategy of the Dallas Mavericks. Burkhardt also recently won a Tony award as a co-producer of the show *Parade*.

**Taylor Fay**, '21 MBA, was appointed as chief operating officer at FOXO technologies.

**Han Zhou**, '21 MBA, is now a business development advisor at Cargill.

**Jason Bateman**, '22 MBA, was named among the *Poets & Quants* 2023 Best & Brightest Online MBA honorees.

**Kristin Greyson**, '22 MBA, started a new role as senior vice president of digital at Magnifi Financial.

**Stefan Michno**, '22 MBA, was appointed director of development at Kraus-Anderson Realty and Development Company.

**Haley Nordstrom**, '22 BSB, started a new role in the rotational assignment program at Medline Industries.

**Corey (Ramsden) Scott**, '23 MBA, started a new position as vice president of sales and marketing at Athian.



**Jeremy Geenen**, '21 MSSCM, and business partners, launched a board game company in 2020. His game, *The Stifling Dark*, which was successfully funded on

Kickstarter, is currently in the manufacturing and supply chain planning phase, thanks to Geenen's Carlson School degree. *The Stifling Dark* is a one-vs-many horror board game where an adversary takes on investigators to prevent them from escaping. The game is expected to be released in early 2024.

### RECOGNITION

Welcome incoming Carlson School Alumni Board Members:

**John Jones**, '18 MBA

**Luis Moreno**, '01 MBA

**Clark Olsen**, '04 BSB

**Charlie Schaller**, '05 BSB

Welcome incoming Carlson School Gophers of the Last Decade (GOLD) Board Members:

**Kristen Ho**, '22 BSB

**Chris Kwederis**, '22 BSB

**Maria Morande**, '22 BSB

**Cozy Morton**, '16 BSB

**Haley Nordstrom**, '22 BSB

**Thomson Thamsir**, '20 BSB, '22 MSF

## IN MEMORIAM



**William Alan "Bill" Hodder**, founding member of the Carlson School's Board of Overseers and

respected Twin Cities business leader, died in July 2023. He chaired the board for six years, and helped to strengthen the ties between the school and the regional business community. "What a giant of a man and a gem he was!" noted Sri Zaheer, professor and former dean. For his commitment and service to the Carlson School and the University of Minnesota, in 1996 he was awarded the Regents Award, one of the highest honors the University bestows.

### 1950s

Roger K. Wings, '58 BSB, died in June 2023.

### 1960s

Lawrence Michelini, '64 BSB, died in August 2022.

Duane Steuart, '66 BSB, died in June 2023.

Dale Jaffrey, '67 BSB, died in February 2023.

Thomas Bracher, '69 BSB, died in February 2023.

### 1970s

Dr. Clyde Neu, '73, died in April 2023.

### 1980s

Scott Duncanson, '81 BSB, died in February 2023.

Roger Baertsch, '83 BSB, died in May 2023.

Robert Fors, '84 BSB, died in February 2023.

Choonja Lee, '87 MBA, died in February 2023.

### 1990s

Michael Fitchett, '90 BSB, died in December 2022.

### 2010s

Sherry (Peschel) Poss, '10 MBA, died in May 2023.

Michael Mensinga, '16 MBA, died in April 2023.

Michael Suyak, '17 MSSCM, died in April 2023.

### 2020s



**Yonghua (Owen) Chen**, '21 MBA, died in June 2023. Just on campus in May 2023 for a pan-

demic-delayed China Executive MBA (CHEMBA) residential session, he was noted as a sincere and warm classmate and friend with an optimistic outlook and passion for life. A loving family man, he leaves behind a wife and son, and will be missed by his CHEMBA and Carlson School alumni community.

## MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

### WEDDINGS

**1. Mariela Erak**, '23 MHRIR, and Gustavo Fuchs married on May 15, 2023. Childhood neighbors who lost touch after moving away, they are now permanently reunited.

**2. Erik Lean**, '13 BSB, and his partner, Matthew Aoyama, married in December 2022 in Thailand after a COVID-19 reschedule and miraculously avoided a rainstorm that paused just long enough for the ceremony and fireworks.

**3. Joseline Pacheco Velez**, '21 BSB, married her husband, Wilson Barbecho, in her hometown of Cuenca, Ecuador, on December 23, 2022.

### BABIES

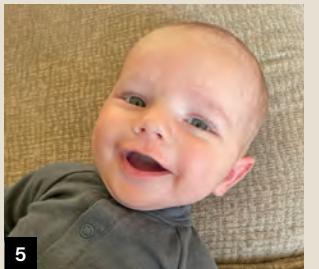
**4. Will Peterson**, '19 MBA, and Kaitlin Jamieson greeted their little girl, Alice, on December 30, 2022.

**5. Michael and Petra Jacqmein**, both '18 BSB, added Shepherd John Jacqmein to their family on April 19, 2023.

**6. Dylan Wright**, '18 MBA, and his wife, Ashley, welcomed Oliver "Ollie" in March 2023.

**7. Kenny Ngo**, '16 BSB, and his wife, Catherine, welcomed their baby boy Kai Wenda (文达) Ngo on April 11, 2023. He's healthy, strong, and has lots of energy, making it quite the experience to swaddle him.

**Recent baby or wedding news? Tell us about it at [carlsonschool.umn.edu/Share](https://www.carlsonschool.umn.edu/Share).**



## Irene Fernando

Hennepin County Commissioner Irene Fernando, '07 BSB, says you can call her *Commish!* Fernando moved from Carson, California, to attend the Carlson School in 2003. She received her Master of Education from the U of M and is currently a PhD candidate. Fernando is the youngest woman to serve on the Hennepin County Board, the first Filipino American elected in Minnesota, and the first board chair of color since the county's founding in 1852.



### 1. Believe in what's possible.

Our systems are not broken; they do not work for all of us because they were not designed for all of us. To redesign systems in compassionate and evidence-informed ways, we must *believe in what's possible*. Future solutions that creatively and comprehensively address the scale of need in our communities can only be imagined from a place of optimism and possibility.

### 2. Remain unwavering in your values.

I launched my campaign in 2017 with three promises: to advocate for those who are marginalized or structurally disenfranchised, to partner across all layers of government to advance our most complex issues, and to expand who sees themselves in the story of leadership and politics. In our increasingly complex and intensifying world, it is necessary to be unwavering in *why* you lead, *how* you embody your values, and *who* benefits from your leadership.

“Future solutions that creatively and comprehensively address the scale of need in our communities can only be imagined from a place of optimism and possibility.”

IRENE FERNANDO

### 3. Study the system to make it better.

In order to change or improve something, we must understand how it currently works. Through genuine curiosity, deep listening, and cultivating a dynamic relationship with yourself as a leader and the systems around you, it is possible to maneuver within systems to change the trajectory of what's possible for people who have been overlooked, underserved, or mistreated by systems.

### 4. Empower youth.

At age 17 in 2003, I co-founded a youth leadership organization with Gopher freshmen called Students Today Leaders Forever (STLF). Together, we learned that leadership is about action, not positions or titles. During my 11 years with STLF, nearly 23,000 participants contributed 318,000 community service hours across the country through leadership programs led by youth and for youth. This instilled in me the belief that *today* is always the right time to invest in our next generation of leaders. I love hosting youth tours of the county boardroom and my office, and I give out *Future Elected: Commish-In-Training* stickers.

### 5. Bet on yourself.

Never assume that decision-makers are advocating for your values—and even if they are—do not assume that they are inherently smarter than you. You have meaningful questions, skills, perspectives, and insights *today* that can transform communities for the better. Achieving change is driven by belief, empowerment, studying, and dedication, which demands that you bet on yourself, your values, and your vision for the world.

From 1968 to 1972, the then-called School of Business Administration hosted the Business Equality for American Minorities (BEAM) Small Business Management class, which aimed to elevate community members' management and entrepreneurship skills.



Former Accounting Professor Robert K. Zimmer (seated fourth from left) organized the course with Honeywell's then-Vice President for Development John Mitchell (standing, far right) through a collaboration with the Minneapolis Urban League and the Minnesota Economic Development Association. Across the four years of the program, more than 100 students and local business

workers participated in the program. Mitchell and Zimmer also visited organizations across the country, sharing insights about the BEAM model and encouraging others to create similar educational opportunities. Support for minority business owners continues through the Ascend Twin Cities program offered through the Holmes Center for Entrepreneurship.

Alumni Relations  
321 Nineteenth Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455



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