

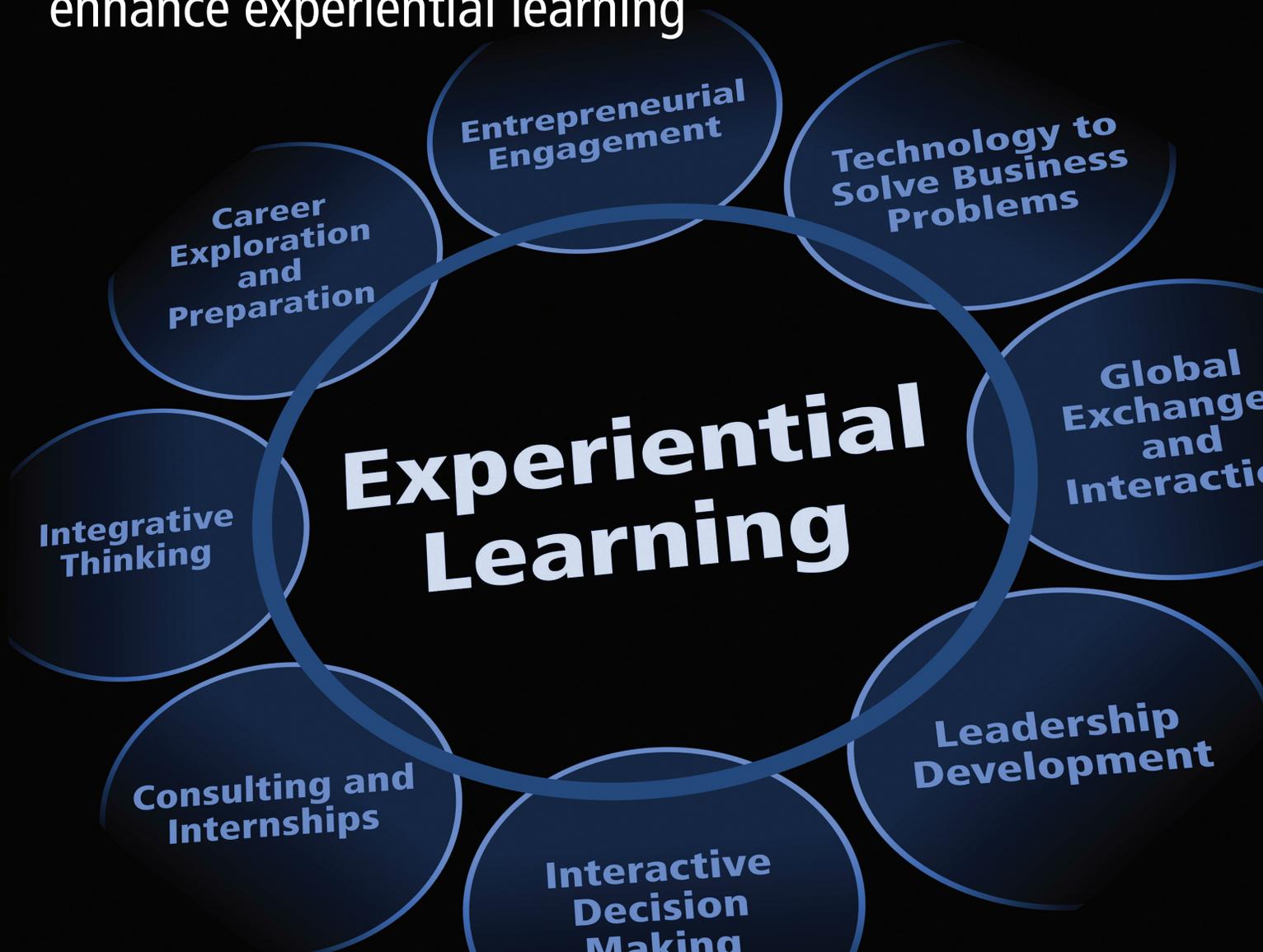
Fall 2011

insight

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

New entrepreneurial lab and minor
enhance experiential learning



inside this issue

- ATiB launches careers
- **ACHIEVE** develops professionals
- Courses increase global awareness



Experiential learning complements strong curricular foundation

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Over the last few years, in building a student-centered environment, the SBA has expanded the experiential learning opportunities available to its students. Our goal was — and continues to be — to provide students with a range of experiential opportunities to practice leadership, connect theory and practice, gain competitive differentiating

skills and build on career-enriching foundations right from their freshman year. And, to do so in a way that complements the AACSB-International accredited academic education they receive in the classroom.

This issue of *SBA Insight* offers a taste of the how students are integrating hands-on experiences with the SBA's strong curriculum. You'll read about the established and respected Applied Technology in Business (ATiB) minor that has launched many alumni careers; our newest addition of the Ideas 2 Business Lab, which offers critical support to OU and Cooley Law School students, faculty and staff in launching new ventures; our commitment to helping students develop professionally through the ACHIEVE program; as well as the global experiences that help our graduates succeed in the world market.

While we are expanding the opportunities for students to excel in multiple ways, our commitment to providing hands-on experience to our students has remained steady throughout our history. Using participation in active student organizations, teamwork in class projects, and engagement in community and business internships, SBA has integrated hands-on experiences with strong curricular foundations to deliver an outstanding business education.

In fact, last year, more than 82 percent of our students had career jobs within a few months of graduation — a phenomenal testimony to the quality of students enrolled at the School of Business Administration.

It's also a testament to the leadership and involvement of the SBA faculty, staff and alumni who provide the structure, support and mentorship that make these opportunities possible, meaningful and successful.

Mohan Tanniru
Dean, School of Business Administration
Oakland University

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Gaining real-world experience is integrated through the SBA curriculum and its extra-curricular programs, expanding the ways in which students can gain valuable professional skills.

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New minor offers students tools to realize entrepreneurial dreams

Since childhood, Brian Fairbrother has dreamed of creating his own business.

"I've always been an entrepreneur," says Fairbrother, a production operations/management major from Shelby Township, Mich. "When I was 12, I used to go around to the construction workers in my neighborhood selling pop."

Fairbrother took a significant step toward realizing his entrepreneurial goals earlier this year when he decided to capitalize on one of the SBA's newest opportunities, its new entrepreneurship minor.

The interdisciplinary program got under way this fall and, unlike the SBA's previous entrepreneurship minor, is open to both business and non-business majors.

"I see it as a way to learn the ropes," says Fairbrother, who is taking the ENT 301 course, Developing New Venture Ideas. There, he and his classmates have opportunities to research, test and fine-tune their business concepts.

Other program courses cover the nuts and bolts of transforming a good idea into a viable business. Those who have developed outstanding business



Entrepreneurial courses host guest speakers, such as successful entrepreneur and SBA alum Ray Gunn, chairman and CEO, MexAmerica, who share the benefit of their experience with SBA students.

plans also may have the chance to launch their venture under instructor supervision through the Entrepreneurship Project Practicum. Plus, students enrolled in the entrepreneurship minor have a direct line into OU's new Ideas to Business (I2B) Lab. Also new this fall, the I2B offers critical support to start-up ventures by OU and Cooley Law School students, and faculty and staff members. (See related story.)

The SBA has taken pains to avoid a cookie-cutter approach to preparing students for entrepreneurship, says Associate Professor of Marketing Mark Simon, who developed the minor in partnership with Professor of Marketing Ravi Parameswaran, chair, Department of Management and Marketing.

"We're trying to look at the whole person," Simon explains. "'Are you willing to take risks? Do you want more time with your family, or do you plan to spend as much time as it takes to make your business a success?' Early on, we will try to tailor the program to the type of entrepreneur the person wants to be."

Eric Franchy, a senior marketing major from Roseville, Mich., who began the program this fall, says he thinks of entrepreneurship as playing "real-life Monopoly."

"The main appeal to me of being an entrepreneur is the ability to determine my own day, both in scheduling and in task determinations," Franchy says. "Leading others can also have its rewards."

"I am excited for the revamped entrepreneurship minor and especially the possibility of receiving funding through OU for a plan created at the end of the program."

For more information about the entrepreneurship program, visit oakland.edu/currentstudents/minors/entrepreneurshipminor. ■

By Flori Meeks

Brian Fairbrother, POM major, meets with Associate Professor of Marketing Mark Simon, who helped develop the new minor.



New Ideas 2 Business Lab brings startup resources to OU, Cooley community

Successful entrepreneurs, those in the early stages of planning and others with ideas gathered with university and government officials, angel investors and business professionals to learn about Oakland University's new Ideas 2 Business (I2B) Lab.



The I2B Lab helps OU community's budding entrepreneurs — students, faculty and staff at OU and Cooley Law School (CLS) —

gain access to the support needed to move from the idea stage of a new venture into implementation.

ASSET TO STUDENTS, COMMUNITY

Guest speaker Small Business Liaison, Michigan Economic Development Corporation and OU alumna Cynthia Grubbs said "I cannot express enough the importance of this type of facility to growing business in Michigan. I commend Oakland University for having the insight to create this.

"Michigan is number two in economic growth. It is a great time to start a new business," she added. "(But) the cost of growing a business is high. OU's I2B is a great resource."

Bringing university support into economic development initiatives is part of an ongoing commitment, said Gary Russi, OU president.

"What's happening today is something different," he said. "We're opening a lab devoted to helping students, faculty and staff develop an idea, gain the technical knowledge, research and skills needed to support it and to spin it out."

Helping young companies grow is important, he said, quoting a recent study that reports just one percent of businesses nationwide — typically companies in their second stage of business growth — create 40 percent of the new jobs.

"OU's I2B is a realization of how a university can use its vast resources as a primary device to rebirth region and our state," added guest speaker Arnold Weinfeld, director, strategic initiatives and federal affairs, Michigan Municipal League.

SUPPORTING ECONOMY, BUILDING SKILLS

"It's not just developing ideas, but also giving students — those with the ideas and others — a very special experience as an employee of the I2B, and being involved in every step of the process," Russi said.

The cross-disciplinary support of the I2B means students from any unit in the OU community can get involved, gaining valuable experience to use in their professional careers. The I2B is supported through a partnership between OU's schools of



I2B Coordinator Wayne Blizman (center) explains the startup resources available at the new lab.

Business Administration (SBA), and Engineering and Computer Science (SECS), and the OU INC.

"The I2B is an extension of the experiential learning that the SBA has long supported — extending it to students across campus to gain skills and build their resumes," said Balaji Rajagopalan, professor, management information systems, and associate dean, SBA.

Through the I2B, students "will see it, touch it, feel it and understand exactly what it's all about," said Amy Butler, executive director, OU INC. "We want businesses to know OU and CLS is graduating students with real, valuable skills."

CONNECTING, NETWORKING

Support for the I2B is strong in the business community.

"My company wants to help retain and attract talent in the area," said Rob Herner, partner, Mars Ventures USA, a new investor firm. "A lot of great ideas come from universities. ... We want to keep them here."

Irene Spanos, business development representative, Oakland County's Planning and Economic Development Services, explained, "As these companies graduate out of the I2B and OU INC, we want to help them grow and get established locally."

EXPLORING, SHARING OPPORTUNITY

Many came to learn how to bring their idea to I2B for support.

"My professor encouraged me to check out the I2B as a place to explore my idea," explained Sameena Sheikh, a figure skating coach, and integrative studies student pursuing premed, business and

"The I2B is an extension of the experiential learning that the SBA has long supported."

Balaji Rajagopalan

teaching/dance. "I'm here gaining knowledge from different fields, getting information to help build my new business and finding the resources to discover where to go from here."

Entrepreneurs in various stages of startup offered insight into the new venture experience.

MBA alum Paul Bonnenberger offered an example of how a customer service model can differentiate a product in the marketplace. "Others may offer a similar service, but our personalized, responsive customer service model really makes a difference."

Entrepreneur exhibitor, Lake Orion resident and Oberlin college student Matt Fish believes the opportunity the I2B offers OU students is valuable, as he describes the college internship that inspired him to move ahead with his venture. "My internship at Detroit Venture Partners connected me to the resources — like how to obtain venture capital. I saw what to avoid, issues to address and the startup process. The internship gave me the confidence to explore."

That's what OU's I2B aims to deliver to its participant — support, knowledge and confidence. ■



OU President Gary Russi says helping young companies grow is important to the economy.



SBA Associate Dean Balaji Rajagopalan reinforces the opportunity all OU students will have to gain real-world experience through the I2B lab.



Amy Butler, executive director, OU INC, said the I2B Lab will allow students to see what starting a new venture is really like.



Cynthia Grubbs, small business liaison, Michigan Economic Development Corporation commended OU for its insight in creating the I2B Lab.



Associate Professor, MIS, Kieran Mathieson demonstrated his electronic textbook *CoreDogs*.



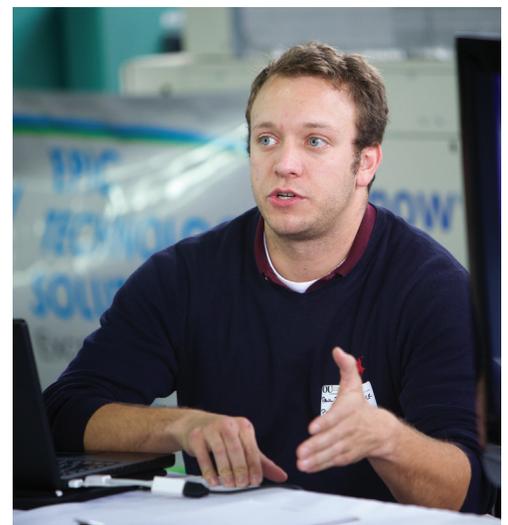
Brandon Gustafson, SBA (Marketing) '11, and current SBA MBA student, discusses his new business venture.



SBA Entrepreneurship Professor Mark Simon shared his entrepreneurial principles, which are found in his book, *The Balanced Entrepreneur*.



Paul Knific, SBA (MSITM) '10, partner and CEO, Epic Technology Solutions, shared insight gained through his many successful entrepreneurial endeavors.



Paul Bonnenberger, SBA MBA, discusses his customer service model with I2B attendees.

ATiB launches careers, creates connections

Membership has its privileges, as Oakland University senior Lynn Couto recently discovered.

She knew the SBA's Applied Technology in Business (ATiB) minor was a good program when she applied in 2009, but she didn't fully appreciate the strength of its reputation until she received a job offer last February, well before her anticipated December 2011 graduation.

Within two weeks of posting her resume on OU's CareerLink in search of an internship, Logistics Insight Corp. of Warren, Mich., contacted her — about a job.

"They brought me in for an interview just based on my ATiB minor," Couto explains. "They are OU alumni, so they know the magnitude of ATiB and the reputation of the people who come out of it," adds Couto, who is now working full time there as a human resources coordinator while completing her Human Resource Management degree.

Considering 14 million people across the country are unemployed, Couto feels extremely lucky. "I was so worried about finding a job after graduation, but now I have one," she says.

THE ROOTS OF ATiB'S SUCCESS

Boasting a 100 percent employment rate of its graduates, the ATiB program, where business students have a concentration of information technology (IT) classes, was the first of its kind in Michigan. It was founded in 1997 and directed for five years by Mohan Tanniru, then-MIS professor who also served as the program's director for five years. Tanniru is now the SBA's dean. Mohammad Dadashzadeh, DIS chair, led the program as its director for seven years. Today, Kieran Mathieson, associate professor, information systems, is the ATiB program director.

The program's success launched many initiatives within the SBA and OU, and it has served as a model for programs at other universities. Most significant for the SBA is how ATiB sparked the experiential learning philosophy the SBA follows today.

"Having hands-on experience and working in teams is part of an outstanding business education," says Tanniru, explaining the genesis of ATiB. "At that time, however, universities traditionally focused on educating students on business theory. The ATiB model elevated the business education at OU by presenting high-caliber students with the opportunity to develop IT and workplace skills that complemented their education. Gaining real-world experience is now integrated throughout the SBA curriculum and its extra-curricular programs." ATiB is open to junior and senior business students regardless of their business major. They put their



Human Resources Management senior Lynn Couto secured a full-time job in her field before graduating thanks, in part, to her experience in the SBA's ATiB program.

newly learned IT skills to work on real projects sponsored by companies seeking technological solutions. Whether it's for a new database or website, companies quickly learn that by partnering with ATiB, they gain implementable solutions as well as access to an educated, skilled and highly trained potential employee base.

"Employers love ATiB students and graduates," says Mathieson. "Even in a slow economy, the ATiB employment rate is high because the students understand their major area, the business function and how IT fits in. Sponsors often hire their project team members as interns or employees because of their proven skill set."

IN GOOD COMPANY

Since its formation, more than 80 companies have tapped ATiB's brainpower to develop business solutions with a focus on IT.

"ATiB has been such an asset to us," says Annette Taylor Wetungu, manager of global common services, GM Technical Education Program (TEP). "They've made parts of our jobs a lot easier."

Wetungu speaks based on TEPs long history with ATiB. Over the years, TEP, which offers GM employees education in current and emerging technologies through partnerships with universities

"ATiB has been such an asset to us. (ATiB students) are self-motivated, self-directed and quite exceptional."

Annette Taylor Wetungu
Manager, Global Common Services
GM Technical Education Program

worldwide, has invited ATiB students to create several databases to improve its systems. The most recent project involved simplifying student registration and reporting processes, eliminating the need for TEP staff to manually enter data, thus reducing paperwork.

The caliber of students keeps TEP coming back, adds Wetungu. "They are self-motivated, self-directed and quite exceptional," she notes. "They need very little hand-holding, which is great."



ATiB students meet in small groups with Kieran Mathieson (center), associate professor, information systems, and ATiB program director.

EXPERIENCING VALUE BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Students — and alumni — value being part of such a unique program. In fact, positive feedback from ATiB students combined with the overall success of the program laid the groundwork for many of the SBA's student-centered initiatives today.

For Thushitha Ramineni Deepak, MIS '02, ATiB provided the skills and experience that helped her

land a coveted international finance position at DaimlerChrysler followed by one at California's Google, where she recently transferred to commerce operations.

She values the network that gave her access to compete in the national job market, but notes that ATiB's benefits extend beyond education and career success. The togetherness of team projects and a dedicated lab that fosters collaboration also promotes camaraderie and life-long friendships.

"At a time when OU felt like a commuter school, ATiB was one of the only groups with a dedicated lab right on campus where we could work together, instead of at home on our own," she says. "There always were other students there, so I could consult with them when I had questions about a project, or chat about classes and job opportunities."

It was here Deepak met fellow ATiB student Amy Rutledge. The two remain so close that Deepak served as one of Rutledge's bridal attendants years later.

With a B.A. in French (2003), a B.S. in MIS (2003), an M.B.A. (2008) from OU, and business experience at Chrysler and Handleman Company, Rutledge, now a special instructor of MIS at the SBA, still talks of the value she gained through ATiB.

"University life can be a daunting experience, but with the ATiB program I was nested in with a group of students with similar academic goals and passions," Rutledge explains. "Moreover, I was able to quickly build important skills given the external project work. My transition to the workforce was seamless."

There are more benefits than what shows on a resume, Rutledge says. "ATiB was one of the best experiences of my life. My corporate track record along with the people skills and project work developed through the ATiB program are shared with my MIS students today. I attribute the launch of my career to ATiB." ■

By Rene Wisely

ATiB students consult with project sponsors in the ATiB lab (pictured here) or at the sponsor's location.



ATiB students share skills to honor World War II veteran, author

When World War II veteran Elson Spangler asked Professor Kieran Mathieson if the SBA's Applied Technology in Business (ATiB) students could help him build a website, Mathieson knew he was facing a win-win situation.

Not only would the project provide valuable real-world experience for students, it would give OU an opportunity to do something for Spangler, who has self-published a book about his wartime experiences.

"We waived the fee as a way to say thank you," says Mathieson, who assigned the project to first-year ATiB students in ATB 306, Business and Information Technology Foundations.

Normally, ATiB students receive a small stipend for the real-world projects they complete. Most of this work is done for businesses in the area.

"The students in the class are learning about websites now, so this project gives them real experience," Mathieson says. "It's their project; they're in charge."

An officer in the U.S. Army Air Corps, Spangler also was a lead squadron bombardier while serving in Foggia, Italy, from 1943 to 1945. A Bloomfield Hills resident, he was inspired to write a book after visiting the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

"The Library of Congress had a tent there, and they were encouraging veterans to tell their stories," Spangler says.

Armed with a Library of Congress writing kit, Spangler documented his wartime experiences. He wrote his book to be a tool for historians and included documents from his service days. "It's a



Elson Spangler (center) in front of the B-17 Yankee Lady at the Yankee Air Museum with his son Craig Spangler (right) and grandson John Spangler (left). Spangler and five of his grandchildren have flown in this B-17.

Photo by Roger Sherman. Photo provided courtesy of the Yankee Air Museum.

snapshot of the history of late World War II," says Spangler. Since finishing the book, *An American Flyer*, Spangler has distributed 180 copies.

Those who've read the book have found Spangler's story fascinating. Friends and family strongly encouraged him to create a website to get the book to a larger audience.

Oakland University seemed like a natural resource to turn to for help. Spangler, who's currently taking a history class at the university, was directed to the SBA's ATiB program by way of his daughter-in-law, an OU nursing student. That's how Spangler and Mathieson connected.

After meeting with Mathieson's class, Spangler was impressed with the talent. "With the ATiB students on the project, my website is getting professional assistance," he says.

And, with it, new ATiB students are getting real work experience right off the bat. Typically, as participating juniors and seniors progress through the minor program, they handle real projects for sponsoring organizations.

"My group and I are devoted to making Mr. Spangler's website a personal and commercial success," says economics and mathematics major Riley Andren of Rochester Hills, project coordinator. "We believe Mr. Spangler will be quite impressed with the finished site."

The goal for the site is to provide easy access to Spangler's story; connect the public with Spangler, who accepts speaking requests; and establish an avenue for others to purchase Spangler's book.



The homepage design created for Elson Spangler by ATiB students.

In addition to gaining real world experience, the students are gaining a new perspective on history. They found the information on Spangler's life — and his book — inspiring.

"I was amazed to learn about his experiences from World War II, especially the stories of when his plane was shot down, and the time he and his crew had to crash land in the ocean," says accounting major Leandra Kramer.

"It's an honor to work with a hero of Mr. Spangler's stature, and hopefully we can help spread his story," adds accounting major Stephen Grassi. ■

By Flori Meeks



Elson Spangler at the bomb sight in the bombardier's position in the Yankee Air Museum's Yankee Lady.



Simon Dover, SBA '88 (Accounting/Finance), associate athletics director, OU, shares his professional experience and insight at an ACHIEVE meeting.



Barbara Hauswirth, director, recruitment and selection, Northwestern Mutual Financial Network, offers advice to ACHIEVE students.



Judy Martin (left), education coordinator for SBA's ACHIEVE, with ACHIEVE student SBA senior Meghan Chamberlain.

Alumni help SBA students ACHIEVE greatness

Business students can learn some of the most important lessons in business from a rich source, one that OU's School of Business Administration taps regularly — successful alumni.

In fact, alumni are at the very heart of SBA's ACHIEVE program, a three-year mandatory career preparation and exploration curriculum for OU's business students.

These alumni frequently visit ACHIEVE events, imparting the life lessons they learned after graduating, teaching everything from how to network effectively and eloquently answering the toughest job interview questions to finding the right internship and offering career planning advice.

SEEDS OF SUCCESS

Introduced in 2008, ACHIEVE has grown and evolved. By including every SBA student, ACHIEVE is now a cornerstone of how the SBA delivers a student-centered education while complementing the integrative thinking, global understanding and experiential learning that takes place as part of the school's curricular and extra-curricular programs.

Its goal is to equip graduates with hands-on skills that round out their business education, enabling them to deliver value starting with their first day on the job in any global business, says Judy Martin, education coordinator for SBA's Center for Integrated Business and Research Education (CIBRE).

Continually increasing alumni participation in the small group lessons has proved valuable -- for the students and the volunteers.

"I wish they had a program like this when I attended," says ACHIEVE volunteer Scott Bittinger, Accounting '88, OU's first-ever All-American in men's basketball and senior manager of finance for aftermarket and specialty products at American Axle & Manufacturing in Detroit.

Bittinger has mentored several business students through ACHIEVE, giving them each one-on-one attention where he instills in them the understanding "that networking continues even after you get your foot in the door of an organization," he says.

Using his own career advancement as proof, he explains to students, "You should be networking after you get the job, too, because those relationships can lead to even bigger, better jobs."

CAREER EXPLORATION, BUSINESS UNDERSTANDING

ACHIEVE also helps SBA students understand the various career paths available in the business world, allowing them to explore areas of interest and learn about careers they may not have known about before. An interactive, engaging game-based activity Martin calls "Business Buzz" — modeled after the popular television quiz show Jeopardy! — starts this education by acquainting freshmen with the majors and minors in the SBA.

Throughout the three-year program, students focus on different areas that sync with their progression toward graduation. In their first year in the program, students learn financial literacy and network. In the second year, they assess careers and research potential employers. In the final year, they identify their strengths, practice mock job interviews, and work with alumni on crafting a two-minute pitch to sell themselves to a company.

"This program really takes students to the next level," says Colleen Webb, president, Michigan Business Education Association. "The connection students have with business leaders working in the job force, especially in their career areas, is helpful because they can see how what they are learning in the classroom is actually used in the field."

A COMPETITIVE EDGE

That's exactly the idea, Martin says, and "the SBA feels so strongly about giving its students this edge in today's workforce that it funds the required no-credit classes each year, so students don't have to pay tuition for them."

In today's economy, with a 14 percent unemployment rate, getting an edge is what it's all about. "I wish more of today's workforce had such training," Webb says.

OU senior Meghan Chamberlain, a marketing major minoring in international business management, has been part of ACHIEVE since its inception. "ACHIEVE has already helped me succeed through the mock

interviews and resume building sessions," she says. "Without ACHIEVE, I would not have the comfort level or confidence that I do in interviews."

"The alumni in the program make you realize the potential of an Oakland business degree," she adds, observing that they are a source of inspiration for her and other ACHIEVE students.

GIVING AND RECEIVING

For volunteer David Hopkins, Marketing '99, ACHIEVE is an opportunity for him to give back to his alma mater and make an impact on future generations.

"It's my turn to help because I remember those who helped me," says Hopkins, a manufacturer's rep in the auto industry for Damy International Inc., the Rochester Hills-based company he owns.

Hopkins also stresses the importance of networking to the students and delights in seeing someone take his advice to heart.

"When a student contacted me after I spoke (at an ACHIEVE event), I was happy to help her," Hopkins says. "I arranged for her to go on an interview for an internship, and she got the offer. So far, she's the only student who contacted me (outside the program)."

Bittinger emphasizes he gets more back from the students than he gives.

"I encourage all alumni to get involved and help these students reach their full potential. It's so rewarding. I get so much personal satisfaction in helping them," he says. "It's so amazing how smart, how cool and how motivated these Oakland students are." ■

By Rene Wisely

To volunteer or learn more about ACHIEVE, contact Judy Martin at (248) 370-3273 or martin23@oakland.edu.

From South America to Europe, MBA students gain a new world perspective

By jetting off to different continents this spring, two groups of SBA graduate students gained a new understanding of diverse cultures, along with the challenges and opportunities of doing business outside the United States.

Though both groups focused on the economic, political, geographical, cultural and social idiosyncrasies, one did so studying emerging markets in South America and the other by examining the ongoing transition to the euro in Europe.

Despite the differences, both groups gained an understanding of international markets, which is critical to succeeding in today's business world.

Formal study abroad opportunities have been available to SBA graduate students for more than a decade. But across the U.S. it's unusual, according to the Institute of International Education's (IIE) 2010 Open Doors report.

"To be a competent professional and to be competitive today, you need international experience," says Peggy Blumenthal, senior counselor to the president at the IIE, in a March 2010 *U.S. News & World Report* article on the subject. She also notes study abroad programs are essential if U.S. students are to remain competitive with their global peers.



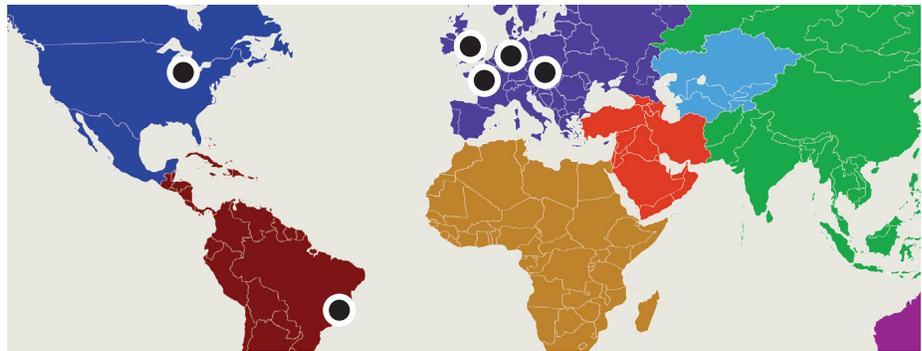
Graduate students gained insight into the business and culture of Brazil during their trip to South America.

UNDERSTANDING THE EMERGING MARKET

As part of an ongoing emerging market series of courses, Janell Townsend, global marketing expert and associate professor of marketing and international business, led the South America trip where students explored the business practices of Brazil — a fast growing country with a population of nearly 200 million — the cities of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, in particular.

Students visited businesses in a variety of industrial sectors including technology, agricultural and meat packing, automotive suppliers, cosmetics, banking and finance, energy, non-profits and a *cachaça* (alcohol made from sugar cane) distillery.

"The growth rate of Brazil is phenomenal, to the point of potentially overheating by growing too fast.



It has a competitive automotive market, and for the most part it was closed," says Townsend. "With an emerging market, you have to understand how to do business there, because it may not be the way that business is conducted in more developed areas of the world."

Students gained real insight into the business and culture of the country.

"Even with rigorous classroom preparation for the trip, I don't think any of us anticipated the real knowledge we gained; not only of business practices, but also of the cultural factors that define a market," Sheri Profant, business development, General Dynamics Land Systems and M.B.A. student, says.

"Until you experience a trip like this, you don't understand it," adds Townsend. "I call it cultural 'aha' moments — little things, like the power of pantomime. You don't have to speak a language to be understood; you can find ways of communicating with people and getting things done."

The laid-back attitude about schedules and punctuality of Brazilians came as a surprise.

"Our schedule (from the travel agency) changed daily," explains Sara Johnson, regional director, financial aid, Dorsey Schools, and M.B.A. student. "We learned that much of this is simply the way Brazilians do business. Business is very casual. In the U.S., we are used to prompt appointments and management of meetings."

A MAJOR WORLD TRADING POWER

Across the Atlantic, Frank Cardimen, special lecturer, marketing and management, led a group of graduate students studying the European Union (EU) in the Czech Republic, Germany, France and the U.K.

"We set out to understand how the strain the EU and the euro are under is affecting the U.S. dollar and business," explains Cardimen.

During the trip, students discussed strategic business issues with local corporate executives, economists, academicians, politicians and U.S. Embassy personnel,

and toured manufacturing plants.

In one meeting, Mark Scher, Economics/Finance/Accounting '90, wealth manager and financial planner for London-based MASECO Private Wealth, offered perspective on finance and investing in the U.K.

"Mark's in the money business, working with Americans in Europe, so his presentation was fantastic," Cardimen says. "We learned about the funding industry and the niche business he is in." (See story page 9)

In a visit with Czech National Bank (CNB) leaders, students learned about the politics and process of transitioning from the local currency to the euro. The CNB is the centralized banking institution for the Czech Republic — similar to the Federal Reserve in the U.S.

EMBRACING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The combination of international business, culture, history and visiting landmarks proved invaluable.

"In each country, we focused on some local lore and history," says Cardimen. "The culture and history was a vital part of the learning process."

Johnson remarked on the energy in Rio. "This city brought together such an incredible blend of history, culture, health, business and fun," she says. "The streets were buzzing with traffic and people. There is beautiful architecture all over the city, and the lively nightlife shuts down the streets."

GLOBALLY CONNECTED

Townsend is a strong believer in the importance of international study and stresses this with her students.

"With global competition, while firms search for efficiencies and effectiveness, students should have, at minimum, a general knowledge of the global business environment," she says. "We live in a global marketplace, yet they must absolutely understand the local landscape. Most will never progress beyond mid-level management without this understanding. To move into a higher level or executive position, their global experience is extremely important." ■

By Dawn Pauli, CAS '88

Making sense of dollars and pounds

London-based wealth manager and financial planner Mark Scher, SBA '90, maximizes the investments of his clients — U.S. citizens and ex-pats living in the U.K. — by navigating complex U.S. and U.K. tax laws. Scher uses his thorough understanding of the intricacies of the dollar, pound, euro, tax rates, capital gains, dividends and tax credits to help wealthy American bankers and lawyers invest.

Scher is a member of an elite group. As one of about 30 wealth managers licensed in both countries, he is uniquely qualified to offer financial services to the estimated 200,000 U.S. citizens living in the U.K. The members of this group combined hold nearly \$100 billion in investible assets.

"This is a niche market, and our specialization is critical for those who must comply with international regulations and tax regimes," explains Scher, senior investment advisor, MASECO Private Wealth. "The U.S. is one of only four countries worldwide where citizens have to pay taxes on income."

IGNITING THE INVESTMENT PASSION

Scher started at Oakland University's SBA after he left the Marine Corps in 1987. In his first economics class with SBA's Anandi Sahu, chair and professor, economics, Scher discovered his passion for global finance and investing.

"I love knowing everything there is to know about numbers and how they equate to day-to-day living," he says. "How to calculate a mortgage or lease payment, how to get around taxes, things like that, have always fascinated me."

Simply put, Scher couldn't quench his thirst for numbers. He took enough classes to graduate with three majors from the SBA — economics, finance and accounting. This intense course of study resulting in the trifecta of majors has provided a solid foundation for Scher's success in his career and advancing his education.



Mark Scher (third from left) met with Adjunct Professor Frank Cardimen (second from left) and graduate students in the MGT 681 Globalization class at MAESCO's office in London, England.

Scher went on to earn a master's in Finance from Walsh College. Now, he's pursuing his Ph.D. in Finance at one of the top universities in the world — the prestigious King's College London, University of London. And, completing the circle in his education, Sahu graciously agreed to serve as his Ph.D. sponsor.

Sahu speaks highly of Scher's success in business — and in the classroom. "Mark's intense zeal to master economic concepts and a ceaseless effort to be always at the top of the class had the predictable effect — an exceptional success in his chosen profession," he says. "His pursuit of a Ph.D. degree while already well settled in professional life speaks to his motivation and ability."

STAYING CONNECTED TO OU

Recognizing the influence OU and the SBA had on his life, Scher has remained involved with the university in a variety of ways, including through the (then) President's Club and other philanthropic endeavors. His involvement also extends to sharing his time with students.

Last spring, Scher shared his knowledge and passion about finance and living abroad with a group of SBA graduate students who traveled to London as part of Adjunct Professor Frank Cardimen's Globalization (MGT 681) class.

"The students said it was a great finance overview; they said it was the clearest explanation they ever had about the finance industry," Scher says about the meeting where he explained his investment philosophy, provided an overview of MASECO, and answered questions about finance and living in London.

Spending time educating today's business student about the global economy is one way Scher believes he can acknowledge the start he got at OU and the opportunities he had to follow his dream.

"There is not a place in the U.S. that I could have this kind of opportunity, not in New York, not in L.A.," he says, but points out that technology is 10 to 15 years behind the U.S. "This is stunning, when you look at technology worldwide."

The differences don't end there. "It's a totally different way of life," he adds. "You are frowned upon for working 60 hours a week, and it's a far more relaxed lifestyle. There are no big-box stores in London; you have to go store to store. It harkens back to the old days."

For now, Scher and his wife, Ashley, who is also a financial planner at MASECO, are content with their career, lifestyle and the opportunity they have to give OU students a unique perspective on life and work across the pond. ■

By Dawn Pauli, CAS '88





School of Business Administration

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insight

upcoming events

March 10

Go Business! Day

Prospective students are invited to OU's SBA to learn about business careers, meet faculty, tour campus more. For information, contact: visit@oakland.edu

March 17, 9 a.m.

Executive MBA Information Session

<http://emba.oakland.edu>

more events

Check the SBA website at oakland.edu/sba for dates and details for these 2012 events.

Alice Conner Gorlin Memorial Lecture

A lecture series that promotes understanding of international issues and events

Ambassador Leonard Woodcock Legacy Seminar

A program that supports bilateral exchanges in education, business and industry, and research, with a goal of promoting mutual understanding between the United States and China.

Marketing Issues Forum

Providing business professionals, faculty and students with marketing insights and ideas.



support the SBA

The SBA offers many different ways alumni can help SBA students develop into professionals through its career development programs.

- If you would like to volunteer with students, contact Judy Martin at martin23@oakland.edu.
- If you are looking for an intern or if your company wants to hire a solid graduate with academic and presentation skills, contact Bobbie Badgley at badgley@oakland.edu.
- Consider making a gift to the business school. Help OU's SBA build a school that is advancing leadership in the business community with a gift that will transform lives. You can give online at www.sba.oakland.edu/give.