Evolve
Graduate programs transform careers

Explore
Faculty examine business trends

Emerge
Alumni lead transformations

ACCOMPLISH
Completion Scholarships help students finish strong
As a responsible global citizen, the School of Business Administration has rescheduled its 50th Golden Gala and Celebratory Brunch from spring 2020 to fall 2020. We look forward to celebrating with you then.

Join us as we commemorate the golden anniversary of the Oakland University School of Business Administration.

Presented by The Elliott Foundation

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2020
Royal Park Hotel
600 E. University Drive
Rochester, MI 48307

Join us as we commemorate the golden anniversary of the Oakland University School of Business Administration. We will honor the school's rich history and celebrate its vibrant future as we welcome you and your guests to a special evening.

Black tie Optional

Please RSVP at oakland.imodules.com/SBACelebrates50

$150 per person; $225 per couple

Celebratory Brunch

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2020
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Founders Ballroom, Oakland Center
on the campus of Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan 48309

All are welcome to join us for brunch as we continue to celebrate the OU School of Business Administration’s golden anniversary. Come share your experiences, connect with alumni and students and be part of our future.

Please RSVP at oakland.imodules.com/SBACelebrates50

$15 per person
In its first half century, the OU School of Business Administration evolved from a small business program to a nationally-recognized, internationally-accredited business school. I’m proud to say that thanks to the work of its expert faculty members, dedicated staff and the success of its graduates, the school has experienced tremendous growth in its reputation in the region as well as in the extended business, research and academic communities.

Our commitment to helping students excel and meet the challenges of tomorrow is one reason why our school and our graduates thrive in their chosen fields. Oakland business graduates launch highly successful, rewarding careers in a competitive global environment in corporations, non-profits, the community and in entrepreneurial ventures in Michigan and around the world.

The articles in this issue offer excellent examples of how our innovative programs influence the success of Oakland business students on their journey from classroom to career.

Michael A. Mazzeo, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor of Finance
Oakland School of Business Administration

GRADUATE BUSINESS CERTIFICATES
Boost your business acumen, refresh your skills and enhance your professional experience with a graduate business certificate. These 15-credit hour programs are ideal for working professionals seeking a fresh perspective or new skills. Learn concepts you can apply immediately while building a foundation for a strong future.

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STRENGTHEN YOUR SKILLS
TYLER TERPENING defines determination. Always preparing for the next challenge, Tyler is earning a Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics to complement his supply chain management experience in the U.S. Navy and excel as a supply chain analyst at General Motors.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

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Graduate certificate credits can be applied to select master’s degrees at Oakland University.

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ON THE COVER
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Matt Guarashio, ACC ’19, understood the value of a dollar before setting foot in an accounting classroom.

As a first-generation college student, he knew he would be paying for college himself. That is why Guarashio carefully evaluated every university that accepted him. After reviewing the merit scholarship package OU offered and studying the opportunities OU provides its students and alumni, the Clinton Township, Michigan, resident committed to a Golden Grizzly future.

Guarashio graduated — debt free — in December 2019, with a full-time offer to join PwC as an assurance associate this fall. As a student, he put his public accounting skills to work as an intern at PwC and his corporate accounting skills in a co-op position at DTE Energy.

Scholarships were pivotal to his success, he says, particularly the ones he received from the business school near graduation. Taking a semester off to complete his PwC internship pushed back his graduation date beyond four years. The scholarship package he received his freshman year had ended, so he scrambled to find and apply for more scholarships.

“When I started as a freshman, I had a Monday through Friday job. It was difficult balancing everything,” he says. He did not want to return to that schedule to fund his final term. While he had some money saved, he says, “I would have wiped me out.”

COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIP

Guarashio applied for and won a Crestmark Bank scholarship, which was established with the Oakland University business school in 2016 to mark the bank’s 20th anniversary and to assist students with financial need who are pursuing a career in business.

“I woke up my mom in the middle of the night when I learned I won it,” he says. “She was happy for me.”

This completion scholarship is one of many ways OU helped him succeed, Guarashio says. The additional financial support allowed him time to participate in Beta Alpha Psi (BAP), the honorary accounting fraternity, where he served as treasurer. In that role, he often worked with Donna Free, the faculty director of OU’s accounting program, whom he calls his most influential instructor at OU.

“Walter organized funding for our many activities,” Free says. “He is extremely reliable and accurate and will definitely make OU proud as an alum in the accounting profession.”

The scholarships opened many doors. Guarashio took advantage of the flexibility to enhance his business education with co- and extra-curricular experiences. In addition to BAP, he was involved in the Oakland Accounting Students Information Society (OASIS), Business Ambassador program and Leadership OU. As a Business Ambassador, Guarashio practiced his leadership skills leading workshops and representing the business school at student and alumni events.

“If I would have attended a different university, I don’t think I would have had all these opportunities,” he says.

By working campus and career-related jobs, living at home and securing scholarships, Guarashio fully appreciated the opportunities that helped him to graduate debt-free.
CROSSING THE FINISH LINE: SUPPORT FOR COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIPS PROVE CRITICAL

Today’s college students balance work, school and family commitments, and often bear the full financial responsibility in support of their education. Nationally, more than half the students who drop out of college cite problems juggling work and school. Another national study indicates that almost 15 percent of students who have completed 75 percent of their required courses leave college before earning their degree due to financial concerns.

“Too often, students exhaust their financial-aid allotment or run into financial burdens prior to completing their degree,” says Kristen Cometto, director of philanthropy, Oakland University School of Business Administration. “Completion scholarships provide critical support to students in achieving their goal of graduation.”

College completion scholarships offer just-in-time financial relief to help students cross the finish line to graduation. That is why the Oakland University School of Business Administration is focused on securing funding to create completion scholarships to provide aid to students who have completed at least 92 credits and require financial support to complete their coursework.

Thanks to the generous commitments from the following supporters who stepped forward to seed endowed scholarships, the OU business school is on its way to creating a path for business students to break through that final financial barrier to complete their degree.

Michael Hermanoff
Vice President, Hermanoff & Associates
and
Sandy Hermanoff
CEO and President, Hermanoff Public Relations

Touched by a fellow student’s own struggles to finish college, the Hermanoffs now provide a scholarship every year to a student at both Sandy’s (Ohio State) and Michael’s (University of Michigan) alma mater who cannot afford to finish their senior year. They extended that commitment to supporting completion scholarships through their contribution to the Oakland University Business Completion Scholarship Endowment, thus helping students closer to where they live and work to realize their dreams.

Mark Mendola, ACC ’86
Vice Chair and U.S. Managing Partner, PwC; Executive Member, OU School of Business Administration Board of Visitors

I have seen the benefits firsthand of individual’s contributions to the OU School of Business Administration and the impact it has on students to set them up on the path to success. I chose to support an annual School of Business Administration scholarship as it is important to assist students who are motivated to complete their business degree, but lack the financial support to do so. Knowing the value of an Oakland University business degree in the market, it is important that alumni help others so they can enjoy the same experience as we did.

Peggy Chiu
Computer Facilities Administrator, School of Business Administration, Oakland University

As a parent of two young adults, I learned that many of my children’s classmates and friends are not able to complete their college degrees due to financial hardship. Despite working various part-time jobs, securing student loans, and balancing study and family obligations, completing the degree without any scholarship assistance may force them to drop out of college. Only about 25 percent of Michigan adults ages 25 to 64 have some college education, but no degree. I support the Completion Scholarship Endowment so OU business students can achieve their goals.

George Corona, MBA ’85
Retired President and CEO, Kelly Services; Member, OU School of Business Administration Board of Visitors

I felt compelled to help OU business students achieve their goal to complete their education after learning the number of OU seniors in good academic standing who don’t finish their degrees due to financial hardship. I’m impressed by the work the Oakland University business school is doing to provide scholarships to assist these students.

For more information on completion scholarships and ways to support, please contact Kristen Cometto, director of philanthropy, at kcometto@oakland.edu or (248) 370-2121.
An emerging interest in the intricacies of data combined with a desire to expand her skill set propelled Michelle (Micki) Rhen to Oakland’s Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics.

An electronic filing manager and a settlement distribution analyst at a law firm, Rhen was already balancing a full load of professional and personal commitments when she began exploring ways to ensure her skill set remained current.

“We have taken on many different roles in the firm over the past years, my favorite roles have always involved data. Whether I am cleaning and analyzing data provided by other firms or writing complex queries to fill electronic claim filings, I am happiest when I am at the computer manipulating data,” says Rhen.

With law associates retiring and the firm downsizing, Rhen decided to focus on preparing for her next professional move instead of worrying about her long-term future. “It’s fun to commiserate with your 16-year-old about homework,” she says. Rhen was already balancing a full load of responsibilities before enrolling in Oakland’s Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics.

“Employees are looking for analysis, presentation, power Excel skills, VBA, R, Python and so much more,” says Rhen, who began the 15-credit business analytics graduate certificate program in 2018. “Oakland’s graduate certificate program delivers on the promise to expose you to what is hot in the market right now.”

As a working professional, Rhen found the OU business school graduate certificate program was the perfect way for her to expand into new areas and gain exposure to the current software and languages used in the industry. Taking one course at a time in the evenings, Rhen maintained her full-time career while balancing her commitments to her husband, two sons and nearby parents.

The quality of courses is exceptional, Rhen says, adding all her instructors have practical and applied experience and are passionate about the material they present.

“Some classes were pretty intense, especially (Associate Professor) Mark Isken’s Business Analytics, and Practical Computing for Data Analytics, but they were also my two favorite courses,” says Rhen, who waited until her eldest son, Jacob, graduated from high school before entering OU. By then, her younger son, Jackson, was in high school. As Rhen says now, “The faculty is always very flexible and proactively checking in with students,” Nykolayko says. Some held weekly phone-in times for lectures or open discussions so students can ask questions of the professor and each other. Students value this access to open communication with faculty. Discussions are not limited to traditional class times. Nykolayko notes. On the discussion boards and in group assignments, students contribute throughout the week, which makes it easy to stay up-to-date, she explains.

“I could study online at my own pace when I went home to Ukraine and when I visited Hawaii and Mexico.”

Taking full advantage of the flexibility, Nykolayko participated in online classes when she traveled for work and pleasure. “I could study online at my own pace when I want to learn something new,” she explains.

Starting the OU MBA program paid immediate dividends. “My manager saw the credits I earned in OU’s certificate program and decided that I had the experience and skills to advance into management in our finance department,” she says.

Whether working full time, traveling around the world or home with her family, Oakland University’s online MBA courses mean Iryna Nykolayko has not missed a beat in pursuit of her MBA. With access to the same accredited curriculum and quality faculty, Nykolayko discovered a way to balance the complex demands of school, work and life.

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Admission to the Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics is selective, and OU required Rhen to take a refresher statistics class. She appreciates the requirement, since statistics is the foundation of the program. She says she was initially concerned about how her skills would hold up among traditional-aged college students. “I found out I had nothing to worry about. I had so much fun collaborating with today’s college students and have learned that a shared passion for common interests fuels an exciting learning environment,” says Rhen, who plans to pursue a Masters in Science in Information Technology Management (MSITM) at OU after completing the certificate program. The credits she earned in OU’s certificate program will apply toward the OU MSITM degree.

“I can’t wait to see where the combination of the skill set that I have developed over the years, along with new tools to analyze and visualize data acquired through the business analytics certificate program, will take me next.”

Business Analytics Certificate FUELS NEW CAREER DIRECTION

By Alice Rhein

Taking Charge

An emerging interest in the intricacies of data combined with a desire to expand her skill set propelled Michelle (Micki) Rhen to Oakland’s Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics.

An electronic filing manager and a settlement distribution analyst at a law firm, Rhen was already balancing a full load of professional and personal commitments when she began exploring ways to ensure her skill set remained current.

“How can you have any graduate certificate without having the appropriate undergraduate background?” asks Rhen, who is working toward an Oakland University MBA, ready to leverage the lessons she learned in her undergraduate studies.

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With the online courses, Nykolayko could remain focused on her MBA while starting a family and working full time. “Then, after

ONLINE MBA OFFERS SOLUTION TO BALANCE SCHOOL, WORK, FAMILY

By Alice Rhein

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Lifelong learning is a proven factor for success. That’s a philosophy the father-son duo of Mark and Nick Gust embraced when they simultaneously enrolled in Oakland University’s Executive MBA (EMBA) program. Mark, founder and CEO of Industrial Automation, an Auburn Hills-based OEM, says the appeal of taking classes with his son was two-fold. “The essential part of Oakland’s Executive MBA is that it provides you with skills and knowledge you can put to work right away,” Mark says. Even though they are at different stages of their careers, both Gusts are leveraging their own work history and drawing on the unique knowledge base to further refine critical business capabilities while learning innovative leadership strategies. So much has changed since I began my career — not just the obvious ways such as computers and how the work was physically done — but in the concepts and methods that we learn in class and apply to our business,” says Mark.

Guest lectures by industry executives reinforce key learnings and highlight the relevancy of the curriculum. “The different perspectives and network of presenters builds upon what we learn in class through their expertise and insight,” Nick says.

The two of them decided to take this journey together,” Klei says. “A young, very sharp, highly motivated engineer with a very experienced business owner who will bring a tremendous amount of real world experiences, he adds, reinforcing the advantages for the Gusts and Oakland University’s Executive MBA program.

“The essential part of Oakland’s Executive MBA is that it provides you with skills and knowledge you can put to work right away.”
Mark Gust, Founder and CEO of Industrial Automation

Nick launched his career at Continental as an associate development engineer after graduating from the University of Michigan. Later, his father convinced him to join Industrial Automation where he now works as a program manager. His professional background combined with the advanced education he’s gaining through OU’s EMBA program is giving him a valuable vantage point while bringing business theories to life.

For Nick, the Executive MBA serves as a foundation to build his executive acumen and grow professionally across the experience threshold. With a focus on core business competencies and executive leadership, the Oakland University EMBA is enhancing Nick’s ability to keep moving forward with his career.

After seeing the immediate return on their investment, Mark has only accolades for the Oakland University Executive MBA program and is encouraging other members of the Industrial Automation staff to enroll. The program alternating weekend schedule, full service student support and OU’s central location rounds out the OU Executive MBA as the great choice for busy, full-time professionals.

ABOUT THE Executive MBA AT OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
Designed for working professionals in or aspiring to leadership roles, the Executive MBA at Oakland University boosts your career momentum while allowing you to maintain your work. With a laser focus on essential business concepts and global business competencies and executive leadership courses, the rigorous curriculum includes topical issues, C suite presentations and professional development components. The fully inclusive 21-month program meets on Friday afternoons and Saturdays on alternate weekends.

Learn more at oakland.edu/emba.

Father and son Mark and Nick Gust embrace a lifelong learning philosophy by enrolling in Oakland’s Executive MBA program together.

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Dropping in at an OU Career Services resume-writing workshop led by Northwestern Mutual recruiters set Jason Rousseau on a path where he is poised to launch his career as a financial representative with the company following graduation.

Northwestern Mutual is a key Oakland University employer-partner. It is one of many organizations that regularly sends recruiters to visit campus to connect with potential interns and future employees through meet and greets, career fairs and other activities. At events like the resume-writing workshop, professionals counsel students on careers, help them with their soft skills and create a talent pipeline for their organization.

At this Career Fair prep session, Rousseau met with Elio Kollcinaku, a Northwestern Mutual financial representative and a college unit director, who mentors the firm's interns. Kollcinaku happened to be filling in for an ill colleague at that particular session. The meeting turned out to be mutually beneficial.

“I never heard of Northwestern Mutual until that point,” says Rousseau, a senior. “My goal was to get an internship in personal finance, so as we were talking, I thought, ‘this is exactly what I’m looking for.’”

After Kollcinaku learned more about Rousseau’s background — including his previous internship at a marketing firm involving some door-to-door sales — he took the resume back to the office and did something he rarely does: he talked up Rousseau as being a solid prospect for Northwestern Mutual’s 2019 summer internship program.

“‘I knew right away he was a really good candidate and yes, it helped that he had a previous internship,’ says Kollcinaku, who became his mentor.

SIZZLING SUMMER OF SUCCESS
Rousseau was one of 46 interns from across the country that Northwestern Mutual’s Troy office hired that summer. Of all the interns, Rousseau is ranked in the top two for helping clients with their financial plans. Northwestern Mutual asked him to extend his internship for the entire year and has plans to offer him a full-time position after graduation, according to Sadie Grobbel, director of campus selection at Northwestern Mutual’s Troy office.

“He has been a tremendous asset to our intern team,” Grobbel says. “Other interns look to Rousseau as a leader, noticing his drive to excel, and that inspires them to do the same. He has a great vision for his future.”

The caliber of students like Rousseau and the welcoming atmosphere on campus are among the reasons Grobbel declares OU as her favorite community partner.

CEDING CONNECTIONS
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING LEADS TO BRIGHT FUTURE
(by Rene Wisely)

The close partnership between the OU School of Business Administration and Northwestern Mutual illustrates the mutually beneficial relationship. It also demonstrates the value Oakland business interns and employees deliver in return; and how the important relationships between Northwestern Mutual and the business school supports student success, notes Ian Caullay, director of employer relations, OU School of Business Career Services.

“For most students the ultimate goal is landing a good job upon graduation,” Caulley says. “The employer relationships allow students to gain career-related experience while figuring out if a particular path or company culture is the right fit for them.” Often these experiential learning opportunities open doors for future employment, like it did in Rousseau’s case.

Rousseau agrees. “Internships are good for finding out if you love the major you’re in and if you want a similar career,” says Rousseau, who changed his major three times.

Today, he’s completely confident he chose the right major thanks to his internship opportunities. He’s excited for his future and is grateful that OU opened doors to help him along his journey.

“I have an ability to make an impact on people’s lives and I’m ready to help them,” he says.
INVESTIGATING TECHNOLOGY INNOVATIONS IN ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING

By Liz Lent

Emerging technologies are transforming the way the world lives, plays and works. Learning to embrace technology’s transformative power is a must for organizations in every industry to succeed.

Robert Nehmer, Ph.D., professor of accounting and finance, has dedicated his research to examining the effects and applications of technology in accounting and auditing.

The technology revolutions in accounting and auditing are leading to less mechanical work for people in these areas and more creative work,” Dr. Nehmer says. “More and more of the work is about broad decisions that affect business direction, how to formulate those decisions, and the end process the data that supports those decision making models.

Dr. Nehmer holds a lifelong interest in technology, specifically computing machinery. Growing up, his family would often gift him with various types of mechanical calculators and abacuses. Even now, he has a DigiComp, a mechanical computer,” he says. “This was all before electronic calculators became available.

He cultivated that interest through college and graduate school, focusing his dissertation on translating the double entry bookkeeping system into an algebra and then into first order logic.

Two decades ago, Dr. Nehmer began considering how apps are freeing business professionals and small-business owners from mechanized work, allowing them to focus on growth and innovation instead.

The apps do the bookkeeping for you, classifying the transactions using business friendly words and concepts,” Dr. Nehmer says. “The small start up is freed from having to learn about accounting. It can go directly into business, yet still be able to confirm to all the regulations such as paying payroll and income tax.

On the auditing front, “we are seeing a revolution using technology for continuous auditing and monitoring, starting in internal auditing,” he says. “The audit process is undergoing a more engineering whereby the more structured parts of the audit are pulled out from the less structured parts. The structured processes are then automated leaving the humans to make the harder and more judgmental decisions in the audit. For the average corporation, these advances mean better, more precise controls for lower costs.

The role drones could play in the auditing process is another area that intrigues Dr. Nehmer. “Our main question has been to what extent would the current auditing standards inhibit the use of drones,” he says.

SEC audits, for example, have strict standards including requirements that auditors be physically present during inventory counting. We were interested in seeing where the current standards might impinge on drone use,” Dr. Nehmer says.

For instance, if the auditor has to observe something, could it be done through a camera mounted on a drone? Would the auditor have to be physically present? Would he or she have to be flying the drone? Dr. Nehmer and his colleagues conducted an extensive inventory of the affected audit standards, which “has helped the standard setters see what some of the issues are.

Blockchain has also piqued Dr. Nehmer’s curiosity. Also known as distributed ledger technologies, blockchain is used in Bitcoin. It allows immutable ledgers of information to be kept. Industry is finding cost effective uses for these technologies in areas requiring an ability to provide data provenance and in security. “We did a project about auditing blockchains … again emphasizing what the current standards are and how the standards make such audits easier or more difficult.

Expanding his academic research endeavors into real-world application enhances the richness Dr. Nehmer gains from his studies. “I see the results and feel that I can use my research efforts to help in several related business fields and industries,” he says.

“The technology revolutions in accounting and auditing are leading to less mechanical work for people in these areas and more creative work.”

Robert Nehmer, Ph.D.
Gregory Thrasher loves it when students tell him they haven’t yet settled on a career. “It’s great to have a variety of experiences — that’s how we find out what we like and what we love,” advises Dr. Thrasher, Ph.D., assistant professor in the School of Business Administration’s Department of Management and Marketing.


“Successful leaders, whether in business or politics, are all able to rally people,” he reflects. “We all carry unconscious biases about race, gender, age, education and job type. If we’re unaware of these biases, it can lead to ineffective decision making. Effective leaders are able to critically evaluate others, while leaving their assumptions at the door.”

Dr. Thrasher ensures his business students are practiced at analyzing today’s plethora of information from all angles, withholding personal notions, which reduces stereotyping of people and situations. Many of today’s college students are victims of stereotyping — as the so-called millennial generation, they are frequently saddled with the most selfish or narcissistic generation label. “Students in my classes participate in a semester-long data collection regarding their motivation levels,” explains Dr. Thrasher. “The results are always extremely different among them. This helps us understand why millennial or boomer labels are meaningless. We need to understand each individual as a whole person.”

This holistic, individualized approach ties into Dr. Thrasher’s recently published research paper on aging in the workplace: “Getting Old at the Top: The role of agentic and communal orientations in the relationship between age and follower perceptions of leadership behaviors and outcomes.”

“Researching aging at work is really about understanding diversity at work,” Dr. Thrasher explains. “It’s not about how to lead a young versus older person; it’s about developing leadership skills that allow you to understand the individual needs of each employee.”

Dr. Thrasher began investigating this topic as his father was retiring from a leadership position. “It opened my eyes to this hugely ignored topic as his father was retiring from a leadership position. Dr. Thrasher continues to push research efforts forward, enthusiastic about tackling tricky issues related to the psychology of leadership.

By Mary Gunderson-Switzer

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Dr. Thrasher began investigating this topic as his father was retiring from a leadership position. “It opened my eyes to this hugely ignored area of how leadership changes across the lifespan. We need to foster workplaces that understand lifespan development and how to keep workers motivated and healthy across all stages of life,” Dr. Thrasher says.

Dr. Thrasher’s aging-at-work research highlights the efficacy of using the more tailored approach, offering employees a reasonable amount of autonomy to craft their own work roles. For instance, in some cases, aging leaders may wish to participate in well-defined mentorship programs; in other cases, the preference may be to receive necessary updated skills training, to stay relevant, confident and respected by coworkers.

In a similar vein, Dr. Thrasher’s recently published “Eldercare and the Psychology of Work Behavior in the 21st Century” research brings to light the importance of a work-life balance for employees. The research focuses on employees who juggle a caregiver role with elderly parents and, sometimes, children still living at home.

“Work-life conflict can be very broad in nature,” says Dr. Thrasher. “Whether it’s eldercare, childcare or for physical and mental health reasons, people need to be trusted by their employers to balance their own work lives. While domain specific programs are great (i.e., paid leave for eldercare), programs such as flexi-work arrangements allow people to most effectively address their specific needs.”

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BUSINESS SCHOLARS PUSH BOUNDARIES TO MASTER PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

Building competence in business and professional skills leads to well-earned career confidence for Oakland Business Scholars. By collaborating with peers in dynamic team exercises, meeting with mentors and traveling to competitions, Business Scholars enhance their undergraduate business education with empowering experiences that prepare them for the future.

Piloted in 2007 as one of the business school’s first co-curricular experiential learning programs, Business Scholars focused on offering students a wide range of opportunities including leadership, academic, research and global. As the Business Scholars program deepened its focus on leadership development through real-world interactions, other components of the original concept were integrated into the curriculum or spun off as stand-alone programs.

As a founding member of OU Business Scholars, Chris Vaimossi FIN ’09, head of global treasury for automotive supplier, NAPA, reflects how his involvement in the business school’s experiential programs like Business Scholars, Beta Gamma Sigma and student organizations helped launch him into the business world.

He points to his OU business education and experiences as driving his success. “Answering questions on the fly when the dean is curious about a presentation is not that different than answering to the CFO or CEO in the boardroom,” he says. “All of my time at Oakland University gave me a good foundation that allowed me to get where I am at today.”

When Business Scholars relaunched in 2013, William Gross, FIN ’14, CEO and co-founder, 17th Street Advisors, was among the first to join, adding it to the suite of life-changing opportunities he took advantage of as a student. As a Business Scholar, Gross was matched with a local business executive mentor. "Having a mentor changed my life. It made me more focused, more driven. Business Scholars was very rigorous. As a sophomore, I was the youngest one there. We had to work on case studies, come up with solutions and then present our ideas to judges." Leadership development, case competitions, community service and mentor relationships are the components that help today’s Business Scholars master professional competencies and build a strong network.

OU Business Scholars put their knowledge, experience and skills to work in case competitions sponsored by local organizations. In the three-hour competitions, the Business Scholars work in small teams to examine the case, then develop and present a business plan to a panel of judges. Over the years, Business Scholars teams have represented OU at various national and international case competitions, often outperforming competitors from around the world.

“The case competitions strengthened my skills and the experience led me to be more of a critical thinker and strategic when making decisions,” says Lauren Lucia, finance major. “The impact Business Scholars has made on my business education is very positive and empowering.”

Judges are consistently impressed with the performance of the OU Business Scholars teams.

Business Scholars supporters and OU business alumni Michael and Susan Novak see the value the program brings to OU business students. “The Scholars program gives OU business students an opportunity to grow and develop their problem-solving and leadership skills as a team,” the Novak’s say. “These skills are more important than ever in today’s environment and we are happy to support the program.”

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OU Business Scholars are generously sponsored by: Oakland University Credit Union, Michael and Susan Novak, New World Diamonds, and many others.

The 2019-20 Oakland University Case Competitions are generously sponsored by: Oakland University Credit Union, Michael and Susan Novak, New World Diamonds, and many others.

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Alumni, friends and supporters help build the future of business by leaving a gift to OU’s School of Business Administration through their wills or trusts. A bequest is the simplest type of planned gift to make and one of the easiest to implement.

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BACK-TO-THE-FUTURE
CONCEPT SPURS
PRODUCT LIFECYCLE
REVOLUTION

By Mary Gunderson-Switzer

A world-renowned authority in PLM, MBA alumnus Michael Grieves, Ph.D., is also Research Professor and Chief Scientist for Florida Institute of Technology’s Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Innovative Design. For some, managing a Fortune 100 company’s mainframe operations in their early 20’s might be the pinnacle of their career. For Michael Grieves, it was just the beginning.

Attending Oakland University’s summer math camp as a high-school junior jump-started a career now replete with accomplishments for this alumnus, who graduated from OU’s charter MBA program in 1979.

“At camp, we learned to program Fortran on OU’s mainframe, which led to a path in the computer industry,” says Dr. Grieves, who also has a bachelor’s degree in computer engineering and a doctorate in executive management in business. “With that technical experience and later MBA equipping me with business tools, OU was instrumental in determining my future.”

Now research professor and chief scientist for Florida Institute of Technology’s Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Innovative Design, Dr. Grieves is a world-renowned authority in product lifecycle management (PLM). He writes and lectures extensively on the topic and is a frequent keynote speaker. He’s also a consultant for many leading international manufacturers and government organizations, including NASA.

PLM’s focus is in maintaining information about a product throughout its entire lifecycle – design-build-maintain-dispose – reducing time, energy and cost.

“Once engineers develop a product, they often don’t know what happens to it after that,” says Dr. Grieves. “PLM is a back-to-the-future approach, like in the days of the cobbler. Cobblers knew their customers well and were physically involved, working and reworking their product, while keeping precise records – keeping customers satisfied, while reducing waste [the cobbler’s time/energy/supplies].”

DOUBLING UP

Dr. Grieves first introduced the digital twin concept and model for designing, testing, manufacturing and supporting the product in the virtual world in 2002. Although virtual models have been around for decades, the digital twin required advancements in machine-to-machine communication and automation technologies. Technology has now caught up with the concept, allowing industries such as automotive, aerospace and healthcare to reap benefits.

A digital twin is a form and function model of the actual product, which incorporates its 3D geometry, mechanical properties, electrical and electronic systems and simulated performance data. The real-world product’s data interacts with simulated performance data.

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In terms of healthcare, extensive simulation work before actual patient care is another obvious, important benefit.”

In addition to the safety, cost and quality efficiencies, Dr. Grieves points to exciting possibilities in expanding the use of digital twins in intelligent design predictor mode.

“With the [2009] Air France Flight 447 crash, the pilots continued performing the same [incorrect] action over and over,” says Dr. Grieves. “With a digital twin to show what would happen 30 minutes later in flight, they might have been able to correct their course. Another area where predictors could have life-saving consequences is surgery.”

In collaboration with NASA Principal Technologist John Vickers, Dr. Grieves moves forward with research as executive director of the Digital Twin Institute – but he still looks back.

He remains invested in the university that provided his first computer-related opportunity and the business principles to last a lifetime. Dr. Grieves serves as Chairman Emeritus of OU’s School of Business Board of Visitors. He and his wife, Diane (MGT ’83), support a computer science scholarship.

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“I realized early on I wanted to use virtually to do valuable things,” he reflects.

Mission accomplished – and continued. 
The Princeton Review tallied its lists for 2020 based on data from the company’s surveys of more than 26,700 students enrolled in MBA programs at 358 schools, and of administrators at those schools.

“We commend these schools for their outstanding MBA programs, each of which has stellar academic offerings as well as on-campus and off-campus experiential components,” says Rob Franek, The Princeton Review’s editor in chief. “We compile many categories of ranking lists rather than a single, hierarchical list because our goal is to help applicants identify, gain admission to, and succeed at the business schools best for them.”

“National recognition of our programs reinforces the high-quality education OU business students gain from expert faculty and top-notch curriculum. Our program integrates theory, research and experience with solid academic preparation and practical skills that help our students launch successful careers,” says Michael A. Mazzea, dean and professor of Finance at Oakland’s School of Business Administration.

**BUSINESS SCHOLARS COMPETE**

Working in small teams, Business Scholars developed business plans, recommendations and presentations to deliver to a panel of judges in a short time. In its first live case competition of the academic year, the “Pokey Business” team took first place for its thorough analysis to increase return on advertising spending for competition sponsor New World Diamonds. In the second competition, Scholar teams focused on change management where the top team — “Business As Usual” — addressed falling morale and high employee turnover with a mission-based solution. The Scholars program is also sponsored by Michael and Susan Novak and the OU Credit Union.

**EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP**

OU President Ora Pescovitz, MD, headlined the first Executive Lecture Series for Executive MBA students and alumni this academic year. In her remarks, Dr. Pescovitz focused on leadership team development and innovative approaches to problem-solving. This lecture series connects the EMBA program’s innovative curriculum to real-world business challenges through the experience of established business leaders.

**STUDENT NEWS**

The OU Board of Trustees elected Robert Hall, professor, to the rank of Distinguished Professor, the highest faculty honor at the OU Business School.

The appointment recognizes Dr. Sugumaran’s strong belief in education of the entire person and his dedication to preparing Oakland business students for successful careers.

The nomination highlights his vast and scholarly contributions, commitment to student engagement in and out of the classroom, and his exceptional professional service at the national and international level.

**BUSINESS PROFESSOR APPOINTED DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR**

Vijayan Sugumaran, Ph.D., department chair, decision-information systems, and MIS professor, was appointed to the rank of Distinguished Professor by the OU Board of Trustees. Appointments to Distinguished Professorships are based on the candidate’s efforts and accomplishments in the areas of teaching, scholarly contributions and service.

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**BUSINESS NEWS**

**PRINCETON REVIEW RECOGNIZES OU MBA PROGRAM AMONG BEST**

The Oakland University MBA program is among the nation’s best, according to The Princeton Review. For the fifth year in a row, The Princeton Review has featured the OU Business School on its highly regarded Best Business Schools list.

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OU Business Scholars Luis Hernandez-Colin, Jennifer Forcagiu, Lauren Lucia and Kenzie Weingartz proudly represented the School of Business at the prestigious Business Strategy Challenge at Georgetown University’s McDonough School of Business. The OU Scholars competed against student teams from all over the world in a weeklong competition to provide and propose strategic solutions for the global nonprofit CARE.

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experts in automotive, finance, healthcare and defense. Hear the latest trends, best practices, and opportunities to collaborate with leading faculty researchers at Oakland University.

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