

# Pitt Business

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH | FALL 2023



**INSPIRING WOMEN**  
MAKING A DIFFERENCE





#### On the Cover

Four Pitt Business women who are making the world a better place: (left to right) Ngozichukwu Ibe, MBA/MHA student; Bibiana “Bibie” Boerio (MBA ’76) current Board of Visitors chair; Josephine Olson, professor emeritus and major donor; Esme Stasa (BSBA ’23), business consultant at EY.

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

-GENE ANDERSON-

During the past year, the Pitt Business community came together to develop *Pitt Business 2030*, the ambitious plan that will guide our community to new heights of impact, quality, and reputation.

This new strategic roadmap emerged from a systematic program of conversations and meetings with faculty, staff, students, alumni, recruiters, board members, and University administrators. Together, we developed a new shared strategic orientation, widely agreed upon goals, and high-impact initiatives for achieving them.

At the heart of our new vision is the imperative of inspiring the next generation of business graduates — preparing today’s students to shape a better future and rise to the challenges of an ever-changing world. Many of the dominant forces affecting business today, including rapid technological advancement, social polarization, and climate change, are ongoing issues that tomorrow’s business leaders will also need to grapple with and address. The research and insights that we generate now, the curriculum that we teach today, and the work we do with industry and other disciplines, will help to better prepare our graduates, the organizations for which they will work, and the communities in which they will live for what lies ahead.

In this edition of the magazine, you will read about the five pillars of our new strategic plan — Reimagine Programs, Engage Pittsburgh, Research with Impact, Business for All, and One Pitt Business. We also introduce the school’s new academic leadership team, which has been reconfigured to align with and support the goals of *Pitt Business 2030*.

Our new strategic plan builds on our community’s remarkable trajectory and the many outstanding contributions of Pitt Business alumni, students, faculty, and staff. Our cover story highlights the achievements and lasting impact of four influential Pitt Business women — Bibiana Boerio, Ngozichukwu Ibe, Josephine Olson, and Esme Stasa.

We celebrate the accomplishments of our 2023 Alumni Association Award honorees, faculty researchers, and students like Alex Firestine (BSBA ’23) — the University’s first-ever recipient of the prestigious George J. Mitchell Scholarship. We recognize the leadership of staff members Jodi Weisfield, Amy McCloskey, and Outstanding Career Achievement honoree Lisa Cherok.

I also want to say thank you to my predecessor Arjang Assad, who achieved tremendous success as dean from July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2022, and has now retired from the faculty. We also pay tribute to H.J. “Jerry” Zoffer, who passed away on July 22, one day before his 93rd birthday. Under Dean Zoffer’s remarkable leadership from 1968 to 1996, the school advanced dramatically in terms of quality, impact, and reputation, establishing itself as one of the world’s leading business schools.

Our highest aspiration is to prepare future business leaders to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. We cannot do so alone. We need support from alumni, parents, and partners around the world. Just as important as financial support are gifts of time and talent — helping to recruit promising students, speaking to classes, acting as a mentor, advising on curriculum, hiring students as interns and more. I invite and encourage you to renew your commitment to Pitt Business, to the impact it had on you, and to the impact it will have on the leaders of tomorrow.





## WELCOME, CHANCELLOR GABEL

This summer, the Pitt community welcomed Joan T.A. Gabel as the 19th chancellor and the first woman to lead the University since its founding in 1787. She joined Pitt after serving as president and chief executive of the University of Minnesota System and Twin Cities campus for four years and overseeing its first comprehensive strategic plan that resulted in record-setting graduation rates and research funding.

“I am excited and filled with optimism when I think of leading Pitt into its important next chapter — to taking leaps when needed, and incremental steps as necessary, to ensure that every step we take, however large or small, moves us forward,” says Gabel.

Prior to leading Minnesota, Gabel served as provost at the University of South Carolina from 2015 to 2019 and was dean of the University of Missouri’s College of Business from 2010 to 2015.



## INTERIM PROVOST NAMED

One of Chancellor Gabel’s first initiatives is the national search for a provost. Effective July 1, Joseph McCarthy started as interim provost. He has been a Pitt faculty member since 1998, served as vice provost for undergraduate studies since 2017, and temporarily added the role of interim dean of the David C. Frederick Honors College in 2021.

## PITT BUSINESS 2030: LEADERSHIP ROLES

To harness the full potential of *Pitt Business 2030*, the school’s academic leadership team has been expanded and reconfigured to support our new strategic plan’s ambitious goals. Faculty members who have been appointed by Dean Anderson to these new leadership positions include:



### JEFF INMAN

**Senior Associate Dean for Research and Faculty:** Leadership for the school’s core research mission, including strengthening research support, broadening sources of research funding, and continued growth in scholarly output and impact.



### SARA MOELLER

**Senior Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning:** Strategic leadership for the school’s educational portfolio, including aligning offerings with market needs and the school’s new mission, fostering innovation in teaching and learning modalities, and advancing educational partnerships across campus.



### BECKY BADAWY

**Associate Dean for MBA and Specialty Masters:** Student-facing leadership for full-time MBA and MS programs, and the Part-Time MBA program, working closely with students, staff, and faculty to maximize the educational experience, professional development opportunities, and career services support.



### DEB GOOD

**Associate Dean for Undergraduate Business Education:** Student-facing leadership for our undergraduate offerings, including further enhancement of the quality and reputation of the business major, and new initiatives targeted at non-business majors.



### PAUL HARPER

**Associate Dean for Inclusion, Engagement, and International Affairs:** Leadership for the school’s initiatives aimed at fostering an academic community that is welcoming to all, community engagement that increases our impact and supports student learning, and leveraging global opportunities that align with the strategic priorities of *Pitt Business 2030*.



### VANITHA SWAMINATHAN

**Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives:** Leadership for new initiatives that cut across our core missions of education and research, including enhancing brand identity and awareness, strengthening educational and research partnerships with industry, and fostering areas of distinctive and aspirational excellence.



### SHARON ALVAREZ AND NARAYAN RAMASUBBU

**Dean’s Faculty Fellows:** Collaborating with the Dean and Associate Deans on key *Pitt Business 2030* initiatives, Sharon is focusing on issues related to faculty development and Narayan is helping to develop new digital education strategies.



# SHAPING A BETTER FUTURE

## Pitt Business 2030: A New Strategic Roadmap

**A**cross all sectors and geographies, businesses are innovating or being disrupted by rapid change. Business schools need to keep pace and equip students to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

“Pitt Business is well-positioned. We have world-class faculty, a strong portfolio of innovative programs, and rich opportunities to partner with industry and other disciplines,” says Gene Anderson, Henry E. Haller Jr. Dean. “By drawing on these strengths, we can advance our position as a leader in business education and research.”

*Pitt Business 2030* is our roadmap for igniting growth, inspiring innovation, and empowering tomorrow’s leaders to shape a better future through the power of business. Bibiana Boerio (MBA ’76), chair of the Board of Visitors, comprised of business leaders who serve as an advisory committee to the school, says the process of developing *Pitt Business 2030* was “a great opportunity to discuss the complexities and state of higher education today — as well as our strengths and weaknesses.”

The retired Ford Motor Company executive whose role included strategic planning (see her profile on page 20), adds: “This plan helps all of us to focus on what we’re going to do — and what we’re not going to do. This also helps to align people to know the school’s future and where everyone of us fits in.”

## FIVE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

The guiding principles of *Pitt Business 2030* are captured in the school’s new purpose, mission, and vision statements (see inset). In addition, the plan identifies three areas in which we will cultivate distinctive excellence or *Paths to Distinction* — the business of healthcare and the life sciences, the digital transformation of business, and business and societal impact.

The heart of the new plan is the pursuit of five strategic commitments:

**Reimagine Programs:** Ensure each offering prepares students to meet tomorrow’s challenges, appropriately leverages the *Paths to Distinction*, and fulfills a strategic role.

**Engage Pittsburgh:** Pursue mutually beneficial partnerships at home and abroad — especially those that advance and support the three *Paths to Distinction*.

**Research with Impact:** Strengthen our research faculty, increase the impact of our research, and diversify sources of research funding.

**Business for All:** Foster an academic community that’s welcoming to all and maximizes the Pitt Business experience for each of its members.

**One Pitt Business:** Advance a unified and distinctive brand identity, communicate impactfully to all constituencies, and pursue all activities with a One Pitt Business mindset.

## OUR VISION STATEMENT:

### Purpose

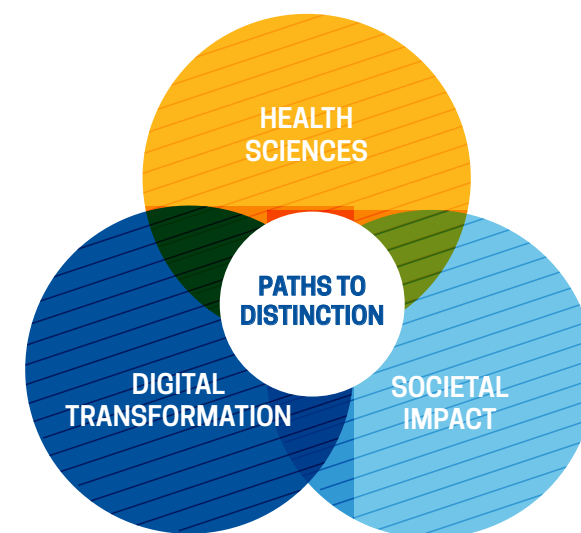
We prepare and inspire leaders to shape a better future through business

### Mission

To advance a prosperous, just, and sustainable future through business education, scholarship, and service

### Vision

To be a pre-eminent business school recognized for developing leaders and scholars who advance a better future for individuals, organizations, and the common good



## DELIVER WORLD-CLASS KNOWLEDGE

Business Alumni Association President Matthew Stahl (MBA ’11) says the plan represents a shift in how Pitt Business delivers its educational offerings to meet ever-changing student needs.

“In the short term, the plan will enable our school to right size the offerings and deliver world-class knowledge in a nimble fashion,” says Stahl, a vice president in PNC Bank’s digital product management division. “In the long term, it will position us to attract and develop a top tier diverse student base ready to conquer the world!”

For more details about *Pitt Business 2030*, including descriptions of the *Paths to Distinction*, visit:





# A LIGHTHOUSE FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE

Fostering a connection to shape a better future

**A**frica is not only the cradle of civilization but is rapidly emerging as the epicenter of innovation and urbanization. The continent will be home to 25 percent of the world's population by 2050, with the youngest population globally and huge impacts on geopolitics, global trade, and migration.

The Africa Business Initiative, announced in April 2023 as part of the *Pitt Embraces Africa* effort, will provide new ways for the Pitt Business community to connect with the world's second-largest continent through partnerships, fellowships, and global exchanges.

"The purpose of Pitt Business is to empower leaders to shape a better future through business," said Gene Anderson, Henry E. Haller Jr. Dean.

"This initiative creates transformational learning opportunities for our students and staff along with high-impact research opportunities for faculty as we engage and learn from partners in Africa."

Hillary Koller Miller, Paul Harper, Rabbi Gideon Pogrand, and Bill McShane on Constitution Hill in Johannesburg

## GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT WITH IMPACT

Paul Harper, clinical assistant professor of Business Administration who is leading this initiative, describes it as "a lighthouse that directs and attracts business professionals and organizations working toward a more just global society."

Activities that are currently under development include:

- **New institutional partnerships** with prominent South African research universities and business schools.
- **International faculty research collaborations**, with a particular emphasis on business ethics, social innovation, entrepreneurship, and organizational transformation.
- **Unique global experience opportunities** for professional students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- **African Executive/Entrepreneur in Residence program** with an emphasis on women's leadership.

## UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

Supporters of the Africa Business Initiative are excited about its potential benefits.

"Africa has vast untapped potentials, from its teeming young population to opportunities for technological innovation leapfrog, but it is a geographical expression with diverse and sometimes complex idiosyncrasies — values, culture, behavior, and other intangibles — that are easier understood through collaboration with and input from experienced players or networks," says Adeola Adetunji (MBA '93), managing director of Coca-Cola Nigeria Limited.

Prof. Charlene Lew, director of internationalization, Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), University of Pretoria, South Africa says, "Our partnership with the Africa Business Initiative and Pitt Business rightly supports GIBS' mission to build responsible performance on the continent. Already we have experienced practical and impactful ways in which the partnership develops capabilities

and thought leadership in support of social justice."

## DR. ORR'S INSPIRATIONAL VISIT

From May 1 to 6, 2023, the Pitt community was inspired by Wendy Orr, MD, the powerhouse leader in human rights who shared her experiences as the inaugural

*"Africa has vast untapped potentials, from its teeming young population to opportunities for technological innovation leapfrog..."*

Executive-in-Residence for the Africa Business Initiative.

Dr. Orr met with various Pitt schools and departments, sharing her two decades of experience in transformation, organizational culture, and diversity work. Of note, she served as a commissioner on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whose purpose was to promote national unity after the fall of the apartheid regime.

Most recently, she was the head of Group Inclusion for the Standard Bank Group, South Africa.

"My visit to Pitt was an opportunity to engage

with faculty, staff and students about a range of issues, including the South African transformation, human rights, professional ethics, and diversity, equity, and inclusion," says Dr. Orr. "I was reminded of how important it is to connect academic institutions across borders and

geographies, because the conversations are so much richer when these diverse perspectives are brought to the table."

To learn more about the Africa Business Initiative, contact Harper at pth6@pitt.edu or visit our website.



## AFRICA: CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION

- World's largest free trade area
- Home to 25% of the world's population by 2050
- Youngest population globally
- Huge impacts on geopolitics, global trade, and migration



West Africa, Nigeria



# WILL AI BECOME A STUDENT'S BEST FRIEND?

Faculty Discuss AI in the Classroom

**P**itt Business strives to be ahead of the curve and embrace new challenges — and navigating the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the classroom is no exception. With the emergence of AI poised to revolutionize how we learn and work, some faculty members have welcomed this modern technology and are already integrating it into their courses, while others are more cautious.

## EMBRACING AI

Clinical Professor of Business Administration Ray Jones is encouraging his students to engage with ChatGPT, an AI chatbot, as a

brainstorming tool to enhance their learning and thinking while working on assignments. He describes AI as a “smart computer friend” or an “assistant for critical thinking.”

When asked about implementing AI into the classroom, Jones says, “It’s easy to

**“AI applications are expected to transform businesses in the next decade...”**

look at the drawbacks of something so new but we need to embrace the future and not be afraid of it.”

Assistant Professor of Business Administration M. Zia Hydari has been incorporating AI into his coursework for the last several years.

“AI applications are expected to transform businesses in the next decade, driven by entrepreneurs and managers who understand both the market needs and the AI technology,” says Hydari. “This combination of business acumen and AI proficiency is likely to be highly valued in the job market. At Pitt Business, we prepare our students for this future by incorporating courses that require AI-driven projects to solve business problems.”

## A CAUTIOUS APPROACH

For other faculty members, integrating AI into the curriculum may not be so simple.

Clinical Associate Professor of Business Administration Heidi Bartholomew is strategizing on the best way to use this tool given the nature of her case assignments. “The real learning in a case-based course is the debrief that we do together in the classroom. But, if the assignment can be completed using AI now,

then I fear the debriefing process — and the real learning — will be lessened,” Bartholomew says. She intends to give a quiz on the day of a case debrief to ensure the students have done the assignment, then allow them to use AI during the debrief to expand their thinking and augment their learning.

The University, meanwhile, has resources for all faculty and a provost-commissioned committee studying AI before any official policies are established.

As AI continues to progress, Pitt Business is forging ahead to equip our students with the skills needed to excel in tomorrow’s workplace.

Follow the Pitt Business social channels (see back cover) to stay up to date on this and other evolving business topics.



BARTHOLOMEW



JONES



## RESEARCHERS CONNECT COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES



### MICHAEL HAMILTON

Assistant Professor of Business  
Administration, Business Analytics  
and Operations

**Key Findings:** Motivated by the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black-owned businesses, the research team began working with community organizations to try to identify ways the students could support Black-owned businesses in the Pittsburgh area. By surveying both sides of the market (college students and local Black-owned businesses), researchers identified that, while they wanted to be connected, each side of the market lacked knowledge about the other. They designed and implemented an online platform, 412Connect, to connect Pittsburgh students and local Black-owned businesses.

**Recommendation:** The site encourages students to learn more about businesses by answering trivia questions about them and following them on social media. The research team incentivized this engagement via the use of badges. Thresholds for when to award badges are determined by a novel badge model, and the order in which businesses are presented to students is decided by a policy that promotes equity across impressions while allowing for testing of the impact of consumer preferences for business type in an online for-good setting.



**Researchers:** Michael Hamilton; Alex DiChristofano, PhD student in Computational & Data Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis; Sera Linardi, Associate Professor of Economics at Pitt's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA); Mara F. McCloud, graduate of GSPIA; Ivy Chang, undergraduate in the College of Business Administration and Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences.

**Methodology:** Pittsburgh Black business owners and Pitt undergraduate and graduate students were surveyed during the winter of 2020–21 in conjunction with discussions with community partners.

**Additional Details:** This research won the New Horizons Award at the 2021 Association for Computing Machinery Conference on Equity and Access in Algorithms, Mechanisms, and Optimization.

**Recommendation:** Businesses should conceal a customer's profile photo from customer service employees to minimize discriminatory practices.

**Researchers:** Priyanga Gunarathne; Avi Seidman, Professor of Information Systems at the Questrom School of Business, Boston University; and Huaxia Rui, Xerox Professor of Computers and Information Systems at the University of Rochester.

**Methodology:** A variety of analytics techniques, including text mining and facial recognition, were used on 57,000 social media customer complaints to major U.S. airlines in 2014 and 2015.



For more cutting-edge  
faculty research:



## RACIAL BIAS IN CUSTOMER SERVICE ON TWITTER (NOW X)



### PRIYANGA GUNARATHNE

Assistant Professor of Business  
Administration, Information Systems  
and Technology Management

**Key Findings:** This paper provides the first large-scale evidence of business-to-customer racial bias (B2C bias) on a digital platform, on which the perpetrators are individual employees who act on behalf of a company and the victims are customers. The authors found that African American customers are 12 percent less likely than similar white customers to receive a response from airline representatives when they complain on social media. The researchers did not find any differences in the airlines' responsiveness to Asian or Hispanic customers when compared with similar white customers.

## NEW FACULTY HIRES

The hiring of new faculty for Fall 2023 strengthens the student experience along with current and new research tracks:



### Taha Ahsin – Assistant Professor in Finance

Background: PhD in Finance, Duke University, Fuqua School of Business; previously Senior Research Assistant in the Consumer Finance Section at the Federal Reserve Board

Email: [taa183@pitt.edu](mailto:taa183@pitt.edu)



### Xiaomeng Chen – Assistant Professor in ISTM

Background: PhD in Applied Economics and Management from Cornell University, SC Johnson College of Business

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### Adrian Lam – Clinical Assistant Professor in Finance

Background: Previously taught at the University of Amsterdam

Email: [adl140@pitt.edu](mailto:adl140@pitt.edu)



### Brad Messner – Clinical Assistant Professor in ISTM

Background: Previously taught at Seton Hill University, where he was Department Coordinator for Computer Science and Information Systems

Email: [brad.messner@pitt.edu](mailto:brad.messner@pitt.edu)



### Mark Haney – Clinical Associate Professor in BAO (expected start Spring 2024)

Background: Previously taught at Chatham University

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## FACULTY RETIREMENTS

### Arjang A. Assad, Professor of Business Analytics & Operations and Dean Emeritus 8 years of service

Arjang Assad assumed the role as the seventh dean in July 2015, retiring in June 2022. He positioned the school for continued growth and success through the development of a comprehensive strategic plan, as well as expanded experience-based learning opportunities that have become a hallmark and point of distinction for the school at both graduate and undergraduate levels.



### George M. (Bud) Smith, Clinical Associate Professor of Business Administration 23 years of service

Bud Smith joined Pitt in 2000 after a successful period of working in management and consulting roles for local, global, and national companies. Over two decades ago, Smith founded Consulting Field Projects, which teaches management consulting as a problem-solving framework, allowing students to apply analytical tools and concepts to real-world problems.





# CELEBRATING THE FIRST YEAR OF THE EXECUTIVE DBA PROGRAM

## Program Earns Praise from Students

**T**ime saving. Thought provoking. Tailored to your company. These are among the takeaways from the 22 students in the new Executive Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program. Some also advanced to new, expanded roles while pursuing this degree.

The DBA program, now in its second year, offers immersive experiences and courses to help experienced professionals develop analytical and leadership skills, which are in demand now more than ever. The following are comments from professionals who experienced the program's flexible format, diverse group of classmates, and real-time impact on their current jobs:

**Q. What's the benefit of the "Hyflex" format — the ability to take courses part-time in person, online, or any combination of the two?**

**Travis Roache**, digital product manager, PPG Industries: "It's great for me because it saves time. Instead of commuting, I can use that time to either finish the workday, get a quick workout before class, or spend that time with my family."

**Q. How does the cohort of students from various fields add value?**

**Alicia Vuittonet**, co-founder, Mantoupia: "I really appreciated my cohort. I have been honored to learn alongside the incredibly intelligent and hardworking people who have been so helpful to me. They have provided insights on certain business issues I was faced with."



ROACHE



VUITTONET



MANSON



CHMIEL



WEISS

**Q. How has the faculty supported you?**

**Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Weiss**, U.S. Army: "The faculty have been excellent. Not only are they as knowledgeable as you would expect but they have also made themselves readily available to meet, answer questions or discuss practical applications of what we are learning."

**Kerr Manson**, managing partner, Breakout Growth Partners: "I found the faculty to be highly engaging. They are all leaders in their fields, the teaching is thought-provoking, and they really encourage you to learn more and to dig into the topics that they cover in the classroom."

**Q. How does the program support your current work responsibilities?**

**Alan Chmiel**, director of engineering, R. W. Beckett: "It's not the same as a PhD. It's more practicum, less academic. I am learning how to do research to advance our market and our space. Every professor lets you do the research that is tailored to your company. I can research the carbon impact of fuel versus the economic model of fuel for class, and it also has direct applicability to my position."

### LEARN MORE

Get details about the program and monthly information sessions:



# TRAVELING TO THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE

**I**magine your job involves transforming an entire behavioral healthcare system. What advanced degree would help you excel now and in the future?

For Jennifer Joyce, (MSW '10, EMBA in Healthcare '20), the answer was Pitt's Executive MBA in Healthcare.

"I was considering a master of public health or a Ph.D. program," says Joyce. "I didn't know an MBA program so tailored to healthcare professionals existed. I joined the cohort a few months after learning about the program."

Part of Joyce's job, as the behavioral health coordinator for the District of Columbia's Department of Healthcare Finance, includes wrestling with complex issues such as increasing access and improving outcomes while simultaneously reducing the cost of healthcare.

### TAKING AMTRAK TO CLASS

The structure of the Executive MBA in Healthcare — online coursework blended with in-person sessions held one weekend per month — made it easy for Joyce, who lives in Washington, D.C., to attend class. Sometimes she would take the Amtrak train to Pittsburgh and use that time to do homework. Other times, she drove.

"If you are a career-driven person and you are passionate about what you do for a living, the class weekend is like a work vacation," she says. "It was like a retreat to be in the room with great minds who are trying to solve the same problems you are trying to solve."

### COHORT SHARES EXPERTISE

Not only did Joyce take a different mode of transportation to class, but she also had different professional experiences from the others in her cohort.

A variety of clinicians and healthcare administrators — nurse practitioners, surgeons, healthcare supply chain management professionals, health insurance executives, physical therapists, etc. — enroll in this program.

However, in Joyce's cohort, there were only two social workers.



JOYCE

care system. Thanks to her cohort, she now has insights into the patient and provider experiences to take into consideration.

### HEALTHCARE INNOVATION

Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C., are separated by less than 250 miles, yet Joyce feels they are worlds apart in their healthcare systems.

"Many of the doctors and nurses who were in my cohort are working on the forefront of innovation," says Joyce. "It was almost like I was traveling to the healthcare of the future for one weekend a month and learning from them."

In her day-to-day work, she frequently taps into what she learned in the courses like healthcare law, policy, and strategy. She credits the program for teaching her the language of business and for giving her practical insights into how some proposed reforms and innovations might work.

Scan to learn more about the Executive MBA in Healthcare:



**"It was like a retreat to be in the room with great minds who are trying to solve the same problems you are trying to solve."**

"Sometimes people outside of the behavioral health world do not realize licensed social workers are actually top-level clinicians for practice environments," she says. "My cohort learned social workers have a lot of training, education, and understanding of society-level dynamics."

Joyce is currently working through the policy and operational considerations of moving Medicaid in the District of Columbia to a more integrated and coordinated managed



# KEEPING SCHOOL TIES ALIVE



**Q: Can you briefly describe your role?**

**Amy McCloskey (SHRS '95 & GSPIA '18):** As director of alumni relations for all of Pitt Business, I work to cultivate and maintain targeted and meaningful personal relationships with our Pitt Business alumni.

**Jodi Weisfield (MBA '00):** As executive director of development for all of Pitt Business, I lead a team responsible for raising funds and engaging alumni to advance the philanthropic priorities of the business school.

**Q: What is the most rewarding part of your job?**

**AM:** Meeting our Pitt Business alumni locally and throughout the world to learn about the successes and impacts they are creating in society and then connecting them to Pitt Business students and fellow alumni.

**JW:** We have incredibly interesting alumni and friends who have gone on to have unbelievable careers. The most rewarding part of my job is getting to know them, hearing their Pitt story, learning what they have done with their lives and careers since graduating, and talking about how they can get involved both personally and philanthropically to benefit the school and our students. I get to meet some extremely interesting, creative, bright, and kind people who are passionate about Pitt.

**Q: What's your favorite Pitt memory?**

**AM:** Too many to list but off the top of mind is Big East Tournaments, Uncle Sam's sandwiches, and football tailgating.

**JW:** This is a hard question because I have so many. Probably my favorite was when I was a student at Katz in the full-time MBA program in 1999-2000. I took an international research course and got to travel to Prague and Bratislava with my classmates, including five of my closest friends.

I had never been to Europe before, and the experience was life changing. Katz had a relationship with a sister-MBA program in Bratislava and we did a two-day long case competition where there were teams of Katz students paired with students from the university in Bratislava. I was there only about 10 years after the fall of Communism so hearing these students talk about their lives and business was eye-opening.

**Q: Can you share a fun fact about yourself?**

**JW:** I was a piano performance major at Indiana University, Bloomington for my undergraduate degree. I came to Katz because I wanted to go into orchestra management (and spent almost 20 years with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra prior to coming back to Pitt). I was probably one of the few piano performance majors ever to get my MBA at Katz!

**Q: How would you encourage alumni to get involved with Pitt Business?**

**AM:** Reach out to me directly or complete our Alumni Engagement form. We have something for every interest and passion!

**JW:** There are so many ways for alumni to get involved! We are always looking for opportunities for alumni to mentor students, be a guest speaker in the classroom, speak to student clubs, serve as judges for competitions, connect students with possible internships or employment opportunities, and, finally support the school philanthropically.

Scan here to see when alumni events will be in your area!



Be on the lookout for alumni events near you! Here are places where the Pitt Business community came together in 2022-23.



Get to know Amy McCloskey and Jodi Weisfield



# SHATTERING THE GLASS CEILING

Pitt Business Women in the Finance Industry

**F**inance is long known to be a male-dominated field with women comprising less than half of the industry, but Pitt Business women in finance are set to break the glass ceiling in their careers. Our students are equally prepared to overcome obstacles and succeed in their roles through real-world learning opportunities as well as experiences in the classroom and in leadership organizations.

## THE FUTURE OF FINANCE IS FEMALE

Three of the four undergraduate finance clubs at Pitt Business are currently led by women, one being Smart Woman Securities (SWS), a female-focused investment portfolio that trades real funds and educates members on relevant finance topics. The Pitt chapter of this national organization was established during the 2018-19 academic year, after an extensive application process that required over 120 pages of documentation on why Pitt should join the list of elite universities with an SWS chapter.

Lauren McNichol (BSBA '23), now a full-time sales & trading analyst in the Institutional Equities Group for Citi, formerly led SWS as both chief development officer and chief



McNichol

executive officer. In these roles, McNichol implemented a new Seminar Series curriculum for members of the organization. "I decided to run for CEO because I strongly believed that the baseline curriculum could be improved," she says. "I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to spread knowledge and ensure a new generation of financial literacy."

Like McNichol, other members of Pitt's SWS chapter are able to apply what they have learned from the organization to their current or future careers in finance. In fact, 100 percent of SWS members are employed at or accepted to their first destination within six months after graduation.

## A LEADING LEGACY

Members of SWS have been influenced and inspired by Executive-in-Residence (EIR) Kathleen Foody-Malus. Foody-Malus (MBA '83) is a retired senior executive with over 30 years of diversified investment experience in the financial services industry. She serves as an advisor for SWS and two other undergraduate finance organizations.

Foody-Malus is highly praised as an inspiration and mentor to women seeking a role in finance. As a female in the finance industry when it was still relatively uncommon, Foody-Malus made it her mission to "send



Foody-Malus

the ladder down" for women to get into the field and feel more confident working in finance and investing. "In order to break the barriers, we've got to give our female students the

tools to find the courage and prove that they can do it," she says. "If you're willing to think outside the box, you're going to go far. SWS gives you the foundation to do so and builds your confidence. I wish there would have been something like this when I was going into finance."

## FORGING AHEAD

Organizations like SWS encourage and support women in finance to forge the path to their future careers. Want to help make a difference? Gifts made to Pitt Business can help SWS and Foody-Malus continue their mission to turn the finance industry on its head.

To learn more about supporting our student trading funds, email Jodi Weisfield, executive director of development, at [jweisfield@katz.pitt.edu](mailto:jweisfield@katz.pitt.edu).

**"In order to break the barriers, we've got to give our female students the tools to find the courage and prove that they can do it."**



# THE PAYOFF OF PAYING IT FORWARD

**PROFESSOR EMERITUS JO OLSON'S  
PHILOSOPHY ON GIVING BACK  
AND HELPING STUDENTS  
DISCOVER THE WORLD**



**J**osephine (Jo) Olson learned the importance of paying it forward as a child. “I grew up in a family where service and donations were important,” Olson says. “My parents were generous donors despite not being wealthy.”

Now that she is retired after more than 50 years of teaching at Pitt, Olson has committed more than \$1 million to Pitt Business students. With this generous gift, the professor emeritus joins The Brackenridge Circle — established by Pitt in 2010 to recognize those remarkable individuals who have given planned gifts of \$1 million or more over their lifetime toward the continued progress and success of the University.

“I think it is important to do something to help others. Now that I am retiring, I hope to give of my time as well as my money,” Olson says.

## FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE WORLD

Olson believes that business students need to understand and be sensitive to different cultures, languages, customs, laws, and regulations since most businesses are international or global. At the age of 20, she spent a summer working in Mexico. “I believe an international experience should be part of almost every student’s education. Even a week or two in another country can help a business student begin to gain a global perspective.”

The bulk of her giving supports the Josephine E. Olson Fund for International Studies, which supports undergraduate business students with their international studies on an annual basis. Many recipients have credited the scholarships with helping them have unparalleled experiences while abroad, equipping them with skills and knowledge that will guide their future careers.

Anita Rzewski (BSBA ’23) studied abroad in the summer of 2023. “The opportunity to discover and reflect on my leadership style in a place as beautiful as the Himalayas is an experience that I will forever be grateful for,” she says. “Thank you, Professor Olson, for your donation and the opportunity to live this once-in-a-lifetime experience.”

“I think it is important to do something to help others.”

## AN INCREDIBLE INTERNATIONAL CAREER

Olson joined the University in 1971 as the only woman on the full-time faculty. Now, nearly 30 percent faculty at Pitt Business are women. Over the course of her illustrious career, she taught graduate and undergraduate courses in managerial economics and international economics.

Olson’s family inspired more than her desire to give back. Her interest in international studies stemmed from her family heritage and her multicultural upbringing in suburban New York.

Olson says the most exciting part of her career was in the early 1990s when Katz had programs in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, and even Russia. She had a Fulbright scholarship to teach in Hungary in 1991 and taught students from Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, and other countries; she keeps in touch with many of them today. More recently, Olson enjoyed taking students on short-term study trips to the Czech Republic, France and Latin America.

“I especially loved watching the first-year students in Chile overcome their timidity and practice their Spanish in restaurants, in stores, and on the street. I hope that most of the students found these study tours to be a significant experience that gave them a greater global perspective.”

## SUPPORT TOMORROW'S BUSINESS LEADERS

Are you feeling inspired to give? Contact Jodi Weisfield at [jweisfield@katz.pitt.edu](mailto:jweisfield@katz.pitt.edu) to discuss the ways that you can pay it forward to shape the future of Pitt Business.





# TURNING RIPPLES INTO TIDAL WAVES

**ESME STASA'S DRIVE TO HELP  
NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS**



**T**he drive to succeed differs for every college student. Recent graduate Esme Stasa (BSBA '23) found motivation in these six words: "Good luck, Mama! You got this!" That's what she heard when tucking her two young children into bed every night.

Bedtime for her five-year-old son and seven-year-old daughter was her time to study. Faced with life as a single mother after her divorce, she focused on earning a college degree to create a better life for herself and her young family.

*"Life is unpredictable, and at one point or another in our life, we all will need someone's help."*

## COLLEGE AS A PATH TO A BETTER FUTURE

Stasa enrolled in Community College of Allegheny County, earned her associate degree, and then transferred to Pitt Business. She attended classes full-time and worked part-time at Carnegie Mellon University, in addition to being a mother and a homeowner. Time and resources were tight. Twice, she considered giving up.

Even though she had limited free time, she participated in the Outside the Classroom Curriculum (OCC) programs with both

Pitt Business students and those from other colleges.

"Pitt OCC allowed me to get involved and feel like I belonged at Pitt Business," says Stasa. "It taught me that being a student is more than doing well in academics but getting involved and meeting others and learning outside the classroom."

Stasa had an internship at EY in the summer of 2022, which turned into her present position as a business consultant at the global consulting company.

She says it "took a village" to get this far, crediting the support and encouragement of her supervisors at Carnegie Mellon and the knowledge she gained from her professors at Pitt. She had two classes with Clinical Associate Professor of Business Administration Anthony Rodi and often asked him for industry advice.

"Esme has a great work ethic and puts lots of effort into everything that she does," says Rodi. "She is very organized, and her strong communication and interpersonal skills along with her willingness to learn new things and ability to adapt to change will contribute to her success as a consultant."

## A COMMITMENT TO SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Stasa has always pursued volunteer opportunities in her community. She served as treasurer for the Parent Teacher Organization at her children's school, helped at a local food bank, and volunteered with Pitt events.

"I feel strongly about having compassion for the well-being and welfare of others," says Stasa. "Life is unpredictable, and at one point or another in our life, we all will need someone's help."

EY's dedication to making a positive impact in the world, and its corporate responsibility program, resonates with Stasa.

"I look forward to being active in EY Ripples and creating an at-risk youth outreach program," she says. "I believe in servant leadership, and I am eager to serve not only my community but eventually turn those ripples into tidal waves."

## A DESIRE TO HELP SINGLE PARENTS

One day, Stasa hopes to write a book for single parents showing how to "not just survive but thrive through the challenges of single parenting." She would also like to fund a scholarship for non-traditional college students like her.

"These students are likely sacrificing something to return to school," says Stasa. "Opportunity cost is extremely real once you have a family. Having the scholarship would make the transition less stressful. That's what drives me to help other non-traditional students."



# THE LITTLE GIRL FROM A LITTLE VILLAGE

**BIBIANA BOERIO SHOWS  
HARD WORK CAN  
TAKE YOU TO THE TOP**



# N

ot only did Bibiana “Bibie” Boerio watch Mister Rogers as a child, but she grew up in his neighborhood.

Raised in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, the Boerio family of seven lived in a modest home a few blocks from where the

late Fred Rogers lived as a child before he became the nationally revered creator and host of “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood.”

Boerio, her twin sister, and three other siblings gained much of their life lessons from their parents, who worked multiple jobs to support the family. Her mother was a housekeeper and school cafeteria worker. Her father was a skilled tool and die maker who worked midnight shifts so he could also drive a school bus.

“My father and mother worked their tails off. We didn’t have a lot of money, but as a family we were always there for each other,” Boerio says.

## THE PRICE OF SUCCESS

They learned quickly that the price of success is hard work. With grants, loans, and work-study jobs, Boerio and her twin sister were able to attend Seton Hill University recommended by three great-aunts who were Sisters of Charity. She then earned her MBA from Pitt in 1976.

With an MBA in accounting and finance, Boerio joined Ford Motor Company, starting in corporate finance. Over 31 years, she worked in most parts of the business. She oversaw the revitalization of the Jaguar Cars business and helped develop a new business strategy for Ford Motor Credit.

Following her retirement from Ford, she served as chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Joe Sestak of Pennsylvania from 2008 to 2011, using her business expertise to work on economic stimulus legislation during the financial crisis. When her undergraduate alma mater, Seton Hill, needed an interim president, Boerio accepted the role.

“Everyone has to pay it back and pay it forward in your own way.”

## GO YOUR OWN WAY

Today, Boerio remains a guiding hand and strategic adviser for multiple community organizations.

She is chair of the Pitt Business Board of Visitors, which serves as an advisory board to the school. She also is leading the 75th anniversary celebration for the Distinguished Daughters of Pennsylvania.

In 2022, Boerio, a former Pitt Trustee who was recognized with the University’s 225th Anniversary Medallion, was the Katz graduate program commencement speaker. She told the graduates about “six simple words that can help make your life richer: Pay it back, pay it forward.”

She explained how she “worked hard, saved every penny, and received scholarships — that somebody else had provided” to earn her degrees. Within a few years of graduation, she donated to scholarship funds at Seton Hill and Pitt Business to help others like her.

As part of the Ford Finance recruiting team for 15 years, she also helped to hire numerous Pitt MBA graduates, anywhere from two to eight each year.

“Everyone has to pay it back and pay it forward in your own way,” she says.

When she started at Jaguar Cars Ltd., Boerio made a business trip to a village in Oxfordshire, England. The small cottages along tree-lined, narrow streets reminded her of childhood just outside of Latrobe. She would later make speeches about the career path of “the little girl, from a little village.”

She adds: “I’m most proud of that little girl who went to college and retired 30 years later as one of the top executives at Ford. I started at the bottom. The accomplishments were the cumulative effect of a great liberal arts undergraduate degree, an MBA from Pitt, and working through a lot of challenges.”



# EARNING A SEAT AT THE TABLE

**NGOZICHUKWU IBE  
IS FIGHTING FOR  
THE UNDERREPRESENTED**



# G

raduate student Ngozichukwu Ibe first stepped onto Pitt's campus when her two sisters were in medical school, planning to follow in their footsteps and become a physician. Then the pandemic happened, which exposed problems in our healthcare systems.

"I realized I wanted to provide care to vulnerable populations in ways that didn't require a medical degree," says Ibe. "My mission is to fight for the needs of the underrepresented minorities in underserved areas and be in rooms that strategize creative plans that can be key to transforming the lives in local communities."

The joint degree option — combining an MBA with a Master of Health Administration from Pitt's School of Public Health — aligns with that goal.

## **MBA/MHA COHORT OF SUPPORT**

Ibe is one of eight students enrolled in this joint degree program, enabling them to create study groups and recommend opportunities and resources to each other. The MHA degree requires students to complete a residency, and Ibe's residency is with UPMC Health Plan. Her preceptor, who provides training during clinical practice, and her direct supervisor are both women who have MBAs. "They were happy that I was also getting my MBA and told me that an MBA allows women to have a seat at the table and hold authority in the board room," says Ibe.

"I realized I wanted to provide care to vulnerable populations in ways that didn't require a medical degree."

## **HONORED TO WIN ALUMNAE SCHOLARSHIP**

In April 2023, Ibe was one of three students to receive a \$2,500 scholarship from the Pitt Business Alumnae Council at the Redefining Women's Leadership Conference. It came at a time when she was doubting her abilities as an MBA student.

"Interviewing with the alumnae council and winning the scholarship was one of the best confirmations for me that semester," says Ibe. "I am so honored to have been chosen alongside such amazing and more established businesswomen."

## **EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES**

In addition to taking classes, working at UPMC Health Plan, and having a weekend job at Walter's Barbeque, she still finds time to volunteer and participate in case competitions. "I love the idea of solving problems and the case competitions provide real-world experience with business problems," Ibe says. "They also provide a safe place to fail so I am able to give it my all and learn."

Ibe is on target to graduate with both degrees in 2024 and will set out to change policies to make the current healthcare system better. "The joint degree can open doors to government, healthcare consulting, management positions and so many other careers."



## BUSINESS OF HUMANITY PROJECT®: TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES SINCE 2011

**T**ransforming communities across the globe, demonstrating that business strategies can increase profits while addressing societal needs — that's the purpose of the Business of Humanity Project, a collaboration between Katz and the Swanson School of Engineering.

Since 2011, the Project has emphasized humaneness and humankind in strategic decision-making in the classroom and beyond to empower businesses in disadvantaged

communities to do good and be profitable. This is done through "demonstration projects" designed to be replicated and sustained in communities worldwide.

The ongoing Tuver, India, project provides sustainable electricity, potable water, sanitation, and accessibility to healthcare, including telemedicine, to help people live longer, healthier lives. The Homewood project in Pittsburgh uses an off-grid bioshelter to increase local farming and reduce utility costs in the neighborhood, improving the quality of life and assisting local businesses.

"A large number of telemedicine projects are photo opportunities and never materialize. The very fact that we are still existing, under the most difficult circumstances, proves that this BoH Project will surely transform lives and communities in the long term," said Dr. K. Ganapathy, the head of telemedicine at Apollo Hospitals. "We now need to take the second step. What the world requires is tens of thousands of Tuvers."

For the latest updates and information on the Manufacturing Assistance Centers in Titusville, Pennsylvania and Lagos, Nigeria, visit the Project's updated website by scanning here:



(From left) Pitt's Bopaya Bidanda, Kristy Bronder, and John Camillus

## CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS: NEW MICRO-CREDENTIAL

**T**he new Sustainable Business micro-credential offered through Katz provides essential skills and knowledge to understand the crucial role of sustainability across various functions within an organization, leading to improved business performance and positive societal outcomes.

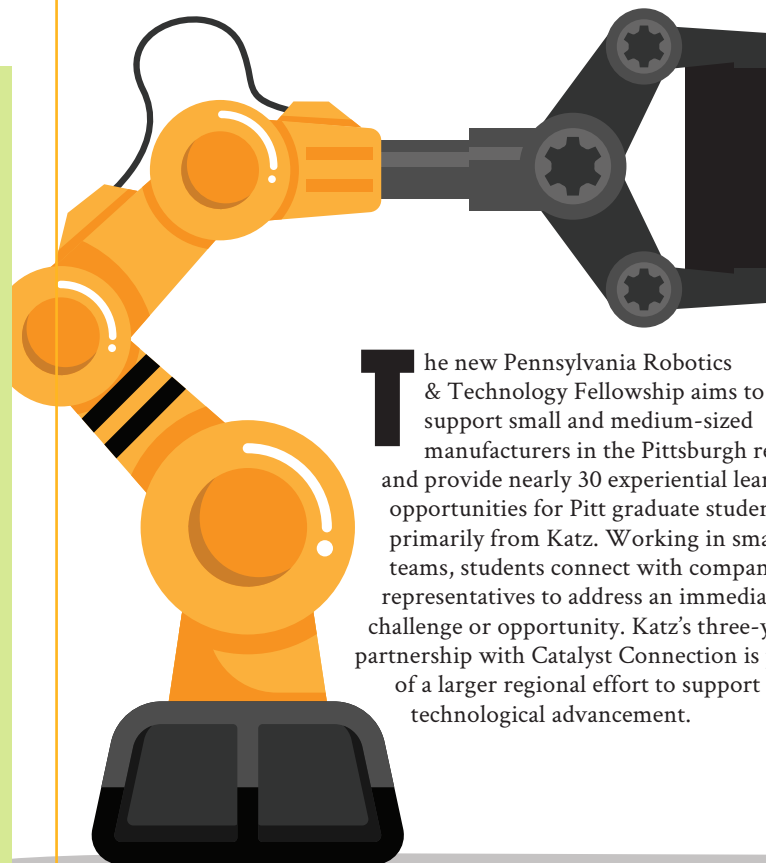
The nine-credit program, available in Fall 2023, offers students and working professionals the opportunity to develop a range of skills that are in high demand in today's business landscape. The coursework emphasizes a long-term approach to the relationship between business, society, and the environment, enabling all stakeholders to benefit from sustainable practices.

"This new micro-credential demonstrates our commitment to educating future business leaders who can effectively manage long-term value creation for organizations," says Sara Moeller, senior associate dean of teaching and learning at Pitt Business.

To learn more about all 12 credentials, scan here:



## CENTER FOR INTEGRATED LEARNING: ROBOTICS & TECHNOLOGY FELLOWSHIPS



**T**he new Pennsylvania Robotics & Technology Fellowship aims to support small and medium-sized manufacturers in the Pittsburgh region and provide nearly 30 experiential learning opportunities for Pitt graduate students, primarily from Katz. Working in small teams, students connect with company representatives to address an immediate challenge or opportunity. Katz's three-year partnership with Catalyst Connection is part of a larger regional effort to support technological advancement.

"This program allowed me to gain practical experience that I wouldn't have been able to obtain through classroom learning," says Arvind Duhan (MBA/MS '23), who spent six weeks at Penna Flame Industries, Inc., in the spring of 2023. "The decisions I made during the program had real-time impacts on the business value, allowing me to see the results of my choices in action."

Learn more about this win-win effort for students and companies by scanning here:



## CENTER FOR BRANDING: ELEVATE YOUR ORGANIZATION

**A**n important mission of the Center for Branding is to educate working professionals like our alumni, as well as students, on the study and advancement of branding strategies, practices, and skills.



The Center offers educational programs, workshops, and certifications to gain practical insights and skills to develop and manage effective branding strategies.

"The invaluable insights shared in these workshops equip our alumni in various industries with the essential tools to stay ahead of marketing trends, learn new skills, and elevate their organization's brand presence," says Vanitha Swaminathan, Thomas Marshall Professor of

**Google Analytics Workshop | October 21, 2023**  
Earn certification upon completion.

**Google Ads Workshop | January 19, 2024**  
Earn certification upon completion.

**Metaverse Symposium | March 1, 2024**  
The evolution of the internet to 3D and virtual reality.

**The Power of Working with Micro-Influencers | April 5, 2024**  
With a social media presence larger than the average person but smaller than a celebrity, meet experts and sharpen your knowledge.

Marketing and the Center's director and founder. "We welcome your participation and any opportunities to partner with your organization."

To learn more about these programs and other Center offerings:







## BETTER ANSWERS COME WITH DATA

**T**he 2023 Pitt Business Analytics Case Competition challenged teams of undergraduate business students from across the U.S. to solve business issues through data-driven decision-making.

The competition started with 21 teams from 14 schools. Each team submitted a preliminary case, but only the top eight competed in Pittsburgh on April 7, 2023, at DICK'S Sporting Goods headquarters in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania. In the end, Texas Christian University finished in first place, followed by the Pitt Business team of Shreya Thennanchar Rajaram, Ryan Tinkelman, Jodi Trang Tran, and Bradley Wiggins. The University of Southern California team was third.

The case competition is offered in partnership with the undergraduate program and DICK'S Sporting Goods as students use their analytical techniques to solve pressing retail issues and provide creative recommendations to a panel of experts from DICK'S Sporting Goods.

Tommy Scales, DICK'S Sporting Goods campus recruiter, credits the Pitt Business Career Development team as a driving force behind this annual event. "I really appreciate their expertise in helping students develop their skills to help them reach their dream careers."

### RETURN TO IN-PERSON COMPETITION

Since the Challenge's inception in 2016, much has changed. At first, it featured regional universities. The 2020 Challenge was canceled, and the event was held virtually in 2021 and 2022. A pivot to a virtual challenge

allowed Associate Director of First Year Experience and Career Programming Rebecca Rhoades to grow the reach of the Challenge.

Rhoades was not sure what would happen when the competition returned to the DICK'S Sporting Goods campus in 2023. "We anticipated that the reach of teams would likely not be as nationally focused. However, more teams than ever from across the country participated." Returning to an in-person competition at a Fortune 500 company invigorated students. Tinkelman (BSBA '25) says, "One of the most necessary and fulfilling aspects of being a business major, especially within a larger school in a major city, is the outside-the-classroom opportunities. I knew that being able to compete against other schools from across the nation was an incredible opportunity to develop professionally."

Rhoades attests, "Competing in person to a panel of analytic professionals is an honor and a great learning experience. Students were also able to network with these professionals throughout the day."

### THE POWER OF ANALYTICS

In response to the importance of data and analytics in business decision-making, a new Business Analytics major was launched in Fall 2022. In addition, three courses on data analytics are now required for every undergraduate business student.

The Certificate Program in Business Analytics is another option for students to diagnose problems and envision solutions from an evidence-based perspective. For more information, contact: [admissions@business.pitt.edu](mailto:admissions@business.pitt.edu).

## PITT'S FIRST MITCHELL SCHOLAR

**A**lex Firestine, a 2023 Pitt Business graduate, was named a George J. Mitchell Scholar. He is the University's first-ever recipient of this prestigious national scholarship, which sends future American leaders to Ireland for a year of graduate study. He called the opportunity "life changing."



Firestine, a resident of Germantown, Maryland, was among the 12 Class of 2024 scholarship recipients chosen from 306 applicants. Firestine plans to study climate change, agriculture, and food security at the University of Galway.

### MENTORSHIP MATTERS

Firestine researched sustainable food systems through the Frederick Honors College, to expand on what he learned about food security during high school volunteer efforts at his local community food bank. Upon arriving at Pitt, he met Professor of Business Administration Audrey J. Murrell. Her work with the nonprofit Food21 brought together his interests in food security and data analytics. Murrell is the deputy chair and a co-founder of the organization.

Firestine credited Murrell as his greatest mentor. Over the past four years, they collaborated on extensive research,

discussion, and learning in the areas of sustainable food systems and servant leadership. "She taught my capstone class in Service Learning, has been my faculty mentor on numerous research fellowships, and co-authored my first publication. I'm immensely grateful for all the support Dr. Murrell has provided me," he says.

"He saw the important connection between ethics and his passion for transformational work within the community related to the issue of food insecurity," says Murrell. She repeatedly notes that Firestine possesses strong leadership and analytic skills. She credits his ability to apply his academic concentrations in finance, business information systems, data analytics, and ethics to create social impact solutions that have sound business foundations to produce effective outcomes.

### RETURN TO IRELAND

Before his first year, Firestine traveled to Ireland through the Haller Global Honors Fellowship. He returned to Ireland as a George J. Mitchell Scholar in August. When asked what he was looking forward to most, he said, "I'm excited to learn more about Irish culture and history related to food. Galway has a year-round farmers market that has been around for centuries."

Pitt Business wishes Alex the best in his studies. His education has truly taken him from the classroom, to the city, to the world.

## ENGRAVED IN HISTORY

### Lisa Cherok Awarded for Outstanding Career Achievement



**L**isa Cherok has played a crucial role in the success of Pitt Business for over 25 years as a student advisor and director of admissions. In recognition of her service dedication, Cherok (shown with Dean Anderson) received the University's highest staff honor — the 2022 Chancellor's Staff Award for Outstanding Career Achievement.

Upon determining the recipient of this prestigious award, former Chancellor Patrick Gallagher states: "The Outstanding Career Achievement category recognizes a staff member with more than 20 years of unparalleled service to the

University of Pittsburgh who, throughout their career, has made exceptional contributions to the success of their department and the University, who has earned the respect of their peers, and whose efforts have defined what it means to be part of the University community."

Lawrence Feick, a longtime faculty member who held the role of interim associate dean from July 2020 until August 2023, was thrilled with the decision to select Cherok for this accolade. "Lisa has been critical in the creation of the undergraduate program we know today," he shares. "She oversaw the growth from a couple of hundred to more than 2,000 students and was a key contributor to its emergence as a top 15 public undergraduate business school."

Cherok will forever be a part of Pitt's history — her name is engraved on a permanent plaque in the William Pitt Union to commend her exceptional contributions to Pitt Business and the University since 1995.

Cherok and other Chancellor's Award winners were honored at a ceremony in January 2023. You can send Cherok a congratulatory note for this remarkable achievement at [cherok@pitt.edu](mailto:cherok@pitt.edu).



# CLASSROOM CONCEPTS IN THE REAL WORLD

Our commitment to experiential learning gave nearly 140 graduate students behind-the-scenes visits to companies in Pittsburgh; Charlotte, North Carolina; and around the world.



MBA students explored Lowe's Tech Hub, and later, Arno Czerveny of Wells Fargo, talked to students who said the opportunity to engage with the future business leaders was truly inspiring.



Students in Argentina put on hard hats and safety gear to tour Tenaris, a global manufacturer and supplier of steel pipes and related services.

## ALUMNI HELP MAKE TRAVEL CAPSTONE SUCCESSFUL

Thanks to the powerful network of Pitt Business alumni, the 50 students in the travel capstone course had access to a wide range of organizations and business leaders in Charlotte, North Carolina:

- Helen Eggers (MBA '81), consumer risk management executive for Bank of America
- Arno Czerveny (MBA '05), head of consumer credit card technology at Wells Fargo
- Rich Sedory (BA in Business and Political Science '83 and JD '86), general counsel, senior vice president at Wastequip LLC

## PITTSBURGH CAPSTONE EXPLORES INNOVATIONS IN HEALTHCARE AND RETAIL

The 38 MBA students in the Pittsburgh capstone visited UPMC Enterprises and Sheetz Technology & Innovation Hub. The 25 students enrolled in the online MBA that DICK'S Sporting Goods offers to employees met with executives from the in-house investment fund, DSG Ventures, and the company's technology group as part of their capstone course. The students also gained insights from panel discussions.

## STUDENTS GO TO ABROAD FOR GLOBAL RESEARCH PRACTICUM

Thirteen MBA and MS students went to Germany to research Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting. Another 13 MBA and MS students went to Argentina to study doing business in an unstable macroeconomic environment. These trips also included a few students from Pitt's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. Fifteen Executive MBA students were in Germany at the same time; researching trends in the automotive industry.



Students in the Pittsburgh capstone experience listened to an executive at the Sheetz Technology & Innovation Hub.



Pitt students in Germany took a break from their research to pose proudly with the Pitt flag.

## CALLING ALUMNI IN AUSTIN, TEXAS!

The travel capstone will be coming to Austin in January 2024. Details are being finalized; contact Amy McCloskey at [mccloskey@business.pitt.edu](mailto:mccloskey@business.pitt.edu) if you would like to meet with Pitt Business graduate students.

# A GOOD LEADER VALUES THE TEAM



When Ammar Kinkhabwala (MBA/MS '23) laced up his first pair of soccer cleats over 15 years ago, he simply wanted to play the game. Little did he know he would be learning valuable business skills. "Playing and following soccer has taught me to leverage the diverse strengths of each team player, trust their abilities, and foster unity," he says. "The sport emphasized teamwork, morale, and bonding, which have become instinctive references for me in various aspects of life."

## MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT

Kinkhabwala didn't play soccer at Pitt, yet he continued to apply the lessons he learned on the field as the president of the Student Executive Board (SEB) at Katz, co-president of the Business Healthcare Club, and vice president of the Consulting Club.

In his commencement address, Kinkhabwala told his fellow students, "We've seen firsthand how a diverse group of individuals can come together to achieve great things." A few of the ways he collaborated with others to help the community include: being a BNY Mellon Fellow focused on Corporate Social Responsibility, participating in the 2023 Super Analytics Challenge focused on Mental Health, and leading SEB to raise nearly \$3,000 at the Katz Annual Ball.

He explains that "overall, the Katz Annual Fall Ball was not just about fun and glamour, but it was also a way to make a positive impact on the world around us."

## COLLABORATING OUTSIDE OF KATZ

Kinkhabwala was among the first team of students to take part in the Pennsylvania Robotics & Technology Fellowship, a Pitt Business initiative supported by federal grant funding. This program pairs Pitt graduate students with small and medium-sized manufacturers to address each company's immediate technological challenge. (See page 25 to learn more about this fellowship.)

He was also a member of the MIT-PITT-RW autonomous racing team. This collaboration between the University of Pittsburgh, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) University of Waterloo, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was a student-led team to program a race car to drive autonomously around the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.



"I enjoyed being part of a multidisciplinary team that was at the forefront of technological innovation," says Kinkhabwala. "Although I had limited knowledge about autonomous cars at the time, I recognized that this was a perfect chance to challenge myself and contribute to a diverse team of experts."

## GROWING PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY

He opened his commencement speech by acknowledging that when he first came to Pitt, he had many questions and fears and quickly added, "As I look back on this journey, I feel grateful for the opportunity to have grown personally and professionally. And most of all, I feel grateful for the community we have built together."

Now working on the Global Risk Oversight team at Vertiv, Kinkhabwala says, "The practical business insights

I acquired during my time at Katz have seamlessly empowered me to complement and excel in my role. I can proactively identify and mitigate risks while fostering sustainable growth with a comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics."



# Congratulations

## TO THE 2023 BUSINESS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AWARD HONOREES

The Distinguished Alumni Awards are a prestigious honor that is bestowed upon only a select few each year. They have made significant contributions to their field, their community, and their alma mater. We are proud of their achievements and grateful for their support. The 2023 honorees include:

### CHRISTOPHER V. DODDS (MBA '83) DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS AWARD HONOREE

Christopher V. Dodds is co-founder and managing member, Crown Oak Advisors, LLC, an investment advisory firm that he co-founded with his son Andrew. Dodds is also a senior advisor with The Cynosure Group, a private equity firm. Prior to this, he worked for 10 years with The Carlyle Group, a private equity firm, as senior advisor in their financial services practice. Over the past 10 years, he has served on the boards of multiple firms, including: The Charles Schwab Corporation and Charles Schwab Bank, N.A.; The TCW Group; ITG, Inc.; Baron Capital; Avalon Advisors LLC; Conifer Financial Services; and Coinbase Global, Inc. He graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in business from Clemson University. He earned his MBA degree in finance from Katz.



### GEOFFREY MUESSIG (MBA '08) H.J. ZOFFER MEDAL FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD HONOREE

Geoffrey Muessig has over 33 years of experience in the transportation industry. He started his career with PITT OHIO in 1988 as a sales representative. Today he serves as the organization's executive vice president and chief marketing officer. He is responsible for overseeing the sales, marketing, pricing, and customer service efforts of PITT OHIO. He has successfully brought many new PITT OHIO service offerings to market, including: Fast Track, an award-winning, expedited less-than-truckload (LTL) guaranteed shipping service; Heat Track, a guaranteed protection from freeze LTL shipping service; and The Reliance Network (TRNet), which spanned North America. Presently, he is working with other transportation industry executives to drive the adoption of a standard digital bill of lading. He earned a master of arts from the University of Chicago, as well as an MBA from Katz.



### BRIGETTE KORENY (BA '10, MBA '13, JD '13) DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD HONOREE

Brigette Koreny was named president of the Pitt Business Alumnae Council. In this role, she works to build a community for alumnae and current students to share perspectives, discuss professional strategies, and build authentic relationships. As senior corporate counsel at Harsco Corporation, she works closely with the executive leadership team to execute the company's strategy to become a global, single-thesis environmental solutions business. In addition to advising on various acquisitions, divestitures, and venture capital-type investments, she also works with team members and outside counsel around the world on a wide range of other legal matters. She is a three-time Pitt graduate having completed her bachelor of arts degree in business and political science, her MBA from Katz, and her doctor of law from Pitt School of Law.



### DEBBIE RICCI (MBA '91) DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA AWARD HONOREE

Debbie Ricci is responsible for managing financial operations in her executive role at Guidehouse, a leading global provider of consulting services to public sector and commercial clients. She is a key member of the leadership team, working alongside the CEO to help drive executive goal setting and planning the company's strategic direction and general management. She was an integral part of the team leading the creation of Guidehouse from a PwC carve-out in 2018. Prior to joining Guidehouse, she served as CFO of Constellis and Centerra Group. She began her career as a certified public accountant at KPMG. Ricci serves on the board of directors for Draken International and the advisory board of the Integrated Learning Academy within the University of Pittsburgh Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business. She earned her MBA from Katz.



### ABHISHEK S. MEHTA (BSBA '05) INTERNATIONAL DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS AWARD HONOREE

Before Abhishek S. Mehta founded Blue Lotus Investment Fund, an India-focused investment firm, he was investment director at Brandywine Trust Group, a \$10+ billion, multi-family investment office in New York. He began his career as an investment associate, and later as interim head of the Investment Office at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Mehta serves on the United Kingdom Board of the Deccan Heritage Foundation, the Chancellor's Global Advisory Committee at Pitt, and the Pitt Business Alumni Association Board. He also serves on the Board of Visitors and Endowment Committee of Shady Side Academy and the Board of Visitors for Pitt Business. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh's College of Business Administration where he majored in finance.



### ACCENTURE CORPORATE APPRECIATION AWARD HONOREE

Accenture has generously shared its expertise and resources to help educate and empower Pitt Business students in real-world problem solving and career development. Accenture is a global professional services company with leading capabilities in digital, cloud, and security. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries, the company offers Strategy and Consulting, Technology and Operations Services, and Accenture Song — all powered by the world's largest network of advanced technology and intelligent operations centers. Accenture's 721,000 people deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity every day, serving clients in more than 120 countries. Accenture embraces the power of change to create value and shared success for its clients, people, shareholders, partners, and communities.





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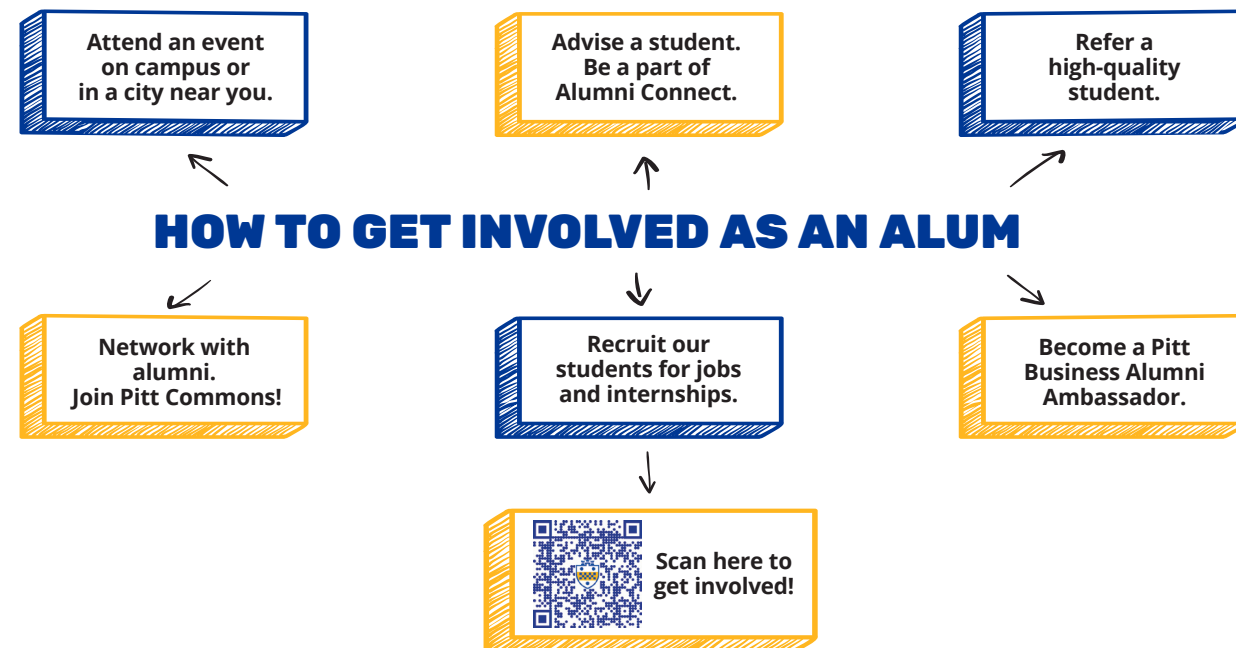
The Pitt Business Annual Fund harnesses the collective power of giving to provide Pitt Business with the greatest flexibility and to help our students become catalysts for change. No matter the amount, your gift is a critical resource that fuels innovation and improves the student experience.

We hope you will join your fellow alumni, faculty, staff, and friends by making a gift today.

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**ARNO CZERVENY (MBA '05)**  
Head of Consumer Credit Cards  
Technology, Wells Fargo

"The opportunity to engage with the future leaders of the business world was truly inspiring and I was impressed by the students' level of engagement and curiosity."



**ANITA RZEWSKI (BSBA '23)**  
Received an undergraduate study  
abroad scholarship

"The opportunity to discover and reflect on my leadership style in a place as beautiful as the Himalayas is an experience that I will forever be grateful for. I have learned how I can be a better leader to my friends and family, to my fellow students, and to future colleagues."



**AARON RIDEN (BSBA '03,  
MS '11)** Chief Financial Officer,  
Vision Benefits of America

"I really felt like I was able to help the students I met through the undergraduate Alumni in Residence program. I will gladly continue supporting Pitt Business students through this program."

# IN MEMORIAM

Dean Emeritus H.J. "Jerry" Zoffer  
(1930-2023)

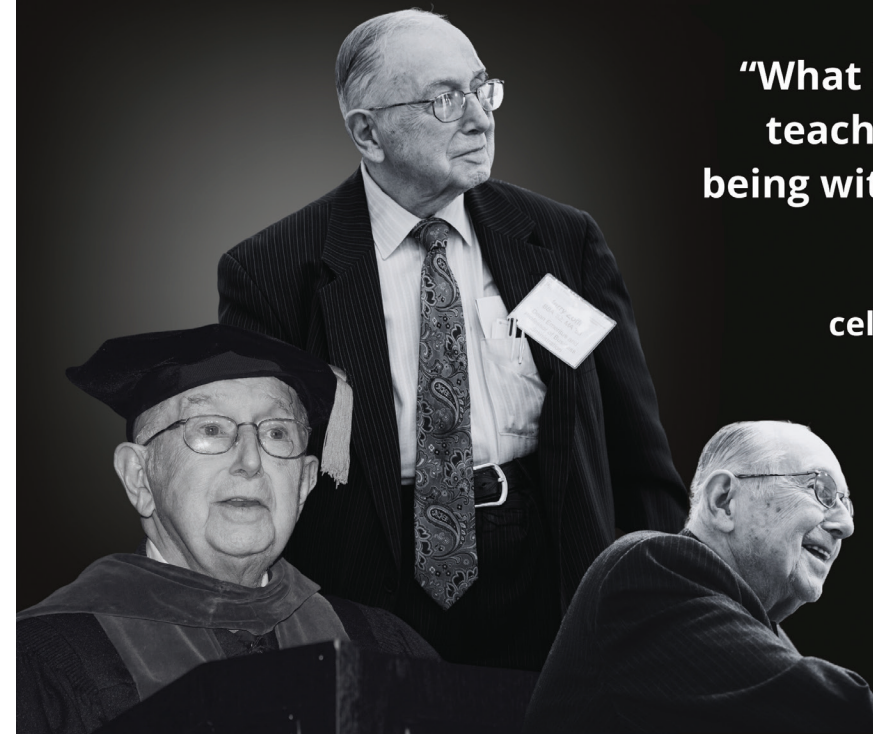
We mourn the passing of our former dean.

He will be fondly remembered and appreciated for his strategic vision during his 28 years of service to Pitt Business from 1968 to 1996 and for his leadership, grace, and kindness.



"What I really like best is teaching, research, and being with my colleagues."

- Dean Zoffer in 2019,  
celebrating his 65 years  
at Pitt Business







University of  
Pittsburgh

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**October 12-14**

Homecoming is also the perfect  
time to reconnect and network  
with fellow alumni.

See full schedule  
of events here:

