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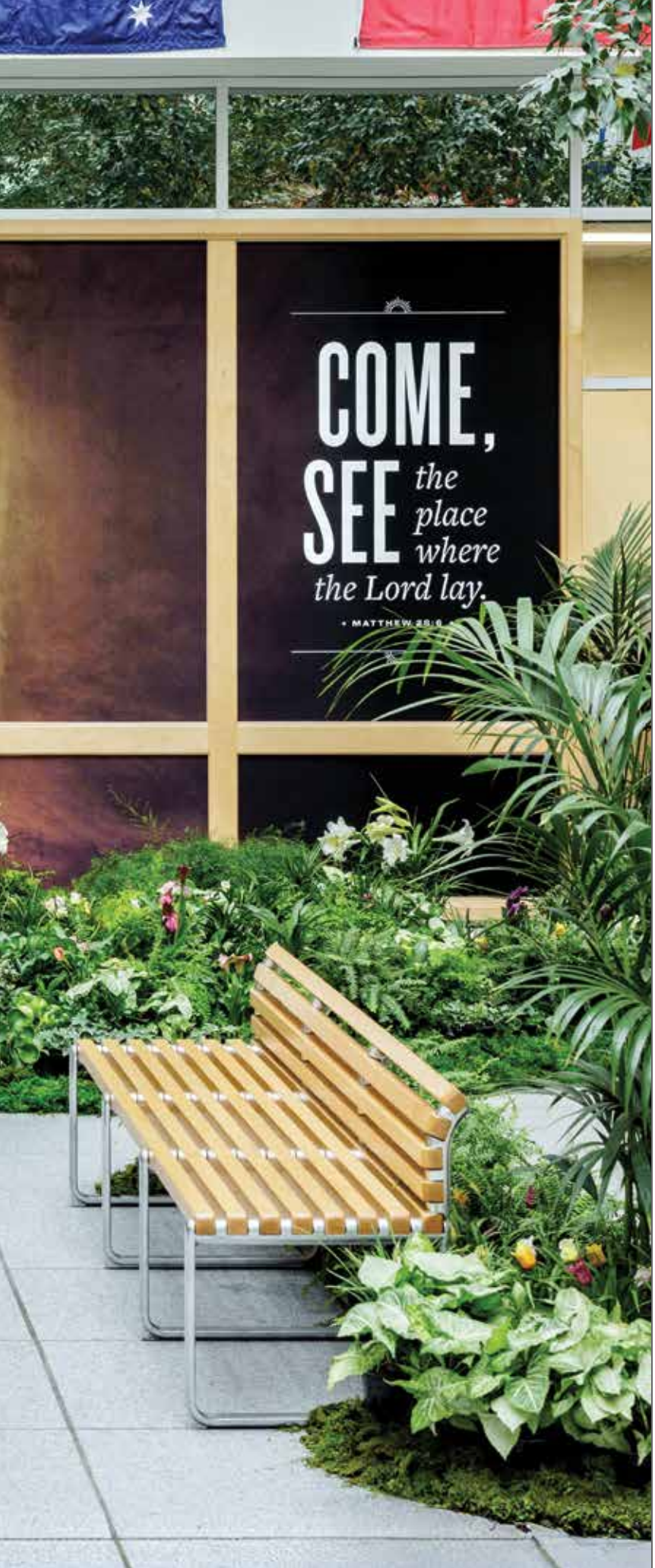
MARRIOTT

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2024

He is not here:
for HE IS
RISEN...



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◀ STUDENTS PAUSE IN THE TANNER BUILDING'S THIRD-FLOOR ATRIUM TO REFLECT ON THE SAVIOR'S RESURRECTION. THE GARDEN TOMB DISPLAY—INSTALLED FOR ONLY ONE WEEK—CREATED AN ATMOSPHERE OF REVERENCE AND HOPE DURING THE EASTER SEASON. PHOTO BY BRADLEY SLADE.

OVERHEARD IN THE TANNER

You ready for the weekend? *It's Tuesday*. • You have the best laugh. It kind of sounds like a windshield wiper. • I accidentally made eye contact with him and then didn't know what to say. • Anything is edible if you don't mind getting sick or dying. • I just found two ibuprofens in my backpack. *Congratulations*. • This is why I should not interject in conversations I did not start. • You've never hiked the Y!?! • Every interaction I have with him, I feel like he's flirting with me. • The past few days our sink has smelled awful. • You know, I don't care what people say about you. I think you're alright. • Why are we whispering? *I'm just whispering to myself.* • The people in my group have gotten to know this crazy version of me, and it stresses me out. • Don't take your eye off that scooter. • I don't even know where this sweatshirt came from. It just appeared in my wardrobe one day, so maybe it's meant to be. • That's a cute temple! • The whole point of Women's Chorus is to not talk to each other. • The last time I saw you was on the internet! • You have the same hair texture as my dad. • If I get to an event 10 minutes before I know my friends are going to be there, I spend that whole time pretending to look for them. But in the most calm way possible so people don't try to help. • That's a tall order. *Well, I'm a tall person.* • How did you get into a situation where you were being force-fed curry? • He's introverted, yet reliable. • I'm not the greatest of friends, but I'm not *terrible*. • He was, like, the third person I called because there are other people I would rather borrow paper plates from. • Just because they're nice to you doesn't mean they approve of you. • You can't just stick your hand into someone else's brown bag. • I am so ready to be blonder again. • I have now accidentally set up two couples. • You do yoga? *Yeah, I do the yogs.* • Girl is over here gaslighting her tastebuds into thinking something tastes good. • It fell through, but we have some other options that we're gonna be looking at today, so strap on your excited hats. • It's only $3 for about 700 carrots. • I'm realizing that I'm not just incompetent—my life is actually hard. • The more I interact with him, the more awkward and embarrassing things I say. • I sometimes lack awareness. • What is in your Stanley? And why is it brown? • This is my reflective week. • Maybe you just have a natural pheromone of fear. *You mean anxiety? Yeah, I do.* • Guess what, guys? I got dumped yesterday. And I still came to work.

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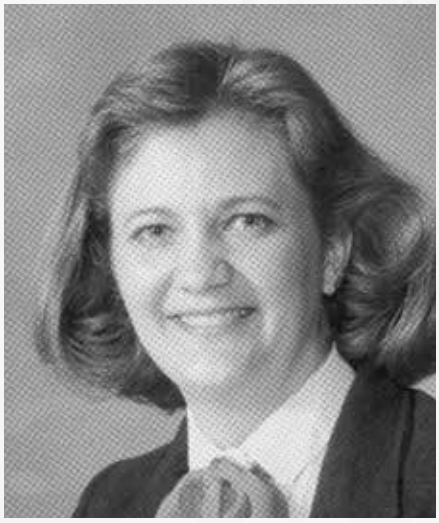
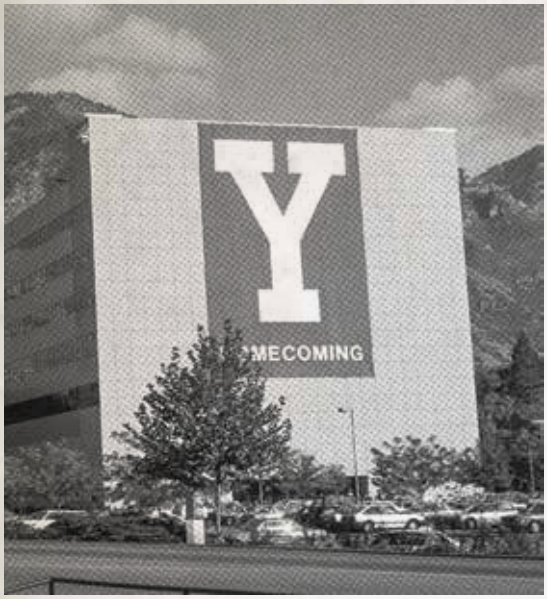


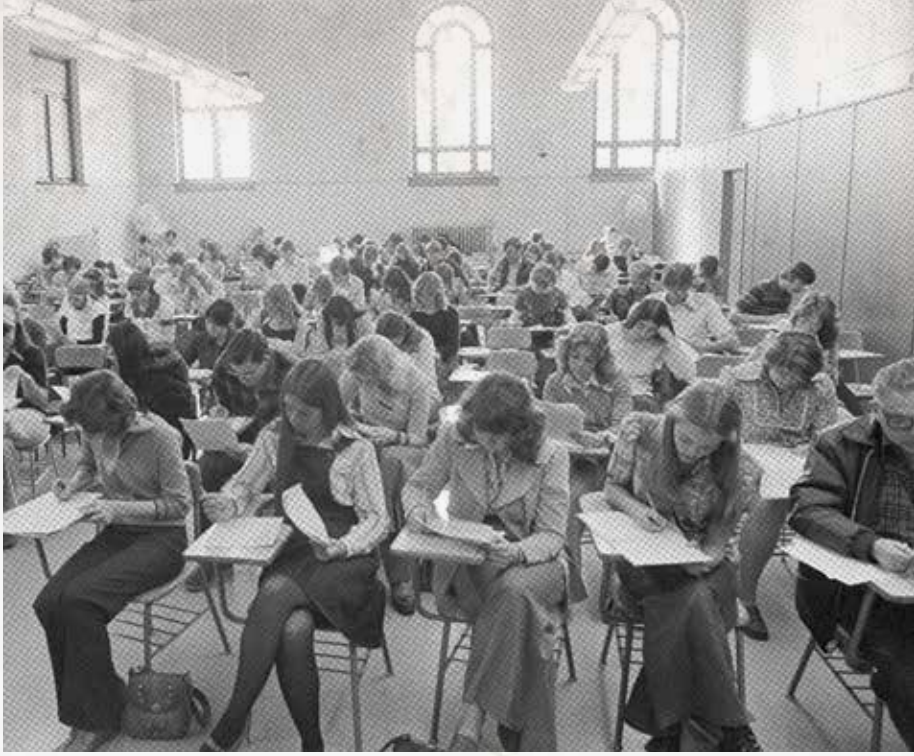
Kristie Seawright

Scott M. Smith

Stacy Taniguchi

Gloria Wheeler





→ By Jennifer Mathis

Where Are They Now?

Go Cougs!

Reconnecting with six retired BYU Marriott professors.

Exemplary professors have always graced the hallways and classrooms of BYU Marriott, leaving indelible marks on the students and the school. We tracked down six beloved professors whose impact continues to be felt long after retirement. The stories that follow prove that “Enter to learn; go forth to serve” doesn’t just apply to the student body.

What did they do then, and what are they doing now?

Steve Albrecht:

Most Likely to Become a Town Council Member

- Put the accounting program on the map.
- Served as associate dean of BYU Marriott for 10 years.

For Steve Albrecht, it's always been about relationships. And while he loved the accounting program and helped build its notoriety, it was the people at BYU Marriott who mattered most to him—not the numbers. "I loved the interaction and the relationships," he says.

The accounting program has been ranked one of the top three in the nation for nearly two decades. Albrecht, who served as program director for nine years, believes "the faculty that we hired, the curriculum that we put together, the students we were able to attract, and the support we got from recruiters and alumni" were key in making the accounting program what it is today.

Cori Elzey, who graduated with a JD/MBA in 2003, says, "I owe my career to Dr. Albrecht. I decided to be a fraud investigator after taking his fraud audit class, and he persuaded KPMG to hire me into its forensic practice. I worked harder because Steve Albrecht was my reference. I refused to let him down."

She adds: "Don't tell anyone, but he let me take the fraud audit final early so I could go to the first showing of *The Lord of the Rings* at midnight. The final was at 8 a.m. the following day. I am forever grateful!"

Albrecht paused his teaching from 2009 to 2012 to preside over the Japan Tokyo Mission, where he and his wife, LeAnn, orchestrated the evacuation, lodging, meals, transfer, and relocation of 160 missionaries in the hours and days following Japan's 2011 earthquake and tsunami. When they completed their mission, Albrecht resumed teaching at BYU Marriott until he retired in 2017.

People still matter most to Albrecht, and retirement has drawn him closer to his family. "I have been spending a lot more time with LeAnn, our children, and our grandchildren," he says. The couple, who met as students in a BYU family home evening group, have traveled to Israel, Alaska, and Europe, among other spots. They also serve as temple workers in the Manti Temple.

Retirement also drew Albrecht back to his hometown of Bicknell, Utah, a small town with a population upward of 300 that is located near Capitol Reef National Park. In Bicknell, he helped put something else on the map: a new heritage memorial that honors veterans and early pioneers. Albrecht raised more than $400,000 for the memorial's construction, and LeAnn designed it. The landmark earned Bicknell the Beautification Award from Utah's Six County Association of Governments. It's no wonder that Albrecht was recently reelected to the Bicknell Town Council.

Albrecht also serves on several corporate boards of directors. He has penned multiple books for his family, including his own personal history, and he assisted LeAnn in writing her history.

"Even though I'm retired from BYU, I'm not really retired," Albrecht says.

Ray Andrus:

Most Likely to Sing in the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square

- Oversaw the planning and construction of the Tanner Building in the 1980s.
- Livened up his sports marketing classes with guests like Steve Young and LaVell Edwards.

Ray Andrus had a blast at BYU Marriott—quite literally, on one occasion.

As faculty chair of the Tanner Building construction committee, Andrus, who was also associate dean at the time, spearheaded the groundbreaking ceremony in November 1980. "Usually, they use shovels to break ground, but I thought it would be more dramatic to use dynamite," Andrus says. "It was dramatic, all right."

The blast shot rocks into the air. "I thought I was gonna wipe out the First Presidency single-handedly," Andrus quips.

One softball-sized rock knocked out a woman in the crowd. Andrus says, "When she came to, she said, 'This is the best day of my life! I get hurt, and when I look up, the entire First Presidency is giving me a blessing.'"

Andrus made an impact in the classroom too. He taught a variety of marketing classes, making sports marketing particularly fun by bringing in notable guest speakers. In his 25 years at BYU Marriott, Andrus also served as assistant dean to Merrill J. Bateman and as associate dean to William G. Dyer. "I had a great time at BYU," Andrus says.

Lia Brandligt, a 1995 business management alumna, says: "It is hard to put into words the effect Dr. Andrus had on me personally and professionally. As I spent many late nights at his house working on group projects with peers, I learned market research from every angle, and I also witnessed firsthand a devoted husband and father."

Brandligt adds, "His connections landed me my first marketing coordinator position in Los Angeles. His confidence in my abilities allowed me to take risks and grow in impactful and unexpected ways."

Andrus also built up BYU Marriott's technology resources. "It's hard to imagine, but in those days, nobody had personal computers," he says. Andrus replaced typewriters with personal computers—a major upgrade for professors who had previously relied on the university's central computer—and he created a computer lab and a MAcc lab at the school.

Leveling up was a trend for Andrus, and it didn't end at retirement. When the time came, he and his wife, MaryAnn, served two full-time missions: first as facilitators for the China Teachers Program and then as senior missionaries at the Mesa Temple Visitors' Center. Andrus also performed in the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square for several years.

Along the way, he has relished spending time with his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. His yard is equipped with a playground and zipline where his posterity can gather.

Andrus wrote a book of family memories titled *Ray Remembers*, though "a lot of people wonder if that is a fact," he laughs.

Kristie Seawright:

Most Likely to Live the Aloha Life

- Created the curriculum for BYU Marriott's first study abroad program.
- Trekked across Africa and Asia while leading experiences abroad.

Kristie Seawright made "The world is our campus" more than a motto for her students when she taught in BYU Marriott's management program. Vibrant villages and cities around the globe became a living classroom for Seawright. "I loved sharing cross-cultural experiences with students," she says.

One of those experiences unfolded in Africa, where Seawright's students collaborated with locals to achieve an especially sweet success.

"The villagers were looking for unique things to sell," Seawright recounts. The students suggested selling mangoes out of season, when the market would bear a price 25 times higher. "We showed the villagers how to preserve mangoes," Seawright says. "They enjoyed the unexpected sweetness of the dried fruit, and they also learned how to make a differentiated product."

Creating these real-world teaching moments was Seawright's specialty. "I didn't have to teach the students much about financial currency exchange because they were out doing it," she remembers.

When Seawright presented to the Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBER), attendees from across the country would often ask, "How do you teach international business outside the classroom?" Her answer was always, "How do you teach international business *inside* the classroom?"

Since retiring in 2018, Seawright has continued to travel, teach, and transform lives. She and her husband, Larry, worked for a nonprofit called Extending Reach International to help villages in Zambia. They also served a three-year service mission for BYU–Pathway. Retirement has also gifted Seawright the "amazing though tiring experience" of caring for her aging parents.

Currently, the Seawrights are serving in the Hawaii Laie Mission, where they are helping students develop university-success skills. "The gathering of Israel is picking up speed," Seawright says, "and everyone is needed."

Shortly after arriving in Hawaii, the couple ran into Vimbayinashe Jennifer Mutsvangwa (pictured above), a student from Zimbabwe who they'd previously worked with at BYU–Pathway. They learned that she had joined the Church and was now studying at BYU–Hawaii. "We'll have the opportunity to attend her family's sealing at the Laie Temple," Seawright says. "It's like the two missions came together."

Former student David Jeppesen, who graduated from the MPA program in 2004, says Seawright stood out among faculty: "I can't think of another professor—and I had a number of excellent ones—who better embodied the standards of BYU, especially teaching through example the ideals of establishing Zion."

Scott M. Smith:

Most Likely to Start a Company in His Basement

- Taught marketing courses at BYU Marriott for more than 30 years.
- Brought market research tools to the masses by launching Qualtrics, a highly successful survey company.

Scott M. Smith sparked progress and growth within his classrooms and well beyond. As his longtime friend and colleague Michael Swenson puts it, "Smith's impact was not only felt within the academic realm, but it also reverberated through the business world."

Smith served as chair of the business management department, where he oversaw finance, marketing, and operations. Swenson says, "Scott Smith steered the department through a period of remarkable growth. When I reflect on Scott, a number of descriptors come to mind: colleague, thought-leader, innovator, researcher, mentor, and friend."

While teaching at BYU Marriott, Smith simultaneously developed several software packages for data collection and multivariate statistical analysis. Later, with the advent of online surveying and data collection, he founded an evolving series of online survey companies—including Qualtrics—with his sons, Ryan Smith and Jared Smith, and Stuart Orgill. Together, they worked out of Smith's basement and garage for seven years. "During this period of time, we focused on getting the product right before we scaled it," he says.

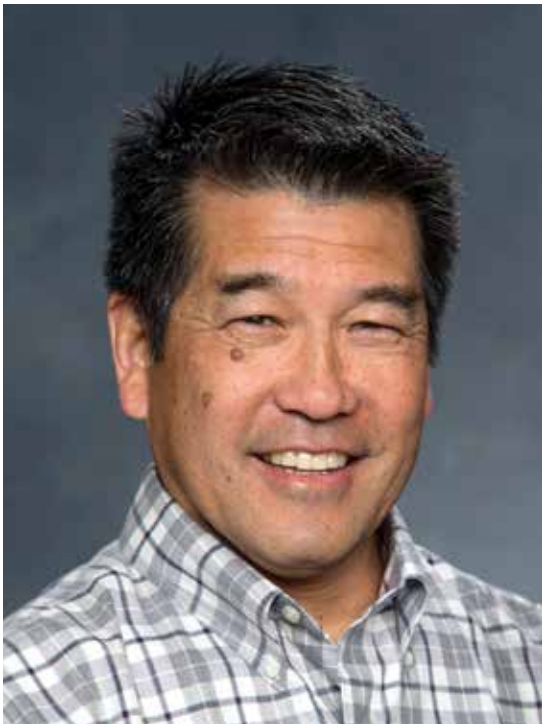
Qualtrics developed under Ryan and Jared's insightful leadership to become the world-leading Experience Management platform. In 2019, Qualtrics was sold to SAP for $8 billion—at the time, the largest private enterprise software acquisition in tech history.

Smith shares that the success of Qualtrics has allowed him and his family to focus on serving and creating a legacy of missionary, public, and philanthropic efforts for their posterity to learn from and follow. "Life provides us with a canvas that we fill with practical achievements, intellectual and spiritual understanding, and the love we give and receive as we minister and share our lives and resources," he says.

Smith and his wife, Karen, served as Church service missionaries in Hong Kong, and they trained healthcare professionals in newborn resuscitation techniques in Palestine, Ghana, and Nepal. They coordinated Church humanitarian service efforts in Israel and the West Bank (Occupied Palestinian Territory) while living and serving at the BYU Jerusalem Center in 2018. The couple recently completed a year of service doing special projects for the Middle East/Africa North Area.

The Smiths are both cancer survivors, and their philanthropic priorities focus on cancer treatment, research, and education. They support the Karen and Scott Smith Women's Center at the Kathryn F. Kirk Center at the Huntsman Cancer Institute. They've also made significant contributions to Utah Valley University, where Smith serves as vice chair of its Board of Trustees.

Smith continues to innovate and ignite growth in those around him. He and Karen enjoy serving with the young married couples in their ward while they plan for their next missionary service opportunity.



Stacy Taniguchi:

Most Likely to Conquer the Items on His 100 List

- Helped shape and grow BYU Marriott's experience design and management program.
- Climbed the highest peaks on six continents. (He skipped the seventh because it was too small.)

A master storyteller himself, Stacy Taniguchi played a leading role in the story of BYU Marriott's experience design and management program. He started teaching in BYU's Department of Recreation Management, which was housed in the now-dissolved College of Health and Human Performance. Six years later, the department moved to BYU Marriott, and he and his colleagues reinvented their discipline so it would better fit within the business school.

"In my mind, we had to not just fit into BYU Marriott but also bring value to the school," Taniguchi recalls. "Recreation management focuses on developing experiences. The power of well-designed experiences was becoming a topic of interest in business."

And thus, in 2017 a new BYU Marriott program was born: experience design and management.

Chase MacCourtney, a graduate of the program, felt the impact of Taniguchi's storytelling during a 2012 study abroad. "Whether we were in a shack in the forests of New Zealand, on an uninhabited island of Fiji, or in the outback of Australia, we lived to hear his gripping adventures every night before we went to bed. We called it 'story time with Papa T.'"

More than a storyteller, Taniguchi became MacCourtney's mentor and friend. "One of the most important things he did for me was to say, 'Chase, you're about to graduate. You need a plan.' That little push led me to research companies and get an offer from my top-choice company before graduating."

Taniguchi encouraged his students to create a list of things they want to accomplish and let it guide their lives—his own list has 100 items.

Since retiring in 2019, he has shared his stories with even wider audiences through a presentation titled "Choose to THRIVE." Speaking to a variety of groups, including incoming first-year students at colleges and universities across the United States, Taniguchi inspires people to actively shape their own life stories.

"Your life is full of opportunities," Taniguchi tells his audiences. "Never think that you don't have opportunities to grow and to be a better person and to enjoy life. You can choose to thrive, or you can just endure life."

The principles at the heart of Taniguchi's message have been a theme for his own postretirement life. Taniguchi also works with some of his former BYU colleagues and students in a consulting role for Beta Experiences, a company he helped found.

Taniguchi has crossed off every item on his personal 100 list and collected many anecdotes along the way. He's whitewater rafted on the Nile and been chased by Maasai warriors in Tanzania. What's next? He and his wife, LuAnn, are preparing for their next adventure: serving a full-time senior mission.

Gloria Wheeler:

Most Likely to Walk Across England

- Joined a small group of female faculty members in 1978 and became the first woman at BYU Marriott to attain full professor status.
- Left footprints in the business school and around the globe.

Gloria Wheeler blazed trails at BYU Marriott. She started in the business management department and transferred a few years later to the Romney Institute of Public Management—now the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics—as its first female faculty member.

Wheeler worked tirelessly to attract more women and other underrepresented groups to the program. She was also known throughout the school for her stats and research methods class.

"Throughout much of my career, because I was often the first woman in a particular role, I was highly visible," says Wheeler, who also taught HR management. "I always felt like I needed to do well because my performance might clear the way for others to follow me."

One of those students who shadowed Wheeler was Lori Wadsworth. "Lori was very bright," Wheeler says. "As a faculty, we did everything we could to encourage her to go on for a PhD."

Their efforts paid off. Wadsworth earned her PhD from the University of Utah, and Wheeler was instrumental in bringing Wadsworth to teach at BYU Marriott. Wadsworth went on to become chair for the department of public management.

Wadsworth recalls, "When I returned to BYU, Gloria Wheeler was the only other woman in the department, so she had a huge impact on me. She was aware that I needed mentoring. She took it upon herself to make sure that I was doing okay. She's a very kind and giving person."

Wheeler didn't just blaze trails at BYU Marriott; she also left footprints around the globe. Prior to her retirement, she and a small group of friends completed a 192-mile coast-to-coast walk in England.

"We averaged about 11 miles a day and took 17 days to walk it," she says. "It was a great experience because we walked through little towns and farm fields." Wheeler appreciated the tenacious spirit of the animals they encountered along the trail. "Chickens and cows don't move for people walking through," she says with a smile. "It's where they live."

Since retiring in 2008, Wheeler has continued to forge new frontiers—teaching in Mongolia and serving missions in Japan; Sacramento, California; Washington, DC; and Orem. She continues to serve at the Orem Digital Processing Center, preparing books to be added to familysearch.org, and she and her sister, Lida Jane Saunders, teach a *Come, Follow Me* class at Provo Rehabilitation and Nursing.

"There are many different ways you can serve people," Wheeler says. "The more you stay physically and mentally active, the more you can help yourself and the people around you." M

→ About the Author: *Jennifer Mathis graduated with an MA in mass communications from BYU while working at BYU Marriott. She is a writer and editor living in Price, Utah, with her husband and three children.*

around the **COOLER**

BY EMILY EDMONDS

1

2

1. CIRCADIAN CYCLES

Sunlight is your body's cue for many things. Getting outside early in the morning syncs your circadian rhythm (your body's internal 24-hour clock) for the day. When light hits your retinas, it signals your brain to stop making melatonin and to start producing cortisol for energy. The light also sets an internal countdown that will spark drowsiness when nighttime rolls around.

Morning Light's Brilliance

If you're looking to calibrate your brain for an optimal day, look no further than your backyard. Sunlight—especially the day's first rays—boasts a variety of benefits. Catching early-morning light for 10–30 minutes will tune your circadian rhythm, improve your health, and provide other daily payoffs.

Summer is a prime time to sneak outside—when the morning temperatures are inviting and the sunrises are spectacular. Try it for a week: eat, read, meditate, stretch, or exercise in the fresh air first thing in the morning. It could be the dawn of a simple, healthy habit.

2. VIBRANT VITAMIN

When sunlight contacts skin, the body immediately begins to produce vitamin D—and it's an anti-inflammatory nutrient worth noting. Having enough vitamin D can *de*crease (get it?) the risk of cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, and autoimmune and cardiovascular diseases. By getting outside early when the UV index is low, you can safely sunbathe while accruing vitamin D, a *de*ficiency (again!) that impacts an estimated 1 billion people worldwide.

3. SCREEN-FREE WAKING

Not all light is created equal; waking up to the light of an electronic screen actually backfires. About 89 percent of Americans are lured by their smartphones within the first 10 minutes of waking, programming their brains to expect more frequent dopamine hits. Screen light also halts the beneficial theta and alpha brain waves produced while emerging from sleep—a disruption that conditions your mind for a day of distraction.

4. RADIANT TEMPERAMENT

A pastel sunrise isn't just easy on the eyes. Research has shown that early-morning light contributes to a better mood because it triggers serotonin, a feel-good chemical that plays a role in fighting depression. It's no wonder that more and more doctors are prescribing light therapy—natural and artificial—as a way to combat depression, especially in the gray winter months. (Even a cloudy day provides 2–4 times more lux than bright indoor light.)

5. DAWN'S DIVIDENDS

If you're still hesitant about getting outside once you rise (and shout), here are some additional perks: Early-morning light exposure has been linked to lower body mass index, heightened focus, improved sleep, increased energy, a stronger immune system, and better decision-making. (Skip sunglasses and hats for the greatest advantage.) With so many benefits, it's hard to deny that getting outside is a brilliant move.

Finance, Family, & Fulfillment

A CONVERSATION WITH JOHN WALDRON

John Waldron, president and chief operating officer of Goldman Sachs, visited BYU Marriott not only to receive but also to give. Before accepting the school's 2023 International Executive of the Year Award, Waldron shared counsel with students in a special Q&A session moderated by BYU Marriott dean Brigitte Madrian. More than 350 students packed into the Tanner Building's first-floor lecture hall to hear Waldron's experiences and observations; topics ranged from mistakes to mentors, family to finance. After the session, Waldron greeted students individually while Goldman Sachs representatives mingled with the crowd. The following are abridged highlights from Waldron's remarks on October 20, 2023.

MADRIAN:

Will you tell us a little bit about your personal journey?

WALDRON:

My journey began in Cleveland, Ohio. I lived there until I was 15, when my father took a job in Philadelphia and moved us from the Midwest to the East Coast. It seems fairly simplistic, but it actually changed the trajectory of my education and my career.

I enrolled at Middlebury College. I was an English major and an economics minor, but I was more of an English kid than a finance kid.

I thought I was going be a writer, but I went to the University of Chicago for a summer business program, which changed my perspective quite a bit. I learned a lot about finance and entry-level opportunities in financial services. Consequently, I went back to school my senior year and dedicated my job search to financial services. I thought it would be an interesting place to learn finance and also be a good baseline for whatever I would do in my career. I had absolutely no intention of staying beyond the first few years. But now—30-some years into it—I have every intention of staying in this arena, which I love.

MADRIAN:

We often have a view of what we're going to do with our lives, and I love the fact that you started out in English and decided to explore financial services.

WALDRON:

It takes an enormous amount of hard work, dedication, and commitment to be successful. So if you don't love your job and really wake up motivated every morning, then it's not easy to be successful. The most important thing is to have a passion.

MADRIAN:

What did you think your career was going to look like when you graduated from college, and how does that compare to what actually happened?

WALDRON:

I thought I would spend two years on Wall Street, learn a variety of fundamental skills, then work for an industrial company or for a nonfinancial services company, and then pursue an executive track. It turned out that I fell in love with the work—but more importantly—with the people I got to work with. I was constantly energized by the people who I was interacting with.

> “Don’t be in a hurry. I think I was a little in a hurry. I’ve gotten better at that. I would encourage you to enjoy the ride. Life is a great journey. It’s not always perfect. There are going to be challenges. Absorb them and live in the moment as much as possible.”

There’s a learning curve—and it actually got steeper. It never really felt like it plateaued, and it still doesn’t feel like it’s plateaued. What’s kept me going is the intellectual curiosity and the strength of the people around me. I still learn today from a lot of young people who have really good ideas.

MADRIAN:

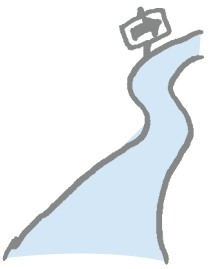
Was your first job out of college at Goldman, or did you start somewhere else?

WALDRON:

I started working for a firm called Bear Stearns. There are interesting opportunities when you can go work for firms that are younger or less established, where you might actually get more running room early in your career, which is what happened to me. I learned a lot because I was thrown out there a little bit more ambitiously than I might have been at a firm like Goldman Sachs. I made more mistakes early in my career, but I learned from those mistakes. I had to interact with senior people more quickly. It taught me a lot about the interaction with more established professionals and how those interactions are meant to go.

MADRIAN:

You said that you made a lot of mistakes and that you learned from them. Do you have an example of a mistake that was an important learning opportunity for you?



WALDRON:

Something I struggled with early in my career was an undue amount of optimism—which is another way of saying not enough skepticism or cynicism—and not questioning whether the path we were going down was really the right path. You can be too quick to jump on the trendy piece of advice or the trendy theme in the market. There’s a lot of momentum on Wall Street. It’s hard to go against the tide. I learned to stop and to question—to make sure the advice resonated.

I think I have pretty good instincts, but sometimes I ignored those instincts because the wave was going a certain direction, and I was a little too optimistic about the wave. As I’ve gotten more seasoned, spent more time, looked at more transactions, and worked in more situations with clients, I’ve become much more willing to go against the tide, challenge the conventional wisdom, and give advice that isn’t popular. I think that has served me well, although it wasn’t a strength early in my career.

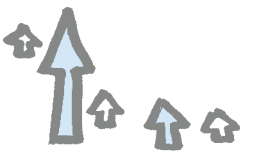
MADRIAN:

Was there a person in your professional journey who saw you as someone who would be able to handle a large organization?

WALDRON:

There were many people on the way who mentored me—some who I really understood at the time were mentoring me, and some who were doing it from a distance. These people saw raw material and realized that they could put some of their imprint on that raw material to help me become more of a seasoned executive.

One of the complicated equations about being in any business is you go from being an individual contributor to being somebody who can scale their impact. For a long time I was an individual contributor; I was working on deals, advising companies, raising capital, and working on transactions. Then there was a period of my career when I was asked to take ownership of more than just things that were in my purview. It’s a little bit like being a new parent. You realize, *Wow, I’m actually responsible for this young child. And if I don’t do the right things, this young child isn’t going to survive, much less thrive.*



I remember quite distinctly waking up at one point and thinking, *I have to make those people better in order for us to be more successful.* That was an eye-opener for me. And I think I got a lot of mentoring along the way as far as how to do that—how to motivate people, how to think about yourself in terms of a coach. I still think a lot about that transition.

MADRIAN:

Was there a moment when a switch flipped and you could see yourself not just as an individual contributor but as a leader?

WALDRON:

When I moved from New York to London in the early part of 2007, there was a lot of money coming from all parts of the globe into London. I remember distinctly the feeling of excess that was all around me. And then shortly thereafter, the financial crisis happened.

That was the first time I was in a job where I had a very big set of responsibilities, and it was clear we were going into a crisis. I awakened to the fact that that I needed to figure out how to navigate all the challenges around me—the business, the people, the clients, the risk that we had on our balance sheet, and so forth. For me, that was an eye-opening experience. Had I not been through that experience, I wouldn't be in this job today. I learned a lot of lessons in that period of time.

MADRIAN:

You're married and you've got six kids. As a woman I'm often asked about balancing family and career, and I think it's unfair to only ask women about that, so I'm going to ask you. You've got an incredibly demanding job—very public, a lot of pressure—and you've got a large family. How do you balance your family and your career?

WALDRON:

It starts by having a spouse who is super supportive of my career and what we're trying to achieve together: a fairly ambitious career and a really close, tight, family-oriented life together. She's a great partner. When you get married, the most important thing is to find someone who will really be your partner through the ups and downs and will understand you and really stand by you and have you stand by them. My wife is magnificent in every respect that way. I couldn't do this without somebody like that as a partner.

The second thing I would say is discipline. I'm pretty disciplined about my time. I'm organized and focused on what's business and what's personal. I color-code my calendar, just as an example, which is something that I worked on a long time ago when I had my first couple of kids. I was much less senior at my job, and I had a lot less flexibility in terms of how I could dictate my time. I put things in my calendar that were immovable—school plays or sporting events—and I've maintained that to this day.

This weekend I have quite an active schedule. I will be driving around to various sporting events—captive time with my children in which I try to get them to talk to me. And I'll be on the sidelines doing my best not to be that overbearing parent.

I try to put my devices away when I'm with my children. That's something I've gotten better at. My kids have actually helped me get better. They have often said, "You're here, but you're not really here."

With six kids, the hardest thing is to have an individual relationship with each child. I started trying to build more individualized time, including taking each one away for a trip, taking them to school individually, and really taking time to talk with them. Putting them to bed individually, reading a story, asking them questions.

MADRIAN:

I think that is wonderful advice and counsel for everyone in this room. I'm going to ask you one last question, and then we'll open it up to the students. What do you know today that you wish you had known when you were a college student?

WALDRON:

I did not stop to smell the roses along the way as much as I should have. You go through these various phases of life. They're each fascinating: young career, single, friends, married life, early-married life with no kids, then married life with young kids, and married life with older kids. And then you wake up and you're 50. You're wondering, *How did that happen so quickly?*

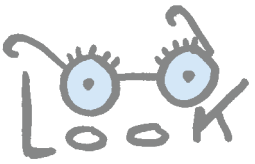
Every one of those moments is quite special and interesting. They are learning experiences. Don't wish them away. Don't be in a hurry. I think I was a little in a hurry. I've gotten better at that. I would encourage you to enjoy the ride. Life is a great journey. It's not always perfect. There are going to be challenges. Absorb them and live in the moment as much as possible.

RHETT ANDERSON, FINANCE:

How did you intentionally develop the skills and attributes that you need to serve in the role you're in today?

WALDRON:

As I was young in my career, I would pretty intentionally push the people who I worked for or the people who worked around me for feedback. I was an athlete as a kid, and I was always coached to work on my weaknesses as I was trying to become a better athlete. I ultimately wasn't as good an athlete, so I had to quit and become an executive. But getting feedback was a lesson I learned early in athletics and in school. What are my weaknesses? What do I have to do to work on them?



The other area is that I was very observant. I still am very observant of people more senior than I am. How do they go about their business and their daily activities? What do they do, and what do I want to emulate? It doesn't mean I want to be exactly like them, because you have to play to your own characteristics, capabilities, and strengths. But everybody has a way of going about things, and I would try to pull different components of what I saw—just little nuggets I could pull away as a piece of my own. It could have been a client or somebody I worked for. It could have been someone I met in my personal life or somebody who I was watching parent their own kids. Those are two things that I've learned over time.

STAN OAKES, FINANCE

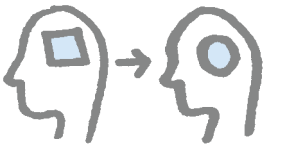
You mentioned that as your position has become more elevated, motivating people around you has become increasingly important. What things can we do now to be an energizer to motivate the people around us?

WALDRON:

Have a willingness to stand up and share your voice when it's uncomfortable. That would include when you're in small-group settings—taking a position, explaining your position, and articulating why you believe in it strongly.

I think your generation is much better at this than my generation was. You are not as afraid, I observe, to step out. Practice doing that as much as you can. Not winging it, not just throwing stuff out there randomly, but actual things that you've really thought about—personal issues, societal issues, business issues. Practice the skill of articulating opposition—taking a stance, articulating it to the people around you, and engaging in debate respectfully.

I'm still practicing that skill of sitting around a table with very strong-willed people and trying to convince them that the direction I would like to go is the right direction. It's a skill that you can develop in your career that will serve you incredibly well.



Also, be willing to change your mind. Don't be dogmatic, where you believe so strongly in everything that you think is right that you're not willing to listen to others' competing points of view. One of the most powerful things you can do as a leader is to change your mind after considering others' input and perspectives. It doesn't mean you always change your mind. But if you can articulate a position and then be moved off your position because somebody has an argument that actually changed your opinion, that's the mark of a strong leader.

EASTON CHRISTIANSEN, PRE-BUSINESS

What habits do you deem to be the most important for us to start developing?

WALDRON:

Most people are better talkers than listeners. I would work hard to develop the ability to listen and to hear competing viewpoints and assimilate those competing viewpoints to form your own judgment. Unfortunately, you're growing up in an era with more information overload than I had when I was your age, so it's going to be even harder to assimilate all that information.

Coming up with a system for time management is incredibly important. The most effective executives I see are really good at managing their time. They don't waste a lot of time on things that are not important.

The third thing would be relational skills: having the ability to relate to other people, to disagree respectfully, to learn from other people's perspectives. If you can develop those skills, you're going to be really well off because they're in short supply. The more people there are who can bridge divides, the better we'll be. M

About the Recipient

Established by BYU Marriott 40 years ago, the International Executive of the Year (IEY) Award honors outstanding executives who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and high moral and ethical standards. It is the most prestigious award given by BYU Marriott. The 2023 IEY Award was presented to John Waldron by BYU president C. Shane Reese and BYU Marriott dean Brigitte Madrian.

Waldron joined Goldman Sachs in 2000 and currently serves as the company's president and chief operating officer. He is a member of the Goldman Sachs Management Committee, cochair of its Firmwide Enterprise Risk Committee, and chair of its Firmwide Reputational Risk Committee. In addition to his roles at Goldman Sachs, Waldron sits on the executive committee of the Institute of International Finance (IIF) and on the international advisory council of the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC). He is also a member of the US-China Business Council, the international advisory panel of the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), and the Council on Foreign Relations.

MONEY TALKS:

TEACHING KIDS FINANCIAL FLUENCY

Even if your money habits aren't gold standard, it's important to talk with your kids—and regularly—about spending, saving, and giving. Here's how.

BY BRITTANY ROGERS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ZARA PICKEN

Parents have a lot of questions for Ashley LeBaron-Black: Yes or no to allowance? Who foots the bill for college? Should kids know their parents' salaries?

LeBaron-Black, an assistant professor in the BYU School of Family Life, specializes in financial socialization—how parents teach kids about money. And she hates to break this to you, but we're shortchanging our kids.

In nearly 50 peer-reviewed studies, LeBaron-Black has measured not only how today's emerging adults learned to navigate finances in their youth but also how they're faring amid soaring rent, home, and higher-ed costs. Combine that with low financial literacy rates and high debt, and you can see why LeBaron-Black views the big picture as grim. "It's harder now to be doing well financially than it used to be, which means we have to do a little bit better as parents," she says.

The good news: parents can move the dial. Whether or not they intend to be, parents are the number one source of financial learning for their kids. Parental teaching is more salient than financial literacy courses, peers, jobs, and media combined. "Kids are going to learn so much from you—the good and the bad," LeBaron-Black says.

Here, find her best practices to impart the good, augmented with examples and tips from personal finance gurus Jim Brau, a current BYU Marriott professor, and Bryan Sudweeks, a recently retired finance professor. These three experts agree that you don't have to be a maven at money management to raise a savvy saver, spender, and giver.

> "We find that young adults generally manage money much the way their parents managed money. . . .

> It puts some responsibility on parents to get their own act together."

"The most important thing is being intentional," LeBaron-Black says. "Be even just a little more intentional at doing even a little bit more."

DON'T LET MONEY BE TABOO

For some parents, talking to kids about money is as awkward as talking about the birds and the bees. "Many parents treat it as a one-and-done conversation," LeBaron-Black says. "They think they can tell their kids all they need to know in one sitting."

Why the hesitation? Some parents don't feel competent in financial concepts themselves. Others report fears that it will put financial stress on the kids, especially if money is tight.

On that front, the research claps back. "If there's financial stress in the home, we find that kids are already picking up on that," LeBaron-Black explains. "It actually helps to *alleviate* stress to have a parent say, 'Here's what's going on, and here's what we're doing about it.'"

Affluence creates its own blind spots. "We find that more privileged kids are often shielded from financial thinking and responsibility," LeBaron-Black says. "Parents might perceive it as loving to provide this carefree environment for their kids."

Many parents also want to keep their finances private; they don't want kids blabbing to the neighborhood. While talking salaries with your kids may seem taboo, the experts advocate for as much transparency as kids are ready for developmentally.

"I wouldn't tell a five-year-old my salary," LeBaron-Black says, "but a teenager is ready to understand—and needs to understand—as they start thinking about their own career options and the standard of living those careers afford."

BUDGET AT THE KITCHEN TABLE

Talk is cheap, say the experts: your advice goes further if you model healthy financial behaviors yourself.

"We find that young adults generally manage money much the way their parents managed money," LeBaron-Black says. This means they're apt to repeat your financial faux pas, be they sins of commission (like overspending) or omission (not investing early enough). "It puts some responsibility on parents to get their own act together."

But even parents who are good money managers can miss the mark if those healthy habits are not visible. "Those examples only stick if children have the opportunity to see them and to learn from them. That means taking your kids with you to the bank. That means budgeting out on the kitchen table instead of behind closed doors."

The precursor to that kitchen-table visual, Brau is quick to point out, is to *have* a budget. "I'm amazed at how many families don't," he says. Between autopay and loose spending habits, many parents are modeling a casual approach to finances, from eating out all the time to overextending for a nicer house.

"As parents, we need to pay our tithing first, spend less than we make, and contribute to savings accounts—both a rainy-day account and a long-term savings account," Brau says. "And you model that starting when kids are three years old."

You read that right: three. The research shows that toddlers can learn basic concepts, like value and exchange, and a Cambridge study shows that money habits are already formed by age seven.[1] "How early should I start teaching my kids about money? *As soon as possible*!" LeBaron-Black says emphatically.

LeBaron-Black was 10 years old when her parents dug out Monopoly money to illustrate how much they made in one month. "I remember thinking, 'Whoa! That's so much!'" she recalls. From that stack they then counted out the mortgage, car, groceries, and utilities, until there were just a few bills left. "It was hugely eye-opening," LeBaron-Black remembers. That experience taught her a valuable lesson at an early age: "Life is expensive, and we live within a budget."

Correction: you live *well within* that budget, Brau says, relaying a line from his teenage son: "Pa, I thought we were the poorest family in the ward because you constantly told us we could not afford things."

SHOW THEM THE MONEY

Here it is, LeBaron-Black's most important piece of advice: kids need hands-on experience managing their own money. Lots of experience.

"Actual hands-on experience with money was tied so strongly to kids' future financial self-efficacy—to all kinds of financial outcomes we want them to have later in life," says LeBaron-Black, whose article in the *Journal of Family Issues* explores the value of

experiential learning.[2] Babysitting, mowing lawns, and setting up a lemonade stand are excellent, but a small allowance really teaches ongoing money management. Should it be tied to chores or just doled out, posing the risk that kids will see allowance as an entitlement? The research offers no definitive answer—and the debate is vigorous. LeBaron-Black suggests a middle-ground solution, with parents expecting some jobs to be done as part of contributing to the family and paying for other jobs that are defined as extra. "The key," she says, "is that money is regularly in kids' hands to practice building these habits."

One such habit is immediately divvying earnings into three accounts: give, save, spend. "For little kids, it's really helpful to have one of those piggy banks with three slots, or even labeled jars," LeBaron-Black says. Arrive at a percentage for each category, say 10-30-60, and follow it consistently.

"You want to name every dollar," Brau adds. And you want to show your older kids how to set up these same categorical, automatic transfers when they start earning direct-deposit paychecks.

Physical paper money is best for young kids' cognitive development, LeBaron-Black says. And then when the "save" jar fills up, it's off to the bank. "Little kids can start getting used to not spending all of their money."

As terrifying as it sounds, teens need practice with a credit card too. One asterisk here: Drill the resounding finding that people spend less when they pay with cash. Walk teens through the true cost of paying only their minimum credit card payment. Make sure their credit limit is low, then step back. "Kids need the latitude to learn," LeBaron-Black says, even if that includes making mistakes. Better now while the stakes are low, she says; a twentysomething's mistakes are liable to involve "much larger chunks of money."

SANCTION SAVING

Every kid needs to experience that crowning feeling of working and saving up for something, experts say. Take Coqui, the Brau family dog.

"We did not want a dog," Brau relays. "My son begged for years." Brau and his wife made their son tally the total cost of dog ownership, not just the up-front cost, and allowed him to save. "We'd go to Cold Stone Creamery as a family, and he would just order a cup of water. He did this for four years.'"

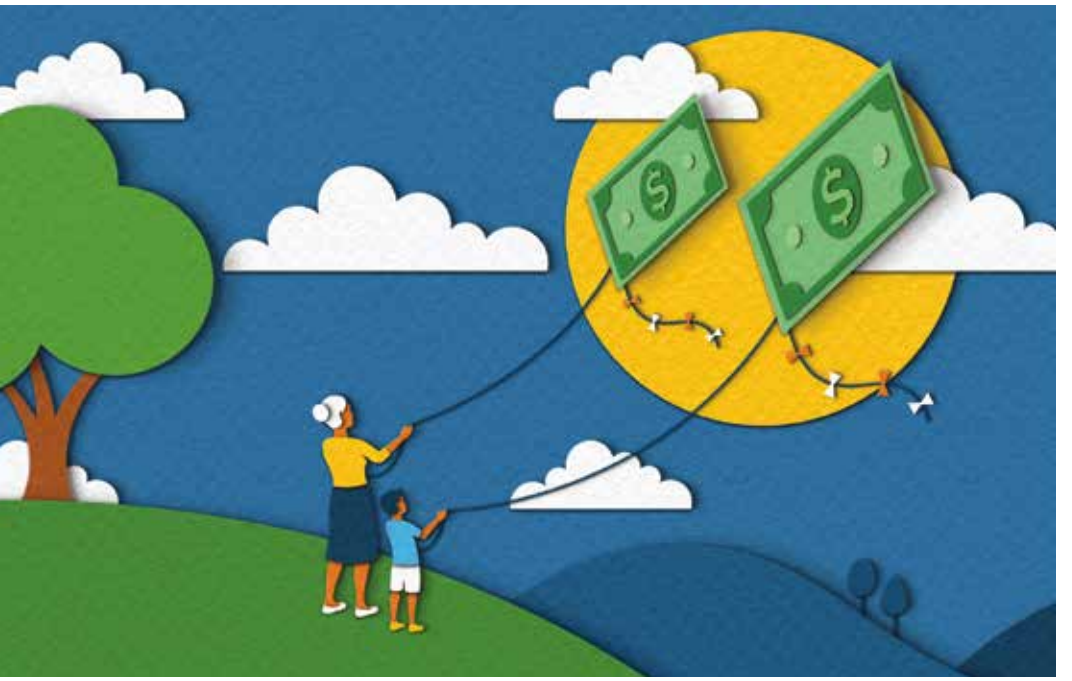
On sabbatical in Puerto Rico, where the floors are cement and ideal for puppy-training, the Braus relented. "We went from pound to pound until he found the exact dog he wanted, and he paid for it with his own money that he'd saved since *kindergarten*," Brau says. "To this day our son is so careful with his money. He's in law school now with no debt. He's crushing it."

The practice of truly earning something "sticks in your soul," says LeBaron-Black, and the story becomes something young adults will retell with pride—perhaps most importantly to themselves.

Another exercise she recommends: Make a family savings goal. Whether it's to make necessary cutbacks or fund a trip to Disneyland, let your kids have a say. "It can be conversations like, 'We could cut $50 a month by canceling a couple of subscriptions or eating out one fewer time a month,'" LeBaron-Black says. "Give kids options." They'll be more engaged—and the lessons will be all the more memorable.

Incentives boost morale too. "When our kids wanted things, we'd tell them, 'Look, you pay half and we'll pay half,'" Sudweeks says. And for every dollar their kids saved for college and missions, they offered a parental 2:1 match. If that's not feasible, teach kids how to comparison shop and let them keep the difference if they find a better price.

Sudweeks offers one final caution: have your kids earn the total cost of an item *before* buying it. "We never said, 'You can pay us back,' because that's debt."



MAKE IT INTERESTING

There are a few capstone concepts that should absolutely be part of your kids' financial tutelage; among them, the wonder of compound interest. "There are lots of options on how to do it," LeBaron-Black says. The goal is to plant the seed of long-term investment.

Consider starting a "family bank" with a 10 percent interest rate, then pay interest on the preset terms. When kids are ready to level up, try a Sudweeks family tradition. "When our grandkids turn 14, we set up a custodial Roth account and teach them the basics of investing," says Sudweeks, who details this and other investment options at personalfinance.byu.edu/helpingothers. The website is essentially a free personal finance class; use the financial calculators there, he says, to show kids how money can grow.

"Investing is not rocket science," Sudweeks says. His advice for your kids: Find a tax-sheltered place to park savings, like a Roth account or a 529 college savings plan. Within those accounts, choose to invest in low-cost index mutual funds, which diversify risk and perform just as well as or better than funds that have expensive management fees.

And parents, if you can, start putting money in when your child is born. "By the time our kids had gotten to college, the markets had paid for half of their educations," Sudweeks says. Merely having an account in their names (even if it has next to nothing in it) makes them six times more likely to go to college.[3]

When it comes to striking a balance on how much to contribute to your child's college education, know this: BYU research advises against free rides but also finds that working through college is a risk factor for dropping out.[4] Further research shows students who work part-time (but under 20 hours) get better grades.[5]

"A little bit of struggle is good for people," says LeBaron-Black, who is grateful her parents supported her during her freshman year—and grateful they cut her off after that. She lived on a $150-a-month food budget until the end of her PhD. "I learned that I can be really frugal."

CREATE A GENEALOGY OF GENEROSITY

Just by practicing a religious tithe, you are opening your kids' apertures to giving—a practice you want to imbue. "Being generous is not the first thing people think of when we're talking about financial literacy and financial health, but it's important," LeBaron-Black says. The literature shows people who give charitably are happier, gain health benefits such as lower blood pressure, and—get this—make more money themselves.

In addition to tithing, Sudweeks says, a regular topic for family discussion should be "How do we want to take care of the Lord's poor?" Sudweeks recommends earmarking a percentage for giving, one that grows in tandem with abundance—bucking the standing societal trend of donating less percentagewise when earnings increase. "Why should our giving decrease as our blessings increase? Giving should be part of your family's mission and vision," he continues. "If we demonstrate this stewardship, we will make giving, strengthening families, and building Zion an important part of our children's lives and characters."

In addition to religious donations, consider how you can involve children in volunteering, in interpersonal giving to friends and family, and in charitable giving to other organizations and causes you value. Do they know how you want to make the world better?

"Too often I think we go through life on autopilot," LeBaron-Black says. "Stop and think, 'Does my budget and how I'm actually spending reflect what I care about, and am I passing that on to my kids?'"

Generosity also taps into something bigger, LaBaron-Black says—into "the very meaning of money and why we should want it." Money offers stability, but after we have achieved that, it should become a tool to help others.

"This is your financial story," she adds. "Your kids are picking up on it." M

NOTES

1. See David Whitebread and Sue Bingham, *Habit Formation and Learning in Young Children* (London: Money Advice Service, 2013).
2. See Ashley B. LeBaron et al., "Practice Makes Perfect: Experiential Learning as a Method for Financial Socialization," *Journal of Family Issues* 40, no. 4 (March 2019): 435–63; see also Ashley B. LeBaron-Black et al., "Finances and Fate: Parent Financial Socialization, Locus of Control, and Mental Health in Emerging Adulthood," *Emerging Adulthood* 10, no. 6 (December 2022): 1484–96.
3. See William Elliott III and Sondra G. Beverly, "The Role of Savings and Wealth in Reducing 'Wilt' Between Expectations and College Attendance," *Journal of Children and Poverty* 17, no. 2: 179.
4. See Laura M. Padilla-Walker, Larry J. Nelson, and Jason S. Carroll, "Affording Emerging Adulthood: Parental Financial Assistance of Their College-Aged Children," *Journal of Adult Development* 19, no. 1 (March 2012): 50–58.
5. See Lauren Dundes and Jeff Marx, "Balancing Work and Academics in College: Why Do Students Working 10 to 19 Hours per Week Excel? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice* 8, no. 1 (May 2006): 107–20; see also Gary R. Pike, George D. Kuh, and Ryan Massa-McKinley, "First-Year Students' Employment, Engagement, and Academic Achievement: Untangling the Relationship Between Work and Grades," *NASPA Journal* 45, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 560–82.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brittany Rogers, a freelance author, lives in American Fork, Utah, with her husband and three children. She is still saving for the horse she wanted as a kid.

Cultivating Corporate Stewardship

NEARLY 100 STUDENTS AT BYU MARRIOTT TOOK THE CHALLENGE to make a major lifestyle change during January 2024. But these modifications—including shifting to a vegan or vegetarian diet, adjusting home utility use, or going car-free for a month—weren't driven by New Year's resolutions. They were part of an assignment for Global Supply Chain Management (GSCM) 414: Introduction to Sustainable Business.

Available to any business student, GSCM 414 addresses how to find creative solutions to sustainability problems faced by businesses. "The class gives students the framework they need to see business through the lenses of economic, environmental, and social sustainability," says GSCM professor Bekki Brau. "All three perspectives will be essential in the future of business."

In the first weeks of class, students are asked to identify one action or habit they can alter. "The exercise makes you look at your own life and start thinking about the changes you would have to make to live more sustainably," says Jaeden Cook, a Seattle native and the course's teaching assistant. "Corporations are on a whole different scale. If you're telling them to completely change their entire receiving system, that's a really big task. Seeing how sustainable transitions apply in your own life can help you understand those tricky business transitions."

Through courses like GSCM 414, students are learning more about stewardship and are pushing the boundaries of corporate responsibility.

In addition to applying principles of sustainability personally, students in GSCM 414 are helping the larger sustainability effort on campus. Brau has partnered with the BYU Sustainability Office to have student teams help create the Sustainable BYU 2030 Plan. "The plan will include goals, metrics, initiatives, and actionable steps for being more environmentally and socially sustainable on campus," she says. "I want the students to serve a real and present need."

Brau also invites guest speakers to talk about sustainability in their unique fields. Lindsey Schwab, who works in supply chain at Walmart, emphasized to the class that both businesses and communities have a strong interest in sustainable practices but lack the infrastructure to support them.

Brau's students learn about companies that are stepping up to help create this infrastructure. For example, the course includes a case study of HP in Canada, which began collecting empty ink cartridges from customers and refilling them.

"The status quo is a cradle-to-grave perspective: a product starts with raw materials, moves through production and transportation, and ultimately ends up in a landfill once it's done being used, whether it has more life to give or not," Brau says. What HP has done is create a closed-loop supply chain. "Now the used product—instead of sitting in a landfill—can be repaired, reused, refurbished, or recycled within the supply chain and have life again."

Through courses like GSCM 414, students are learning more about stewardship and are pushing the boundaries of corporate responsibility. "We're really trying to question the status quo in sustainability," Brau says, "to think critically and to continue asking, 'How can we change things for the better?'"

—MELISSA EEN

"The class gives students the framework they need to see business through the lenses of economic, environmental, and social sustainability."

—BEKKI BRAU

Gretchen Montgomery
MBA, 2004

For many people, one marathon is enough to last a lifetime. Not so for Gretchen Olson Montgomery.

She ran her first one as an MBA student at BYU Marriott after training with her classmates. "I survived it and thought, 'I'll never do that again,'" she remembers. "But you catch this running bug. The more time that passes after the race, the more you think, 'I can do it again.'"

Sweet Victories

BY SARA SMITH ATWOOD

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY BRADLEY SLADE

She did Chicago in 2006. New York City in 2007. She took a decade-long hiatus from both running and a high-octane Wall Street career to raise kids, then she hit the pavement again with the goal to run a marathon in every state. Now she's at 51 marathons and counting, on track to reach her 50th state next year. Her next goal is to run a marathon on every continent, including Antarctica.

"I'm a high achiever," Gretchen says. "I need to be knocking down goals."

One of her most recent victories has been especially sweet: launching and growing Gretchen's Goodies, a bakery featuring original recipes served as portable desserts in a cup. At 70 sweet treats and counting—including cakes, cheesecakes, and pies—her on-the-go goodies are the perfect fare for customers patronizing the gas station purchased by her husband, 2004 MAcc grad John Montgomery, in his own departure from an investment banking and fintech career.

Since it opened in 2021, Gretchen's Goodies has become a local landmark. But the route that led Gretchen from BYU to Wall Street to Tampa, Florida, has been much like a marathon: exhausting, exhilarating, and enriching. Life in Tampa is much brighter, but the pace hasn't let up one bit as she and her family have built their lives and their business from scratch.

What Does MBA Stand For?

Gretchen was finishing up a degree in history education at Utah State University and one final barrier remained: student teaching.

While interviewing for a placement, she remembers, "I just realized, I never want to be a teacher. Ever." Gretchen, who was raised in Paradise, Utah, graduated that semester in history and headed to Washington, DC, to intern with Utah senator Bob Bennett.

There she found some clarity. "I filed my mission papers and was called to Ukraine, which was surprising. But God put me where He needed me to be, humbled by a challenging climate, people, and language," she explains. In Ukraine she and her fellow sister missionaries spent any spare time baking, a hobby Gretchen had picked up as a kid by trying her hand at ward cookbook recipes. "The ingredients were limited, so we got creative," she says. Her companions also prompted her next step: joining them at BYU.

▲ *(Above left) Gretchen's first marathon in Logan, Utah, 2003. (Above right) Gretchen with MBA classmates at the First Annual Corporate Climb in 2004.*

Her sister-in-law suggested Gretchen apply to BYU Marriott's MBA program. "I don't even know what an MBA is," Gretchen responded. "What does it stand for?" But as long as an MBA would get her into BYU with her friends, she was game. She crammed for the GMAT and was admitted to the program.

When it came time to choose a specialty, she started with marketing—another suggestion from her sister-in-law. "I took my first marketing class by David Whitlark, and he humbled me," Gretchen says. "He gave me my first A minus." Gretchen soon found that finance was a great fit for her. "I really loved

"I really loved working with numbers. My dream job was to be in equity research on Wall Street."

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While Gretchen discovered the MBA program almost by accident, John knew from childhood that he belonged in business. "My dad was an accounting major and instilled a love of accounting in me," John says. In fact, John was so single-mindedly focused that his friends gave him the nickname Zoom Zoom—he just couldn't slow down.

It's possible John zoomed past Gretchen at some point at BYU. But the two never met in the Tanner Building. That wouldn't happen until New York City.

The Big Apple

"There are three decisions that have really set the trajectory of my life," Gretchen says. The first two: serving a mission and earning her MBA at BYU. And number three? "Moving to New York City," she says.

New York was a dream built in b-school. "It's the pinnacle of success," Gretchen says. "If you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere. I was single. I loved to travel. You don't get those kinds of opportunities forever."

After many interviews and no job offers in equity research, she ended up getting hired by Zions Bank as a bond trader in Jersey City, across the river from Manhattan. "I was doing the reverse commute," Gretchen says. "I lived in New York City, then took the train out to Jersey City."

New York City, she loved. "I still love it," she says. "I love every part of New York." Skyscrapers, tree-lined streets, the fast-paced life, a temple on the upper West Side, bakeries with subway tiles. She was in her element.

With bond trading—not so much. "I was good at my job," Gretchen remembers. "I made a lot of money for Zions, but I wasn't passionate about it." After sticking it out for almost two years, she caught wind of an opportunity much more her style through the city's strong network of Latter-day Saints in finance. She was hired by Deutsche Bank as an analyst, working first in apparel retail with brands like Gap, Abercrombie, and Aeropostale, then in the food industry with Kraft, Kellogg, and Hershey. The gig was everything she'd dreamed of.

Around the same time, Gretchen moved from the Upper West Side—with its brownstones, trees, and Central Park proximity—to an apartment in the sky-scraping financial district—a 10-minute walk from her Wall Street office. And there, in the young single adult ward, is where she finally crossed paths with John.

It was not love at first sight. "He was arrogant and obnoxious, always bragging about his GMAT score—which was funny, because mine was higher," Gretchen says. John offers no defense. "I try to be humble, but I'm not," he says. "I was cocky and rough around the edges. But let's be clear—so was she. She's intimidating. She's confident. She wants things her way."

From the outside, their personalities read like the clash of the titans. But in each other, they found something perfect: "Neither of us could ever handle someone who wasn't intense," John explains. "We both have a New Yorker personality."

As their relationship quickly grew serious, John put all his cards on the table. "I am a workaholic," he told Gretchen. His career in banking had grueling hours, with John at the office evenings and weekends. Given her own 12-hour days on Wall Street, Gretchen understood—and she was all in.

Out of Gas

Right after the honeymoon, John went to work at the Royal Bank of Canada. The couple moved into an apartment on Wall Street itself, a quick walk from both their offices. Even with the short commute, "John would go in at 9 a.m., and I wouldn't see him until 3 or 4 a.m. the next day. On Sundays, he would stop in the church to take the sacrament, then go back," Gretchen says. "I felt like I was a single wife."

She was lonely but never resentful. Before long their first child was born. Gretchen wrestled with the decision to parent from

home or stay on at Deutsche Bank, which was willing to be flexible and work with her needs and schedule.

"I had always planned on staying home with my kids, but going back after maternity leave was so rewarding," she says. Her husband soon jumped ship to a firm in San Francisco, and Gretchen felt it was the right time to stay home.

San Francisco ended up being a short yearlong stint, but it was a good fit. "We were living in Inner Sunset, just two blocks away from Golden Gate Park," she says. "That was our playground. I would walk there every day, and the weather was awesome. It was much closer to Utah, so I saw my family a lot."

John's career next took their family to Charlottesville, Virginia—and, for the first time, out of a large city. "We decided to embrace the suburban lifestyle," Gretchen says. "We bought a house, a dog, and a minivan—all those things we couldn't have in the big cities. It was fantastic."

They were there for ten years, in the thick of making a living and raising a family. Never one to slow down, Gretchen threw herself into her role as a stay-at-home parent. She volunteered at school and drove kids to appointments, toting the youngest in a baby carrier. To keep from drowning in Dr. Seuss, she regularly read the *Wall Street Journal*.

"John was still working crazy hours," Gretchen says. "I was doing all of the grunt work with the kiddos, and that was okay."

But eventually, at the beginning of 2020, things just weren't okay for John anymore. Challenges at work combined with the long hours took a toll on his mental health, which evolved into a midlife crisis that landed the Montgomerys at a gas station in Florida.

Recipe for Success

John needed to get out of the corporate world. "He decided that he wanted to buy a business and see if he could apply what he had learned from his career," Gretchen says.

The Montgomerys looked to buy somewhere with a bigger market—and more sunshine. They decided on John's home state of Florida and began researching. Most for-sale businesses were either HVAC companies or gas stations; John preferred the latter. "He flew down to Florida and visited—I'm not even exaggerating—100 gas stations, looking for the perfect one," Gretchen says.

He found it in Tampa. The gas station came with a restaurant space in a prime location with a strong ward and a thriving youth program. John officially traded office-building windows for a back room lined with breaker boxes.

"I hate gas stations with a passion," John says. "I hate going in them; I hate the clutter. But our gas station is amazing because it's ours, and it's run the way I like it." John went all in on cleanliness—no souvenir T-shirts or stacked boxes—and he sourced only best-selling products.

The gas station was dubbed Zoom Zoom after John's college nickname. A clever moniker for a spot to refuel cars—but not as amusing as John's initial jesting suggestion: Gretchen's Got Gas. "She was not a fan of that one," John understates. Gretchen instead lent her name to a different piece of their business: a bakery.

The Sweet Spot

It all started with key lime pie.

Years earlier, John and Gretchen had taken a Florida cruise, and Gretchen couldn't stop

raving about a piece of key lime pie she tried in Key West. John, known for taking up all-consuming hobbies, fell into a baking phase "and took it upon himself to nail that recipe for the key lime pie I loved so much," Gretchen says.

Even though he doesn't like sugar—and even though Gretchen hated sharing her kitchen—John concocted 65 different versions of key lime pie. In true business-grad style, he tracked every variation in an Excel spreadsheet. "He ended up with a really amazing pie," Gretchen says.

Key lime became the first of the founding flavors at Gretchen's Goodies. She pitched desserts in a cup—portable for travelers and layered, trifle style, for aesthetics. Gretchen adapted John's pie recipe, stacking pieces of graham-cracker crust with filling and whipped cream. "The crunch and texture really made it phenomenal," Gretchen says. "If we could do key lime pie in a cup, what else could we try?"

Red velvet cake. Peanut butter cheesecake. Salted caramel cheesecake. Hummingbird cake (a southern favorite with pineapple and

"The fun part for me is being creative and coming up with different recipes and flavors."

cream cheese). "The fun part for me is being creative and coming up with different recipes and flavors," Gretchen says.

The bakery launched in 2021, complete with subway tiles inspired by New York City haunts, with 20 original recipes prioritizing quality ingredients like Belgian chocolate and real buttercream. "I can't stand shortening in my frosting," Gretchen says.

John scaled the operation, translating recipes Gretchen whipped up in her 7-quart kitchen mixer to the bakery's 140-quart industrial mixer. Once they advanced into the larger mixers, she ceded the baking to John: "Frankly, I'm not strong enough to fold in the whipped cream in such large quantities," she says.

Locals spread the word. Gretchen's Goodies has hundreds of Google reviews and a sparkling 4.9-star average.

"It's been really fun to see the positive reactions," Gretchen says. "Because my name is associated with the company, when people write a negative review, it hurts. It's gotten better, but it's still hard to not take it personally."

Because the desserts are so popular, the bakery has a freight-container-sized freezer on site to store the extra inventory needed to keep up with demand. They offer 70 flavors, including some keto options. John wants to invent even more desserts, but Gretchen is looking at a seasonal menu with rotating flavors, like lemon meringue pie and strawberry shortcake in the summer and caramel apple cheesecake in the fall.

"We stand by our product; it's a good, quality product," Gretchen says. If something doesn't taste right to her or to a customer, she experiments until it does.

Fast Pace

Gretchen and John enjoy the independence of business ownership and the grit it requires. But they have no rose-colored views of the startup life. John used to watch *Shark Tank* and dream of his own hustle. "I love owning a small business," he says. "I'm happy that I own it. But I don't watch *Shark Tank* anymore."

"It's a big business," Gretchen adds. "It's a lot of work." Florida law requires gas stations be staffed 24/7. Especially in the first year, if an overnight employee didn't show up, it fell on John to step in at 2 a.m.

Gretchen helps with the finance side in addition to running the bakery. "I was out of the game for a long time—12 years," she says. "I don't regret spending that time with my kids. I'm grateful that I still don't have to work full-time because John picks up a lot more of that. This goes back to our very early conversations about him working crazy hours. He still does that."

John has no desire to build a gas station empire—one Zoom Zoom is enough, though the Montgomerys are exploring expanding Gretchen's Goodies to more locations. For now, both are happy with the pace the family has settled into.

"Gretchen puts up with me," John says. "She keeps me in my place. She is very intellectually smart and knows baking like the back of her hand. She cares about people a great deal, but she can be honest and ruthless. With her, everything's a strength." M

About the Author

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THE EXPERIENCE EQUATION

Adding Organizational Value Through Designed Experiences

By Emily Edmonds

You can feel the energy before a BYU football game.

On the west side of LaVell Edwards Stadium, Canyon Road is closed to traffic. A band entertains the crowd while people play cornhole or giant-size chess. Others test golf simulators, queue at food trucks, and pose for caricatures or selfies. Kids slide on inflatables, then get their faces painted as the sugar rush begins.

Festivities peak with the spirited Cougar Walk, when the football team and staff march through the street into the stadium. "It's exciting. Everyone wants to give the players high fives, the marching band is right behind them, and the coach gets everybody pumped up," says Sean Firmage, a BYU Marriott experience design and management alumnus. "It's the premium gameday experience."

The high-energy event, dubbed Cougar Canyon, wasn't always the norm. Pre-2019, tailgating was confined to a small area in the stadium's west parking lot. And while there were booths offering some activities and free

COUGAR CANYON: BYU PHOTO

swag, it was more understated—with almost a farmers market feel. Firmage worked at BYU Athletics when the in-house marketing team decided to level up the pregame event. "We wanted to elevate that experience 10x," says Firmage, who spent five years at BYU Athletics, mostly as an account executive. "We wanted to make it meaningful for fans—a top game experience in college football, not a dinky Utah college tailgate."

Traditionally, tailgating is just as important to fans as the game itself. "We didn't really have a good option for BYU fans," Firmage says, "especially since alcohol isn't part of the experience."

But once again, Cougars highlighted how stone-cold sober can be fun. "Cougar Canyon is a bigger endeavor, especially closing off the street, but that makes it feel more special," Firmage says. "I like to get there two hours before games just for Cougar Canyon."

Firmage is no stranger to tailoring events for peak customer experiences. As regional director of partnerships for Live Nation—a position he landed early in 2023—he's leveraged partnerships that enhance fans' experiences at an array of venues across Colorado and Utah, including the Utah First Credit Union Amphitheatre.

High-profile events, such as games or concerts, are typically associated with providing multifaceted experiences. However, more organizations—from tech to accounting—are realizing the value of good experiences, whether internally with employees or externally with clients. Internally, experiences can improve employee retention and boost creativity. Externally, experiences can build brand loyalty, and as Camilla Hodge, a BYU Marriott assistant professor of experience design and management, points out, "People tend to spend more money when there's emotional engagement."

Organizations are acknowledging this trend by adding chief experience officers to their C-suites. "That role is becoming more and more normal, which is a huge deal," Firmage says. "BYU was ahead of the curve to establish an experience design major years ago."

Wearing Your Heart on Your Wrist

On a shelf in Hodge's Tanner Building office sits a small cube that holds 20 simple black heart rate monitors. They look a lot like fitness trackers, but these bands don't track calories burned. Instead, they monitor emotional responses.

"The most basic definition of *experience* is an emotional response—some kind of cognitive or psychological response that drives somebody's perception," Hodge says.

The wearables track changes in cardiac rhythm, which is affected by oxytocin—released in the presence of emotional resonance and/or social bonding—and dopamine—released in response to novelty or reward stimulation. Hodge, who acknowledges that the wearables aren't a perfect measurement tool, has used them to track responses in a variety of settings: online shopping, theater performances, movie premieres, theme parks, and even her own classroom in the Tanner Building.

"Changing cardiac rhythm is representative of this more complex neurological story—the narrative that a person is creating while going through an experience," Hodge explains. "We can learn how someone is responding in a way they couldn't fully articulate themselves."

Experiences are common, says Mat Duerden, a BYU Marriott professor of experience design and management, but unpacking them, understanding them, and designing them is complex. Duerden points to traffic lights. More specifically, the feeling you have when you can't remember if you stopped at one because you were on autopilot. "There

EARTH INFORMATION CENTER EXHIBIT: NASA

are lots of experiences so ordinary that the attention you pay to them is fleeting," he says. Capturing attention is important, he adds, but it's also important that "people feel like the time or the attention they gave to an experience was time well spent."

Whether subtle or straightforward, experiences—like goods, materials, products, or even services—drive the economy, Hodge says. "We're in an economy that really values connection," she continues. "You can create or increase the perceived value of your service, product, or experience by positioning it in a way that meets the need for connection."

This experience-based economy means that people are interested in not just a staged experience but a guided transformation—time invested in an individual as the product. Duerden notes, "We all want to change and grow and progress."

Dancing in the Data

For Naomi Clare Crellin, guiding clients to understand experiences "in this wildly shifting landscape of human connection" is her top priority as founder and CEO of Storycraft Lab in Washington, DC.

Whether she's consulting Marriott International, Google, or a niche museum, Crellin is centered on using audience advocacy insights to inform strategic design—and she knows a good experience when she sees one. Recently, Crellin visited NASA's Earth Information Center exhibit in DC with her coworker, Katy Mull. "It's a small display of data, but it's wonderfully visualized on-screen," Crellin says.

The exhibit included a room with an immersive video display of Earth from the perspective of a satellite. "Visually, we saw all the data that NASA collects about the planet," Crellin says. "We were in the dark, and there were projections on the walls. The voiceover was poetic. I felt very present and excited."

As the presentation continued, suddenly Crellin recognized her silhouette in the video data display—and Mull's silhouette next to her.

"We started to dance," Crellin says. "We danced in the data projection. It allowed me to feel this wonderful connection with another human being and with the planet."

It was a moving encounter for the two. "There are moments where we go into experiences and there's a message that must be delivered," Crellin says. "And then there are also moments where it's okay to deliver a feeling. That can be just as valuable."

Whether disseminating a message or a feeling, organizations must intentionally craft touch points—customer interactions, in person or online. These touch points help "ensure that you're eliciting emotions that you want customers to have," Hodge says.

Experience-centric organizations are more likely to provide uniform service—the experience feels the same across all channels and touch points, Duerden says. "I was talking about this with someone, and he said, 'I'd love to fly with Delta but use American's app to manage the process.' We make those sacrifices sometimes because we don't have the option of having well-designed experiences across all the touch points."

Crellin often sees organizations approach experience design from a "What do we want to say to people?" perspective. But for the message to resonate, that goal needs to be paired with consideration of what the audience needs. "There needs to be some kind of intentional understanding of your audience's humanity so you can successfully deliver," she says.

An empathetic approach to the customer experience may not be the cheapest or the most efficient option, Firmage notes. "But we need to put customers first, and the more we do that, the more loyal they will be."

Companies are also examining how they can help people feel like they belong to something exclusive in hopes of keeping them longer as customers, Firmage says. "That trend speaks to the power that experience designers have." He points to his American Express card. "The fact my card is metal really means nothing, but I love it. It feels different, like I'm part of a club instead of just having a random credit card. I'm loyal to brands based on every touch point they provide."

Visualizing an experience in terms of individual touch points is known as experience mapping or journey mapping—one of Duerden's areas of expertise. Mapping doesn't just apply to the immediate experience, he says. It can be broken out into anticipation, participation, and reflection phases: "What's happening before an individual engages, what's happening during, and what's happening afterward," he says.

An encounter—like Crellin's at the NASA exhibit—can nudge people toward seeing an organization as more memorable, meaningful, and even transformative. Interactions can eventually get integrated into customers' identities and worldviews. "This is why some people are passionate about why they go to Costco instead of Sam's Club," Duerden says.

Mandatory Fun

Workplace loyalty runs deeper than a love for free samples, although some experiences can leave a bad taste in employees' mouths. Duerden's research looks at how companies bring nonwork elements into the workplace, whether that looks like onsite rock-climbing gyms, cafés, or laundry facilities.

"Research shows there are benefits of allowing people to bring their whole selves to work," he says, "but that doesn't mean that you can force people to have fun at work."

"There are moments where we go into experiences and there's a message that must be delivered. And then there are also moments where it's okay to deliver a feeling. That can be just as valuable."

Duerden has found that office activities sometimes feel like assignments instead of amusement. "Employees have talked about this idea of fun-datory, mandatory fun," he explains. "Experiences are individually perceived, and you have to understand what people's needs are—not just their functional needs."

Work became very separated from nonwork after the Industrial Revolution, Duerden notes. "Before that, most people lived on a farm, where work, leisure, and homelife mixed together. Starting in the 1980s, they gradually overlapped more due to technology and societal changes. Then COVID smashed everything together," he says. "Now we're trying to figure out how to peel them back apart—or if we need to."

There's give-and-take within the employee experience, Firmage says. "You make it too fun, and it's hard to know if employees are working. You make it too rigid, and no one wants to stay. With more people willing to bounce from job to job, leaders must pay attention to the experience people are having. The younger generations expect some element of experience at work."

Providing meaningful opportunities for employees—sorry, not everyone enjoys karaoke—pays off in several ways. Hodge says that connection between employees and managers can drive innovation and overall organizational success.

But the benefits don't just stop there. "When organizations pay attention to employee experiences, they have less turnover, more engaged employees, more creative solutions, and better teamwork," she says. "Basically, all of those perks then become predictors of revenue outcomes."

Making the Magic

Whether getting a high five from Cosmo, dancing in a virtual data shower, enjoying "treat day" at work, or simply having an easy customer service interaction, a positive experience can have a lasting impact.

But the experience itself can only go so far. Promoting memorable experiences without intentionally evoking reflection is like planting seeds but never harvesting, Duerden says. "Research suggests that most people aren't naturally reflective," he adds. "When we help create moments that produce memories and then give people opportunities to reflect on and gain insight from them, those experiences are more likely to become lasting, meaningful moments."

Experience designers, Crellin says, are the creators of culture, and she hopes leaders can better support this group of innovators and changemakers. "We help people do new things, which is often not easy, especially within large corporate landscapes," she says.

Experiences are not just about pyrotechnics, lasers, or goodie bags, Crellin continues. "It's also about having processes that enable designed experiences as they extend and touch organizational strategy."

Well-designed experiences can also spark belonging. "They can shift our mindsets to a new way of doing, being, working, and engaging with the world. When they're done well," Crellin says, "they can feel like magic." M

HAMMOCK: JANKO FERLIC, UNSPLASH

Diversify Family Activity Profiles

If organizations can benefit from well-designed experiences, so can families. Camilla Hodge points to an adage coined by Karen Melton, an associate professor at Baylor University: "Diversify the family activity profile."

Hodge recommends that families intentionally and continually try new things—but there's a caveat. "Don't only do new things," she advises. "Families still need predictable, consistent elements."

For example, Hodge's family loves spending time watching movies together over holiday breaks. "It's a tradition," she says. "But is our relationship developing if we're not actually talking with one another? Not really, but we have this great, consistent touch point."

To balance familiar rituals, Hodge will occasionally suggest new activities. One year, she proposed a family drive to visit relatives' graves. The three-hour round trip brought her family closer together as they reminisced, comforted one another, and shared their heritage with nieces and nephews.

"Try to plan a variety of activities," Hodge advises. "Mix low interaction with high interaction activities and balance novel with familiar."

Four years ago, Hodge led a research team that focused specifically on siblings—a relationship often overlooked in academia. (In the United States, Hodge notes, people are more likely to grow up in a household with a sibling than with a father.) "The strongest predictor of relationship quality among college-aged siblings wasn't the number of shared experiences they had, and it wasn't the type of shared experiences they had," she says. "It was how many *different* things they had done together."

School News

BYU Marriott Hosts Faith at Work Competition

Sixteen interfaith MBA student teams from across the country participated in BYU Marriott's second annual Faith and Belief at Work case competition—a unique event focused on workplace inclusivity of religious beliefs.

"Research shows that work satisfaction, happiness, and drive are affected by your ability to bring your whole self to work, including your spirituality," explains **Ben Williams**, an MBA student from Mesa, Arizona, and co-organizer of the event.

The competition was hosted by the BYU Marriott MBA program and sponsored by BYU's Wheatley Institute as well as a diverse group of other organizations, including Accenture, Allymar Health, Equinix, Interfaith America, PayPal, and BYU's Sorensen Center for Moral and Ethical Leadership. The 64 student participants represented a variety of faiths, including Christianity, Hinduism, Islam,

Students from Indiana University won first place in the Faith and Belief at Work case competition.

Simulation for Supply Chain

To help global supply chain management (GSCM) students prepare for potential workforce disasters, associate professor **Barry Brewer** invited Kathy Fulton, executive director of American Logistics Aid Network, to run a disaster simulation for the Global Supply Chain Management 429: Global Supply Chain Strategy course.

"GSCM students learn an incredible number of skills in procurement, operations, and logistics," Brewer says. "Our primary focus is to employ those tools in business situations with a profit motive, but their supply chain skills are equally relevant in humanitarian efforts."

For the simulation, students were assigned one of four roles: government, business, nonprofit, or individual. Those who represented businesses were assigned a resource: food, water, or medicine. Nonprofit, government, and business members had a geographic area they oversaw and a set amount of money.

After learning their roles, students were given a short period of time to coordinate with other participants and to discuss how to provide relief during a crisis. Then the mock disaster struck. Students had less than 20 minutes to get each essential resource to an area with corresponding demand.

"Coordination is hard," Brewer admits. "Being able to act in that high-stakes environment is an important skill to learn."

Many students struggled to find resources to fill all the aid requests within the short time frame. "We didn't have much time to plan or to really think about what we were doing. We just had to act in the moment," says **Joshua Nelson**, a student from St. George, Utah.

In a follow-up discussion, Fulton explained that the scarcity students wrestled with during the simulation was not due to a lack of resources but rather stemmed from logistical challenges. "Even in the real world, we have enough food to feed all of our population," Fulton told the students. "The problem is price, equity, and supply chain. The resources aren't where they need to be."

Preparation is crucial for swift and efficient responses during a crisis. "When it comes to disaster relief, time is life," Brewer says. "You have to make decisions fast—that's why preplanning is so important."

Fulton pointed out that building relationships is a critical piece of preparation. "We don't necessarily need to pre-position all of the supplies, but we need to pre-position relationships so we have somewhere to get the resources we need," she told the students after the simulation.

The activity helped students understand how to support an ecosystem amid disaster. "Information is really key in a crisis," says **Ryan Dodson**, a student from Louisville, Kentucky. "When we are acting on good information, we can make better decisions to meet people's needs."

Brewer's goal in running the simulation was to empower students to serve in the future. "I wanted them to think about how to be an asset to the community so when the rubber hits the road, they can be good citizens and good Samaritans," Brewer says.

From Patient to Healer: MPA Alumnus of the Year

After a trampoline accident left **Dale Hull** paralyzed from the shoulders down, he could no longer work as a physician. "I felt like I'd lost all my value," said Hull at a banquet honoring him as the 2023 Brigham Young University MPA Alumnus of the Year. "I didn't feel like a husband, a father, a physician, or even a worthy human being."

Hull's road to recovery was long, but it also positioned him for new opportunities. "As I lay on my backyard trampoline completely paralyzed from the shoulders down, I never could have imagined a moment such as this," he said upon receiving the award. "It is abundantly clear that one never knows exactly how a journey will evolve."

During a grueling two and a half years, Hull worked to gain back as much movement as possible with the help of his physical therapist, Jan Black.

Working with Black helped Hull find new hope for himself, but it also raised his awareness of the challenges facing those with similar injuries. "There were many individuals who also had experienced paralysis. They wanted, needed, and deserved more specialized therapy. Yet it wasn't readily available," Hull explained.

As a result, Hull and Black sat down and wrote a business plan for a nonprofit spinal cord injury center, Neuroworx, which launched in 2004.

As the organization quickly grew, Hull realized that he needed to increase his knowledge of nonprofit management and grow his skill set. His nephew introduced him to **Jeff Thompson**, then an associate professor in BYU Marriott's MPA program. "I was intrigued," Hull said. "Jeff Thompson helped me conclude that the Executive MPA program was a great fit for what I needed."

Hull enrolled in 2009 and gained the skills he needed. "The faculty was knowledgeable, personable, and always willing to listen," Hull said. "The program was just the right mix of theory and practicality; it was an excellent education." Earning an MPA also renewed Hull's self-esteem. He said, "It gave me personal confidence that I can go into a boardroom, committee, or legislative session and be able to represent our organization in a compelling way."

Neuroworx is now in its 20th year of providing specialized physical, occupational, and speech therapy to adults and children experiencing paralysis. Through Hull's efforts, the nonprofit has provided rehabilitative services, regardless of cost, to several thousand individuals.

Scientology, and Sikhism. Event speaker Weslie Ricks, a representative from Equinix, says the variety of beliefs fostered a sense of creativity and inclusivity. "It was a beautiful experience to show up as an agnostic woman and connect with such a diverse group. We found a lot of common ground in three days, and I left inspired by the students," Ricks reports.

Not only did the competition's theme emphasize belonging in the workplace, but the event itself also created a safe space that nurtured mutual understanding. "There's a fundamental need for people to be understood. When you understand each other, you're able to build a bond. And when you build a bond, you're able to work better together," Williams says.

This year the competition grew to include five more teams and 20 more participants. MBA students came from Baylor University, Boston University, Carnegie Mellon University, Columbia University, Indiana University, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Oklahoma State University, Pepperdine University, Texas A&M University, University of Alabama, University of Arkansas, University of Florida, University of Notre Dame, and University of Utah.

100th Ballard Brief Published

Alyssa Minor interviews Ghanaians affiliated with orphanages.

The Ballard Center for Social Impact had barely wrapped its 20th anniversary celebration when it reached another remarkable milestone: publishing its 100th Ballard Brief.

Ballard Briefs are written by undergraduate and graduate students to

explore the complexities and nuances of current global issues. Each thoroughly researched report helps readers understand a particular social issue; together, the briefs make up a rich library.

Orem-native Alyssa Minor, author of the 100th Ballard Brief, became involved with BYU Marriott's Ballard Center through the global and community impact minor. What started out as a class assignment (for Marriott School of Business 375: Social Impact: Do Good Better) turned

into an eight-month research project, a trip to Africa, and a Ballard Brief.

Minor, a communications major with an emphasis in public relations, learned that as many as two-thirds of children in Ghanaian orphanages still have one or more parents alive. More than 50 percent of children in these orphanages reported exposure to violent discipline, and these children are three times more likely to experience sexual abuse than children in the foster system or in family-based care in Ghana.

These statistics persuaded Minor to visit Ghana, even though she had never left the United States before. "I realized this is something that I didn't just want to read about. I wanted to actually get involved," she explains. Soon after this realization, Minor attended a Ballard Center event where she met with groups that helped set her plans in motion.

Working for the Kaeme Foundation, Minor spent her first six weeks in Ghana interviewing tribal chiefs, parents of children in the orphanage, and children who had lived in orphanages. For the next two weeks, Minor taught in the orphanage's school, played with the children, and helped students with their homework. She then met up with BYU biology professor Mark Belk and a group of students researching rural Ghanaian rivers and lakes in their search to find fish that could be reliable protein sources for impoverished children.

Upon returning, Minor was able to publish the Ballard Brief, which captures her research and the issues related to Ghanaian orphanages.

Reflecting on her transformative experience, Minor shares gratitude for the Ballard Center: "The whole reason I was able to visit Ghana was because of the Ballard Center. They helped me realize that I want social impact to be something that I do for the rest of my life."

Ethics, Family, and Faith

The Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics hosted Senator Mitt Romney and his wife, Ann, as they shared advice with MPA students preparing for careers in the public sector. The Romneys drew on their years working in government positions and with nonprofit organizations as they answered questions on

topics ranging from personal ethics to marriage in the public eye.

Throughout his career, Romney has held himself to high standards of conduct. He believes commitment to principles is what the Romney legacy is built upon. "My father, George W. Romney, was known for having an unwavering devotion to the things that mattered most to him," Romney said. "Anytime I have strayed from my conscience, it has been a burden. You can sleep better at night when you live by your principles."

Romney emphasized the importance of ethics, both for organizations and for public servants. "It's remarkable that the character of one person can impact other people," he said. "Stay true to personal ethics and political figures with good character, because policies come and go."

Two of the things the Romneys are most committed to—no matter what professional endeavor they might be pursuing—are faith and family. "Mitt actually supports me all of the time," Ann Romney said. "He values his family and his marriage. Half of the country loves him, and half of it hates him, but I'm proud of him because he makes decisions based on his heart."

In response to a question about what makes an organization effective and successful, Ann Romney offered advice from her experience with nonprofits. "I've had many opportunities to review the nonprofits we support, and the most successful nonprofits are those with an eternal commitment to knowing that everyone is a child of God," she explained. "That knowledge carries their mission in such an extraordinary way."

Romney also shared how the couple balances their many professional responsibilities alongside their personal lives. For example, he set work boundaries so he could have a healthy balance between the two. "I decided to take Sundays off from working long ago, and the cloud of stress was gone as I devoted myself to what mattered most: faith and family," he shared.

"If you define success as money or promotions, you won't feel successful," he advised. "Most of success lies in serendipity, so measure your success through things that are in your control."

FACULTY NEWS

Female Judges Cited Less Frequently than Male Judges

The current US Supreme Court may be in the news more often than any set of judges in the history of the judicial branch. From striking down *Roe v. Wade* and ending affirmative action to ruling on President Joe Biden's program to cancel student debt, SCOTUS has not been afraid to make headlines.

The current makeup of the court has also garnered significant attention due to both the political leanings of the justices and their race and gender. With this backdrop, researchers from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of Louisville, University of Georgia, and Brigham Young University analyzed how the race and gender of federal judges might be impacting judicial processes. Specifically, researchers wanted to see which judges get the most attention from their peers when they have complete discretion to reference another judge's work.

After analyzing out-of-circuit citations of more than 2,000 published federal appellate decisions from 2009 to 2016, the researchers found that majority

opinions written by female judges receive significantly fewer subsequent citations from other courts than majority opinions written by male judges—largely because of disparities in citing Black and Latina women. The findings were published online in *American Political Science Review* on September 1, 2023.

"We wondered why decisions by some judges are better able to catch the attention of their peers and are afforded more influence in the development of law," says study coauthor **Robert Christensen**, director of BYU Marriott's MPA program and a professor in the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics. "Our results indicate a clear bias against citing majority opinions authored by women—especially women of color."

Over the five-year period studied, female judges received an average of 1.4 external citations to their opinions compared to the average 1.63 citations to opinions written by male judges in equivalent positions. While that difference may initially seem small, it really hits home when accumulated over a career. A judge produces an average of 53.5 opinions a year, so in 10 years of full-time service, a male judge would have 120 more citations than a female judge. This cumulative difference is particularly problematic because citation of legal precedent is foundational to the US common law legal tradition.

The discrepancy is even more substantial for opinions authored by Latina and Black women, who receive 28 percent fewer discretionary citations than White males. Over 10 years, this translates to 239 fewer citations for women of color compared to White male judges.

"Even among judges who are trained in equity and due process, we are not yet past the point where we can say we live in a bias-free world," Christensen says. "Subconscious biases are still very much at work, and when that is shaping the common law of the country, we think that deserves both scholarly and practical attention."

Mindful Bytes in Decision Making

Ryan Schuetzler, an associate professor of information systems (IS), aims to share his love of constant learning with his students. "The biggest thing that I try to impress on them is lifelong learning," he says. "Tech moves too fast to not learn and not keep up."

It was technology's quick pace that drew in Schuetzler as a BYU

Peak Perspectives

Each fall **Peter Ward**, associate professor of experience design and management (ExDM), leads his students in climbing Rock Canyon's rugged walls. Since coming to BYU Marriott in 2006, Ward has taught students to push their limits. "I like students to realize that they have great potential," he says.

Ward also teaches Experience Design and Management 490R: Topics in Experience Design and Management, a class that requires students to accomplish some daunting research tasks. But just as he does in his rock-climbing class, Ward gives students the tools they need—both academic and spiritual—to help them succeed.

"This class serves as our main PhD-prep course," Ward says. "I teach them the publication process and mentor them along the way." As students choose one of four projects—each led by a different ExDM professor—the students receive additional coaching on the writing and publishing process.

Ward begins each EXDM 490R class with a prayer and invites his students to conduct personal gospel study for 10 minutes. "They reflect on gospel topics, and that helps them make spiritual connections to class topics," Ward explains.

This approach helped **Aaron Scribner**, a senior from Orem who took Ward's class, gain more appreciation for blending the gospel with academic pursuits. "Professor Ward has been a great example to me," Scribner says. "He always listens to what students pray about and makes a genuine comment about the prayer."

Ward says his testimony is strengthened as he watches students lean into their faith during the research and writing process. "The majority of my job doesn't feel like work," he adds. "I have a lot of fun in this job, but the most enjoyable part is inspiring my students to grow closer to Christ."

undergraduate. After returning from a Church mission in McAllen, Texas, Schuetzler planned to study neuroscience on the pre-med track. But everything changed when he took the introductory IS class and realized how the content would help him constantly learn and grow in the ever-evolving tech world. His passion for IS grew, and he felt inspired to pursue a master's degree and a PhD.

As a PhD candidate at the University of Arizona, Schuetzler was introduced to chatbots—an emerging technology at the time—through a research project. "I started working with chatbots in 2013 or 2014 when I was left in charge of a chatbot project. And then I realized, 'this is kind of cool,'" he recalls. "I've been working with chatbots ever since."

Throughout the years, Schuetzler has observed how changes in technology have improved the interaction between humans and chatbots. "I used to write chatbots in a special programming language. Now that ChatGPT is out, it's totally different. I can tell the bot to be whatever I want it to be in simple terms, and it's so much easier," he explains.

Upon finishing his PhD, Schuetzler worked as an associate professor of information systems at the University of Nebraska at Omaha before coming to BYU Marriott in 2020. Schuetzler appreciates how motivated BYU students are and how they engage with their professors. "BYU provides a unique opportunity to connect with more than just the content of a course," he notes.

Schuetzler also enjoys being able to bring his faith into the classroom. "I can talk about my own journey, share my challenges, and talk about ways that the Lord has helped me," he says. "Those are conversations I couldn't have at any other university."

MBA Curriculum Shapes Christlike Leaders

Research from the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research indicates that 96 percent of MBA graduates will enter management roles within 15 years of completing graduate school. In preparing MBA students to become impactful managers as soon as possible upon entering the workforce, BYU Marriott is guided by

its vision to transform the world through Christlike leadership.

Associate professor of organizational behavior and human resources **Taeya Howell** recently revamped the MBA leadership class curriculum to reflect this Christ-centered approach in two significant ways. "One way is to really focus on Christlike leadership," she says. "And the other way is to have the class learn tangible skills that leaders need to have to be effective in business."

Howell draws on her professional experience as an attorney to bring real-world situations into the classroom. "Having worked for six years with a large organization and seeing how they operated helps me as I am preparing the concepts discussed in class," Howell shares.

Her students also make their own unique contributions to the classroom dynamic. "MBA students have a lot of experience," Howell says. "They have ideas about how to apply course content immediately because they've seen things and can make sense of them now that they know the theories behind them."

In her course, Howell has utilized the Christ-centered leadership model developed by the BYU Sorensen Center. "The model emphasizes that we need to consider our relationships with God and His children and seek to express love, honor agency, and invite accountability for ourselves and those we lead."

Using this model has changed how several of the MBA students view leadership. "I had a couple of students mention that they didn't see themselves as leaders because they thought leaders had to be authoritarian," Howell says. "But when they thought about leading like Christ would, they could see themselves being Christlike leaders. I loved seeing that mentality shift."

STUDENT NEWS

Getting to the Core of Mentorship

School of Accountancy (SOA) students can easily become siloed within their program, cohort, or specific year in school. But a peer mentoring project in Human Resource Management 540: Organizational Effectiveness aims to counteract that trend.

McKenzie Rees, an assistant professor of organizational behavior and human resources and the HRM 540 instructor, designed the project to help students at different points in the SOA program make connections. "If you only associate with people who are in the same year as you are, you never get the benefit of knowing those in a broader social circle," Rees says.

In the class, each MAcc student is paired with an accounting junior core student. Mentors find ways to support their mentees throughout the semester—ranging from ordering them food during midterms to weekly in-person meetings.

For MAcc student **McKay Johns** from American Fork, Utah, mentoring starts with moral support. "At the beginning of junior core, students just need to learn how to relax and understand that everything is going to be okay," Johns says.

Grace Gwin, a MAcc student from Eagle, Idaho, has found peer mentoring to be practical and fulfilling. "My mentee wanted some tips and tricks on studying for different tests as well as guidance for each class," Gwin explains. "It's been fun to meet her friends in the junior core, answer their questions, and be a support."

Students McKay Johns and Parker Reynolds were paired up as part of the peer mentoring project in HRM 540.

Peer mentoring has helped undergraduate students like **Parker Reynolds** navigate the junior core experience. "My mentor told me that a lot of students will put every waking hour into accounting. He also told me not to do that—to instead set time to study and still go on dates with my wife, eat well, sleep well, and exercise," says Reynolds, a junior from South Jordan, Utah. "It's really good to talk with someone who's two years ahead of me about career plans and how to get accounting internships."

The mentor-mentee relationship helps both parties learn and grow in a way that aligns with the spirit of the class. "It is these one-on-one moments when Christlike leadership is truly embodied," Rees says. "When we think about someone else and take a selfless approach to our work, everyone wins."

BYU Students Roll Out AI Tech to Solve Parking Problems

A group of enterprising BYU students aims to significantly—if not entirely—reduce violations in paid parking lots. The team just got a major endorsement and $12,000 in cash by winning the 13th BYU Student Innovator of the Year (SIOY) competition with their idea for an AI detection and tracking system called Spot Parking.

"We knew Spot Parking had incredible potential, so we started searching everywhere for funding to help us get our idea off the ground," says **Ryan Hagerty**, a pre-business student and Spot Parking team member. "SIOY has been an incredible experience to gain recognition and funding. Now we feel like we can really get started with parking enforcement."

Spot Parking uses cameras and AI to immediately detect vehicles as they enter a parking lot. It then assigns vehicles a unique tracking identifier associated with their license plates. Likewise, every parking stall in the system is categorized as occupied or unoccupied, and the data is passed on to parking police via the Spot Parking app.

The Ira A. Fulton College of Engineering hosts SIOY annually in partnership with the Rollins Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology. Salt Block Inoculum, which offers farmers a solution for salinity struggles, snagged the competition's second-place award and $10,000. Another AI-based idea called Stratus, which automates front-desk tasks for healthcare, came in third and won $8,000. MelBas Cancer Therapeutics, a biotechnical solution that can successfully target and kill lung cancer cells, was crowned fan favorite, earning $2,000.

Guided By a Life Vision

According to a 2023 Old Dominion University study, 39 percent of undergraduates change their major at least once as they try to find the right fit. For **Aaron Adams**, a recent BYU Marriott human resource management (HRM) grad, choosing a career path was less about finding a perfect fit and more about finding a path that aligned with his life vision.

A high school teacher first prompted Adams to formulate a life vision. "He inspired me to be confident about who I am and what I'm doing," Adams says. "He told us to figure out who we want to be in life, write it down, and work toward it."

Though his life vision was originally written for an assignment, it has taken on more meaning as Adams updates it periodically. When Adams was accepted into two BYU Marriott majors, including HRM, he revisited his life vision. He considered the jobs each major would lead to and how those jobs would enable him to touch others' lives.

"There is no one particular major that is *the* right path or job that is *the* right place," Adams says. "For me, satisfaction comes from identifying who I want to be and understanding that there are several paths I can take to get there. I decided to pick one major and go with it, knowing that it's okay to pivot and adjust as I go forward."

By applying this philosophy, Adams determined that a human resource career would help him fulfill his life vision. "I'm so excited about understanding psychology, business, and how people work—and using that to improve people's lives and solve problems," Adams says. "Because HRM aligns with who I want to be, I am committed to succeeding in the field."

Nine BYU Marriott Undergraduates Receive the 2024 Bateman Award

BYU Marriott recently recognized nine undergraduate students with the 2024 Bateman Award and presented each recipient with a certificate and a monetary prize.

Dean **Brigitte Madrian** spoke at the award ceremony and acknowledged the students' commitment to excellence. "These awards are given annually to one student from each of our undergraduate programs for exemplifying BYU Marriott's vision, mission, and values and for each student's commitment to academic achievement," she said.

Speaking to the recipients, Madrian remarked, "Receiving the Bateman Award is a distinct honor, and we congratulate each one of you on this tremendous accomplishment."

The 2024 Bateman Award recipients:

- Accounting: **Alex Baldwin**, Kamas, Utah
- Entrepreneurial Management: **Baylee El-Bakri**, Cottonwood Heights, Utah
- Experience Design and Management: **Hayden Underwood**, West Jordan, Utah
- Finance: **Kurtis Welker**, Silver City, New Mexico
- Global Supply Chain Management: **Emily Jensen**, Lehi, Utah
- Human Resource Management: **Ammon Johnson**, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- Information Systems: **Olivia Morgan**, St. Louis, Missouri
- Marketing: **Mary Cluff**, Warrenton, Virginia
- Strategic Management: **Julia Woolley**, Denver, Colorado

Beyond Camo and Campus

On a hot, humid day at Fort Knox, Kentucky, BYU ROTC cadet **Aidan Fryar** noticed someone in his unit who needed help. "I took my struggling teammate aside and worked him through it," Fryar explains.

Fryar was later chosen out of 600 cadets who participated in the summer ROTC training program to receive the Patton Award, given to someone who demonstrates confidence, boldness, dash, and daring during a time of crisis. Fryar also earned the Reconnaissance Commando (RECONDO) badge, awarded to cadets who demonstrate exceptional individual skill in areas such as land navigation and rifle shooting.

The camaraderie present in BYU's Army ROTC has shaped Fryar's development as a cadet and leader. "I've become who I am today because of people I've surrounded myself with in the ROTC," he says.

While on his mission in the Philippines, Fryar thought about the rewards and challenges of serving in the military. One day while studying the Book of Mormon, he felt that he should pursue a military career. "I knew God would protect me," Fryar says.

That reassurance guided Fryar as he returned home, enrolled at BYU, and joined the Army ROTC. "I went all in and joined the Ranger Challenge team," he says.

While he enjoys the ROTC community, Fryar admits that the program is rigorous. "The ROTC pushes me mentally and physically," he says. "We wake up at 5 a.m. every single day, which limits your social life a little bit. But it's helped me to learn discipline."

Fryar will continue with the Army ROTC until he completes his undergraduate degree in psychology. He hopes to become a psychiatrist, and he plans to maintain his military service during medical school by commissioning in the Army National Guard.

It's no coincidence that Fryar's compassion toward his teammate was noticed and acknowledged that day at Fort Knox. Showing compassion toward others has been a lifelong focus for Fryar—both in the military and in his personal life. "I try to make serving others one of my top priorities," he says. "That's what I'm trying to do in the army, so I want to do the same in my life."

The award is named after **Merrill J. Bateman**, who served as dean of BYU Marriott from 1975 to 1979 and was president of BYU from 1996 to 2003. Bateman is also an emeritus general authority seventy.

The 2023 Buckwalter Award Recipients

Erica Jensen and **Brianna Merling**, two BYU Marriott MPA students, received the 2023 Doyle W. Buckwalter Award, which includes a $1,500 cash prize, for exemplary performance in their off-campus internships.

During her internship with City of Spanish Fork, Utah, Jensen helped the city prepare for and recover from flooding. "I recorded more than 5,000 hours from 2,700 volunteers to secure an emergency reimbursement from the US government for repairs," she says.

Jensen also designed and administered surveys, conducted quantitative analysis, facilitated workshops, and helped plan events, including Spanish Fork's annual Fiesta Days Rodeo. "Overall, my internship experience was an incredible opportunity to learn new skills," she says.

Merling, who graduated alongside Jensen in April 2024, interned at BDO, an international network of public accounting, tax, consulting, and business advocacy firms.

Merling coordinated with BDO's nonprofit and grantmaker advisory team, and she worked on more than a dozen projects, including financial health assessments, client proposals, and fiscal infrastructure reviews. Her culminating project was adapting a company model to help a nonprofit client predict its financial health given different recession possibilities. "The teamwork I learned in my first year of the MPA program was critical to my success navigating complexities and communication effectively," she says. Merling's internship was extended through the school year and led to a full-time position at BDO.

Brianna Merling (left) and Erica Jensen (right).

The award is presented in honor of **Doyle W. Buckwalter**, a former associate director and internship coordinator for the Romney Institute of Public Health and Ethics. Buckwalter passed away in December 2023 at the age of 85.

Alumni News

CLASS NOTES

1993

While serving in the Vietnam War, **Charles Amonett** developed a system for capturing rainwater for showers. That resourcefulness is a trait he's carried throughout his life. Amonett, who earned his MBA in 1993, was an adjudicator for Utah's Department of Workforce Services Unemployment Insurance Division for two years and then a supervisor in the division's unemployment insurance claims call center. In 2006, Amonett became the unemployment insurance program manager, where he worked until his retirement in 2013. While in that position, he wrote and managed federal grants, coordinated Spanish translations of unemployment insurance publications, and proposed and managed technology projects. From March 2014 to January 2016, he and his wife, Karen, served as senior missionaries in Huancayo, Peru. Amonett now serves as an ordinance worker in the Payson Utah Temple. He has developed training material and a textbook that he uses in his volunteer work as an ESL teacher. He has also authored a handful of other books, including *Visible Darkness — Hidden Light* (the first novel in a fiction series) and a leadership text. The Amonetts live in Payson, Utah, and have 5 children and 15 grandchildren.

1996

After earning his MPA in 1996, **Francisco Ordaz** embarked on a rewarding career in public finance, which has included service in two counties and six municipalities in Utah, Florida, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia. From 2016 to 2023, he worked with the Ministries of Finance of El Salvador and Paraguay in his role as an international finance advisor for the US Department of the Treasury. Ordaz returned to BYU in 2022 as an MPA career services manager. In that position, he initiated the first-ever hybrid MPA career fair, deployed a job search engine that lists thousands of nonprofit and government jobs, launched the new website mpacareers.byu.edu, redesigned the MPA 647 Career Development course, introduced job-search skills practice labs, achieved 98 percent summer internship placement, and founded BYU's Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) student chapter. GFOA featured Ordaz as a guest on its hour-long podcast and invited him to join the *Public Finance Journal* editorial board. Ordaz, who earned a BA in political science from BYU, is now a diplomat for the US State Department, serving at the US Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago. He enjoys singing, reading, playing the piano and organ, and attending his four children's recitals and concerts with his wife, Francisca.

2004

Jon Fischer earned an MBA with a finance emphasis from BYU Marriott, after which he worked as a financial analyst at Payless ShoeSource. In 2013 he was named the company's vice president of real estate, responsible for approximately 4,000 stores in multiple countries. From 2014 to 2019, he was vice president of development for Papa Murphy's, and in 2019 he was hired as chief development officer for Wetzel's Pretzels. Fischer is now head of development for Wetzel's Pretzels, where he oversees real estate, construction, and franchise marketing and sales. In his downtime while traveling for business, Fischer authored *Alpine Tide*, a young adult science fiction novel that was published in 2022. He released a sequel novel, *Rogue Watcher*, this year. He loves creative writing—fiction, humor, song lyrics—and has no plans to stop. "I'm still a new author, but I plan to write myself into retirement someday," he says. Fischer, who earned his BA in communications with an emphasis in public relations from BYU in 2000, also serves on BYU Marriott's Marketing Program Advisory Board. He and his wife, Miriam, have three children and reside in Vancouver, Washington.

Throughout his career, **Steve Higbee** has skillfully adapted to working in a variety of industries. Upon graduating in 2000 with a BS in management with a finance emphasis, he jumped into the world of retail banking. "It was a great initiation to the importance of learning, mentoring, dealing with conflict, solving problems, and helping others achieve their goals," he says. But while earning his MBA at BYU, he landed an HR internship and, in his words, "took the HR train and never turned back." Higbee, who completed his MBA in 2004, is now chief human resources officer at BOLD, a software development service that aids online job recruitment. He joined BOLD in July 2023 after spending four years in executive HR roles at Match Group, the world's leader in online dating services. He has also worked in HR for Intuit, PayPal, and Bank of America. Higbee and his wife, Staci, raised three daughters, and their family fostered kittens for two years through Texas Rustlers Small Animal Rescue. The Higbees recently moved from Flower Mound, Texas, to Puerto Rico, where BOLD is headquartered. Higbee has traveled to more than 40 countries and enjoys playing sports. As a 12-year-old he played in the Little League World Series, but his most recent sports obsession is pickleball. Higbee also enjoys reading history books and working in his yard.

2005

In 2023, **Samuel Enos Eghan** began a three-year assignment presiding over the Tanzania Dar es Salaam Mission with his wife, Paulina. Eghan completed his MBA at BYU Marriott in 2005, having previously earned a BS in international

business management at BYU–Hawaii and worked as a credit analyst and a risk analyst with WFS Financial (now Wells Fargo). He was in the final stage of completing his PhD from University of Ghana Legon when he was called as mission president. Eghan says his MBA gave him the experience and ability to analyze business problems and create solutions. Those takeaways came in particularly handy as he founded Breezes Beach Resort, a four-star retreat in his native country of Ghana. Eghan created a notable career in the banking industry, holding positions at Ivory Global Investments, Forms Capital, Standard Chartered, and Barclays Bank in Ghana. He also worked at Bank of America in Fresno, California. Eghan enjoys reading and playing soccer, tennis, and pickleball. The Eghans have four children.

2007

Since earning his bachelor's degree in management with an emphasis in marketing, **Jorge Mazal** has built a career that focuses on using technology to help people develop good habits. In 2014, Mazal completed a concurrent graduate program in which he earned an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School at Harvard University and an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. While he was in grad school, both product management and management consulting piqued his interest. After completing internships with McKinsey & Company and Zynga, Mazal decided that product management was the path for him. He was a Kleiner Perkins Product Fellow and held product management positions at Zynga, MyFitnessPal, and Lucid Software. He then spent five years at Duolingo, where he worked as director of product management, VP of product, and, ultimately,

Learning in the Long Game

As soon as **Hefolau Lotononga Lavaka** heard about the Close Up Foundation's Washington, DC, trip for high school students, she immediately knew two things: she wanted to participate, and she'd need to pay her own way. She started saving during her freshman year, buying candy in bulk and selling it bar by bar in her hometown of Oakland, California. When Lavaka landed in DC four years later, she realized that playing the long game wasn't just about the payoff. It was also about the power that comes from working hard and waiting.

Lavaka's knack for business and numbers eventually led her to study accounting as an undergrad at BYU Marriott, but when she applied for the MAcc program in 2006, she wasn't accepted. "At first I was sad," she recalls. "But God knew me. God knew my situation."

Lavaka shelved her grad school goal and, after graduating with a BS in accounting, took a job at Barrick Gold, a mining company. "When I got my job offer, I realized, 'This is what I'm supposed to do,'" she recalls.

Six years later, Lavaka earned her master of accountancy at Westminster College—but on the company's dime. Her patience had paid off but was about to be tested by a tragedy.

On November 1, 2016, Lavaka was preparing to leave for a trip to New York City, where she had served a mission years earlier, when a slew of bullets hit the garage and front door of her home in the Rose Park neighborhood of Salt Lake City. Lavaka thought it was post-Halloween fireworks—until she felt a sharp pain in her leg.

"I looked down and realized that there was a hole through my leg and my inner thigh and that I was bleeding," she recounts. A sheriff who lived a few houses down rushed over, and the police soon followed. They identified a similar house nearby that was likely the intended target, but authorities never caught the shooters.

A long and difficult recovery followed. "I'm very stubborn," Lavaka says. "I don't really like having people help me." But Lavaka leaned on her faith and moved in with her cousins in Lehi, Utah.

Picking up the pieces of her professional life presented additional challenges. Barrick Gold relocated to Nevada during Lavaka's recovery, so

she needed to find a new employer. She also wanted to find a role that wouldn't require the late nights she had worked before.

Lavaka found a home at Cricut in accounts receivable, which offered the work-life balance she needed. "There's opportunity for growth and opportunity to thrive here," she says. Personally, she's also flourishing: Lavaka is a Sunday School teacher in her single adult ward and is a guiding light to her two young-adult nieces who live with her and her cousins.

Like the DC trip, the New York City trip happened in due time—thanks to Lavaka's persistence and her former mission companion's patience in pushing Lavaka's wheelchair through the Big Apple's boroughs. "I just keep moving forward," Lavaka says.

chief product officer. He is now an investor and an independent product strategy advisor for consumer technology companies. Mazal, who recently began surfing lessons, resides in Punta del Este, Uruguay, with his wife, Ashley, and their three children. "Seeing our kids grow and develop has been the most rewarding accomplishment in my life," he says.

2011

Mike Francom earned both an MPA and an MBA from BYU Marriott, in 2003 and 2011, respectively. Why both? Francom says he stays inspired by regularly learning something new and pursuing growth. "The combination of degrees has served me well as I have advanced in my career—the public service orientation and rigorous analysis skills that I learned in the MPA program and the entrepreneurial spirit and marketing understanding from the MBA program," he explains. Francom, who graduated from BYU with his BFA in 2000, spent seven years at BYU's David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies. As the center's controller, he managed annual budgets and trained international study program faculty directors—including BYU Marriott program directors—on operations and finances. Francom then spent five years in France working for ITER, an international nuclear fusion research and engineering organization, as a senior department budget officer. Since December 2018, he has worked as the chief fiscal officer at the Iowa State University College of Engineering. Francom and his wife, Meredith, have four children and reside in Ames, Iowa. His hobbies include shoemaking and creating digital collages. He is a board member at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ames.

2012

Paul J. Gustin currently resides in Normal, Illinois, but his path there has been anything but normal. As a BYU student, Gustin studied finance while operating a small construction business. During that time he also began volunteering in Utah Valley Hospital's ER, where

he fell in love with helping others in a hospital environment. Gustin ultimately loaded his class schedule with medical school prerequisites during his senior year and then applied to medical school. In 2018 he graduated with his DO from Midwestern University's Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine, and he is now a resident physician in the Department of Neurological Surgery at Carle Health in Illinois. "I knew when I was accepted into BYU Marriott that no matter what I did in life, I would be able to use the knowledge and skills I gained there to succeed," Gustin says. "The foundation I obtained has helped me understand the business of medicine and has allowed me to help others in their endeavors as well." Gustin and his wife, Cayeling, have one boy and three girls, and the family plans to move to Utah County in 2025 once Gustin completes his neurosurgical residency. When he is not studying or performing surgery, you can find him playing with his four children or waking up early to exercise.

2013

Following an internship at Payson City Recreation, **Kelsea Hillam Kartchner** accepted a job at InsideSales.com. The company offered Kartchner a position as a travel coordinator and buyer—a job created specifically for her, based on the skills she'd gained at BYU Marriott while studying recreation management. Kartchner eventually shifted to making purchases for the entire company; she also onboarded a new travel management platform, Concur, and oversaw training on the platform for all existing and new employees. In 2016, Kartchner left InsideSales.com to raise her two children with her husband, Branden, who earned an undergraduate degree and a JD from BYU. In 2018, Kartchner was diagnosed with grade 3 brain cancer and underwent surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. Her cancer is now stable, and Kartchner says she is doing remarkably well. "I'm trying to savor the simple moments of motherhood and never take life for granted," she shares. Kartchner is a Relief Society instructor in her ward and a gymnastics instructor at a dance company, teaching gymnasts ranging in age from 6 to 20. She also enjoys kickboxing, going on walks, playing with her kids, practicing calligraphy, and listening to audiobooks. The Kartchners reside in Tucson, Arizona.

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2014

As an undergrad student studying marketing, **Jeff Rowan** dreamed of becoming a brand manager. Upon graduation, he accepted a position as an assistant marketing manager at the Walmart Home Office, where he worked on both the brand marketing and the local marketing teams. After a few years at Walmart, Rowan returned to school with the goal of pursuing a career in consumer packaged goods. He earned an MBA from Indiana University's Kelley School of Business in 2019, majoring in marketing. "While at Kelley I interned at Conagra, which confirmed brand management was the right career for me," he says. Rowan now works full time for Conagra Brands in Chicago as a brand manager for Marie Callender's Meals. He is responsible for strategy development, base business growth, forecasting, and assortment optimization. Rowan and his wife, Kirsten, reside in Aurora, Illinois, and have three children, with another on the way. He enjoys smoking meat, golfing, and following BYU sports.

2015

Early in his career, **Taylor Kauffman** investigated Ponzi schemes and educated residents on the warning signs of financial fraud while working at the Utah

A New Field of Vision

Blaine Meek's pivot from finance to farming was kickstarted, quite literally, by a cow. When a cow kicked Meek's father on their family farm in Idaho, Meek wrapped up his finals and hurried home to help. As he dug into the work, he caught the vision of farming and never let go.

In addition to the testy bovine, there was a second kicker that put farming in Meek's future: allergy shots. Even though Meek was raised on a farm, he never fully embraced the lifestyle due to severe allergies. "I loved tons of things about growing up on the farm, but I was sick all the time," Meek recalls.

But that summer, with his allergies quelled by shots and his business senses awakened, Meek let the idea of a farming career take root. When he returned to BYU Marriott, Meek discovered AgReserves—the operating entity of the Church's for-profit farms—and he has been with its family of farms ever since.

Through AgReserves, Meek interned in Elberta, Utah, where he grew corn, alfalfa, and wheat. This internship prepared him for a full-time job on another AgReserves farm after he finished his management degree with an emphasis in finance in 1997. Located in Monmouth, Oregon, this farm was where Meek mastered additional skills. "I was doing everything," he recalls. "It was like having my own little farm."

Meek entered AgReserves's manager trainee program, which took him to AgriNorthwest in Kennewick, Washington, where he progressed from a farm manager over 4,000 acres to an area manager who oversaw 16,000 acres and four other managers. "Now I'm the general manager," Meek explains. "I manage over 50,000 irrigated acres of cropland."

The honesty of farming has always resonated with Meek. "You can't fake the agronomy," he says. "You can tell if the stuff isn't growing." But while the health of a farm's crops can be plainly seen, its financial health isn't always visible. "You're not forced to become a good businessman just because you're a good grower," Meek explains.

That's where Meek's BYU Marriott education comes into play. "I'm using financial analysis skills all the time," says the father of eight. Meek wears his finance hat to do everything from running a return on investment for farm equipment to doing a payback analysis for crop protection products. He also helps AgReserves evaluate new enterprises such as properties to expand the farm.

Meek leans on the leadership skills he learned at BYU Marriott to manage what he calls "the people part" of agriculture. "The workers in the field—they're the ones who are really making it happen," he points out. "Training them, retaining them, and compensating them appropriately—all of those things are important."

As Meek watches over his people—as well as his potatoes, peas, and corn—he's thankful that the finance program was fertile ground for the growth of his future profession. "I look at everything with business eyes—not just an agronomist's perspective—and that has made all the difference."

Division of Securities. Kauffman, who earned a bachelor's degree in European studies and an MPA from BYU, says that his work counteracting Ponzi schemes was a great springboard into a public finance position at a regional investment bank. His next career move was to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget as a budget and policy analyst, where he also had the opportunity to serve as a trustee on the Utah Navajo Trust Fund. Now, as budget director for the Utah Department of Health and Human Services, Kauffman focuses on helping Utahns live safe and healthy lives. In this role, he communicates budget and fiscal issues with critical stakeholders, including the Utah Legislature and the Utah Governor's Office. "It's been amazing to see how each of my experiences has helped me to grow and stretch in new and unexpected ways, polishing me into a better critical thinker, manager, and contributor to state government," he says. Kauffman, who volunteered as an ESL teacher for three years, is an amateur woodworker. He loves reading and playing with his three children. He and his wife, Kate, and their family reside in American Fork, Utah.

2019

Monica Wood, who earned her bachelor's degree in experience design and management, is on a mission to capture good stories. As cofounder of EverStory, which specializes in transforming personal and family stories into documentary films, she finds joy in preserving clients' histories. "Stories told through film can be transformative and truly powerful," Wood says. Her unique combination of academic interests plus her time volunteering with the elderly make her job a perfect fit for her. To elevate the client experience, Wood regularly draws upon what she learned in her BYU Marriott classes. She is also thankful she chose to minor in international development because it taught her about social issues and broadened her worldview. Upon graduating from BYU, she worked as a country coordinator for HELP International in Tororo, Uganda. Wood, who resides in Provo, cohosts *The Musi-Gals* podcast with her former BYU roommate. For each episode, they comment on local productions and interview cast members. In addition to podcasting, Wood spends her time singing, hiking, practicing archery, playing guitar, and volunteering with the Kiwanis Club of Provo.

2020

Olivia Phillips's face lights up when she talks about tax. "I love it," says Phillips, a CPA. "Most people look at me cross-eyed when I say that, but I'm passionate about it. It's a puzzle I'm constantly trying to piece together, and that's what makes it interesting." Phillips, who earned her MAcc from BYU Marriott, is a tax senior at Deloitte in Salt Lake City, working in its core federal group with a focus in corporate compliance, consulting, and renewable energy. In 2023, Phillips spent six weeks in Deloitte's India office—training staff, traveling on weekends, and absorbing the culture. Phillips was recently accepted into Deloitte's national rotation program and will move to Washington, DC, in January 2025 to work with corporate tax experts for two years. In addition to traveling, Phillips enjoys hiking; she has traversed the Grand Canyon rim-to-rim twice and summited Mount Whitney, the tallest peak in the continental United States, multiple times. She has also hiked nearly all the peaks along Utah's Wasatch Front. Phillips served a mission in Busan, South Korea, and she had the memorable experience of graduating virtually from BYU during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finding His Soul Major

Brad Hales found his perfect match online. But it wasn't a dating site he was perusing; it was BYU Marriott's MPA site. "As soon as I looked at the website, I knew an MPA was the degree for me," he recalls.

At the time, Hales was studying communicative disorders at Utah State University (USU) to become a speech therapist, a profession that had piqued his interest during elementary school when he'd worked with a therapist to overcome a stutter. As Hales progressed in his undergraduate program, however, he couldn't ignore the unsettling feeling he had about continuing in the field. His professional trajectory changed soon after he joined Friends of the Elderly, a USU club that partnered with various nonprofits.

The positive experience he had with nonprofit organizations, coupled with growing uncertainty about his major, prompted Hales to consider a new career path. "I asked a mentor about possible graduate programs related to nonprofits," he recalls. "She highly recommended the Romney Institute's MPA program."

Upon graduation in 2006, Hales spent five years at BYU Marriott as an administrator in the Ballard Center for Social Impact. He then spent six years in various data and administrative positions at BYU–Idaho before moving to BYU–Pathway Worldwide in 2018.

As a data and planning manager for BYU–Pathway Worldwide, Hales now creates forecasting models, assists with enrollment strategy, and works directly with the vice president over enrollment.

"I took a few quantitative classes while at BYU, but forecasting student enrollment in BYU–Pathway's fast-paced and quickly changing environment has been a challenge," he says. "It's also been rewarding to see how we have planned for and served so many students around the world."

Hales and his wife, Rachel, have five children, and the family seeks out volunteer opportunities everyone can participate in. In his younger years, Hales participated in humanitarian work in many places—from Syria to Haiti. "Since having a family, we have kept things more local by visiting care centers, cleaning cemeteries, delivering food to food banks, and providing supplies for Pakistani schools."

Hales says that while he fell in love with service during his undergraduate years, it was the MPA program that taught him how to translate that desire into a career. "Working at BYU Marriott also taught me how to make a real impact in the lives of others," he says. "It provided a foundation that has guided me all along the way."

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