



Robert J. Trulaske, Sr.
College of Business
University of Missouri

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TRULASKE MAGAZINE

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TRULASKE Magazine

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Robert J. Trulaske, Sr.
College of Business
University of Missouri

THREE PILLARS DEFINING THE VISION FOR TRULASKE

“Together, we’re building something truly special at Trulaske — a business school that combines academic rigor with real-world relevance, global perspective with Midwest values, and innovation with tradition.”

As we prepare for another exceptional academic year, I’m excited to share the remarkable momentum building across the University of Missouri’s Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business.

Our enrollment trajectory remains extraordinary. Over the past five years, we’ve witnessed a positive increase in the enrollment of first-time freshmen and transfer students. This sustained growth reflects the increasing recognition of Trulaske’s value and our commitment to providing an accessible, world-class business education right here in the Midwest. Our faculty continue to advance the frontiers of business knowledge, with multiple research papers recently accepted at top-tier conferences and journals. Their scholarship enhances our classroom instruction and reinforces Trulaske’s position as a thought leader in business education.

While our placement rates remain strong, it’s more important than ever that we maintain our focus on preparing students to enter an evolving and increasingly competitive job market. As you explore the latest issue of Trulaske Magazine, you’ll see that our vision for ensuring the success of our graduates is built upon three pillars: transformative technologies, experienced-centered learning and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset.

Transformative Technologies

Introducing our students to transformative technologies not only prepares them for the opportunities that await them in the workforce, but it also helps ensure that the next generation of business leaders are equipped to implement these technologies in new and innovative ways in the workplace. By providing leading-edge access to AI, quantum computing and other cutting-edge tools to our faculty and students, we amplify the impact these transformative technologies have throughout our society.

Experience-Centered Learning

Through experience-centered learning, we create unique opportunities for students to connect classroom concepts with real-world applications, which leads to a deeper understanding of potential career paths and professional expectations. With this unique insight, students are better positioned to establish and attain goals that are a strong match for their talents, skills and interests, and enter the work force with a competitive edge.



Fostering an Entrepreneurial Mindset

At Trulaske, we believe that a bold, clear vision is the basis for every successful business venture. That's why we carefully nurture the entrepreneurial mindset, not just in business students, but in students across the Mizzou campus. Because there's much to be gained from a collaborative spirit, we remain committed to offering entrepreneurial tools to Tigers of all stripes.

As we look ahead to the new academic year, I'm energized by the possibilities before us. Together, we're building something truly special at Trulaske — a business school that combines academic rigor with real-world relevance, global perspective with Midwest values, and innovation with tradition.

Balaji Rajagopalan
Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. Dean

Pursuing quantum questions: TRULASKE RESEARCHERS INVESTIGATE EMERGING TECHNOLOGY'S POTENTIAL

BY KATHY DETERS

As quantum computers stand at the threshold of having the capability to solve problems and answer questions more quickly than even the world's most powerful supercomputers, forward-thinking researchers at the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business are leading the way in efforts to understand and harness the technology's potential.

Kuntara Pukthuanthong-Le, Trulaske's Marie M. and Harry L. Smith Endowed Chair Professor of Finance, is applying quantum computing to financial markets to address computational bottlenecks in learning, prediction and decision-making. Quantum computers use quantum bits, or qubits, to process and solve complex problems exponentially, creating the opportunity for financial agents to leverage the technology in order to develop and execute trading strategies much more quickly, and in today's high-paced financial industry speed provides a competitive advantage.

"Quantum computing could fundamentally transform financial markets by enabling faster and more accurate processing of complex data," Pukthuanthong said.

Pukthuanthong's research will look at how quantum technology can be used by financial practitioners to access analysis in real time and examine whether its use could lead to more efficient financial markets and more timely price adjustments in the future.

"Quantum computing isn't just about faster calculations — it's about rethinking financial economics from the ground up," Pukthuanthong said. "For hedge funds, a quantum-powered algorithm could analyze hundreds of risk factors in seconds — transforming how quickly trading strategies are developed or mispricings are corrected, potentially offering a speed advantage in highly competitive global markets. Our conjecture is that computational limits explain up to 20-30% of market inefficiencies, like persistent mispricing or contract failures, beyond traditional factors like irrationality."

International Year of Quantum Science and Technology

The year 2025 has been declared the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the initial development of quantum mechanics. Trulaske's research is part of global efforts to understand the technology's potential — and its limitations. While promising, quantum computing faces significant hurdles in financial applications, Pukthuanthong said, including data challenges, ethical risks, cybersecurity threats to trading platforms and a global shortage of experts in quantum finance.

Pukthuanthong cites the availability of specialized resources at Mizzou, like the State of Missouri's first IBM Quantum Innovation Center, as providing a strong foundation to help



From left to right: Detelina Marinova, Kuntara Pukthuanthong-Le, and Zhuping (Zoe) Li

quantum researchers understand these hurdles and find solutions. The center offers researchers and institutions access to advanced quantum computing through IBM's cloud-based platform.

"I'm thrilled to be advancing quantum research at the University of Missouri, where resources like our Mizzou Quantum Innovation Center and Mizzou's College of Engineering enable real progress," Pukthuanthong said.

Collaboration across campus is a critical asset in Pukthuanthong's research, as well. Experts in computer science and data analytics are helping her to customize Quantum Neural Networks. Pukthuanthong is also partnering with Mizzou's Physics and Engineering departments to develop hardware-aware models.

"This interdisciplinary approach accelerates my work and ensures it's grounded in both theory and feasible implementation," she said.

Researchers in Trulaske's Marketing Department hope to harness quantum's capabilities to help public service providers optimize their communications on social media platforms. Samuel M. Walton Distinguished Professor of Marketing Detelina Marinova and Trulaske PhD student Zhuping (Zoe) Li are bridging classical and quantum computing methods to analyze the language used in social media posts by public service providers in the United States, Canada and United Kingdom to determine which attributes of published information are most effective at communicating with the public, and how those communications influence public sentiment.

The study is designed to help public service providers craft their social media posts to communicate more clearly and effectively with the customers they serve, leading to increased public trust and customer wellbeing. It will also offer public service providers a greater understanding of the spread of misinformation and how to mitigate it. The researchers hope it will help the public better understand social media communications from these providers, too.

Li sees the research as having broader implications, as well. A gap has often existed between advancements in computer science and their practical applications in marketing, she said. It's a gap she plans to shrink by demonstrating how quantum computing can be used in her own marketing research.

Quantum research reflects Trulaske's commitment to transformative technology

Li credits Trulaske for empowering her to pursue her research by creating an internship opportunity. She hopes to introduce others, including undergraduates, to this powerful technology.

Drew Reeves, director of Transformative Technology Initiatives at Trulaske, said that staying ahead of emerging technology trends like quantum computing enables Trulaske to prepare students for the realities of a rapidly evolving business environment.

"These projects give the Trulaske community hands-on experience with emerging quantum technologies and their business applications. In turn, instructors guide students in developing the knowledge and skills to thrive in a landscape defined by data-driven decision-making, ambiguity and innovative problem-solving," Reeves said. "As they graduate, this generation of students will lead the way in bringing transformative technologies like quantum into real-world business practice."

The quantum research projects reflect the College of Business's ongoing commitment to providing leading-edge transformative technology opportunities to students and faculty.

"By exposing students to transformative technologies and their implications, the college ensures graduates are positioned to lead, innovate and create value in industries shaped by these advancements," Reeves said. "True innovation anticipates the future from an analytic framework, creating answers for questions the world hasn't even asked yet, positioning Trulaske as a leader in business education while fostering strong connections with industry partners navigating similar technological shifts."

While students and faculty benefit from Trulaske's transformative technology initiative, the college makes strategic use of these resources to benefit the business community, as well.

"Our quantum-powered research is just one example of Trulaske's visionary use of research and technology to uncover insights that give businesses a competitive edge," said Balaji Rajagopalan, Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. Dean of the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business. "By pairing the innovative thinking of our top-notch researchers with the latest in leading-edge technology, the college is able to deliver actionable, practical insights that are timely and relevant." •

Looking Forward...

TRULASKE STRATEGY PILLAR 1

TRANSFORMATIVE TECHNOLOGIES FOR BUSINESS & SOCIETY

Trulaske has seamlessly integrated digital skills, analytics and AI literacy into its curriculum. Recent highlights include:

- > **200 IT-compliance reviews for Trulaske AI use**
- > **6 full courses using paid AI licenses (ChatGPT, Claude, Gamma)**
- > **50 solutions evaluated by Trulaske stakeholders**
- > **15 workshops hosted covering Transformative Technology topics**
- > **Engagement with 20+ industry stakeholders**
- > **Pilot engagements with Gartner, Jobscan, Coursera and Gradescope**

Want to get involved?

Contact Drew Reeves, Director of Transformative Technology Initiatives at Trulaske, at reevesan@missouri.edu.

"Quantum computing could fundamentally transform financial markets by enabling faster and more accurate processing of complex data."

— Kuntara Pukthuanthong-Le



BANKS USING AI ARE BETTER AT IDENTIFYING CREDITWORTHY BORROWERS FROM AFAR

“This research is an example of Mizzou’s land-grant mission, and my ultimate goal is to support small businesses in Missouri, which make up 99.5% of all Missouri businesses. Seeing the ripple effect of our research going from Cornell Hall across the state of Missouri is humbling and motivating.”

— Jeffery Piao



Jeffery Piao

BY BRIAN CONSIGLIO

Artificial intelligence could be a game changer for small businesses struggling to secure loans — even in areas without access to a brick-and-mortar bank branch — according to a new study from the University of Missouri.

Since the 2008 Great Recession, more than 13,000 bank branches have closed across the U.S., many in rural areas. These closures have created “banking deserts,” where traditional face-to-face lending — often required to build trust and share sensitive financial information — is no longer feasible. The result? Small business owners are increasingly cut off from the credit they need to sustain and grow their operations.

Jeffery Piao, an assistant professor in Mizzou’s Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business, wants to solve this problem using artificial intelligence. Specifically, he believes AI could help banks identify and support creditworthy borrowers, even if they live far from a physical bank branch — opening new doors for economic growth in local communities.

For the study, Piao and his colleagues analyzed the U.S. Census Bureau’s annual technology survey, which tracks AI adoption among banks. They then compared the results with banks’ small-business lending patterns. The researchers discovered three main findings:

1. **The percentage of banks using AI increased from 14% in 2017 to 43% in 2019.**
2. **Banks with greater AI usage lent money to borrowers who were located farther away from physical bank branches.**
3. **Banks with greater AI usage offered lower interest rates and saw fewer instances of default even while lending money to distant borrowers.**

"When implemented carefully, AI can help banks extend credit to underserved regions without sacrificing loan quality—a result that is both unexpected and encouraging for policymakers and lenders," Piao said. "This is exciting news because of the implications for local economic development. As AI becomes more widely adopted, expanding credit access to underserved communities could boost job growth, increase tax revenues for local schools and increase the formation of start-ups."

AI helps banks make smarter lending decisions through its ability to collect and process massive amounts of data quickly, allowing banks to make better-informed decisions.

For example, when processing loan applications, AI can determine whether a business is located in an area where the economy has been booming or busting recently, even if the loan officer has never visited the area. It can provide data on foot-traffic patterns or whether a particular industry is on the rise or in decline in a certain area. While the credit risk profiles of borrowers were traditionally monitored periodically, AI can now track them in real time, improving accuracy.

"This research is an example of Mizzou's land-grant mission, and my ultimate goal is to support small businesses in Missouri, which make up 99.5% of all Missouri businesses," Piao said. "Seeing the ripple effect of our research going from Cornell Hall across the state of Missouri is humbling and motivating."

"U.S. banks' artificial intelligence and small business lending: Evidence from the Census Bureau's annual business survey" was published by the United States Census Bureau. Philip Wang with the University of Florida and Diana Weng with Baruch College collaborated with Piao on the study. •

TOOL, OR AGENT?



BY KATHY DETERS

When it comes to allowing artificial intelligence (AI) into our lives, the role we view it playing predicts our willingness to accept it, says Bingqing Li, an assistant professor of marketing at the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business.

Li and research partners Edward Yuhang Lai and Xin (Shane) Wang examined what drives people to accept or reject AI, especially as it becomes more autonomous and socially present. Their meta-analysis of nearly 120,000 participants discovered that certain AI features, including capability, transparency, role, expertise scope and anthropomorphism, impact acceptance differently depending on whether AI is perceived as a tool to be used or an agent capable of acting on its own.

"As AI becomes increasingly capable of acting autonomously and interacting in socially intelligent ways, it is now viewed not only as a technological tool but also as an agentic entity," Li pointed out. "However, current understanding of people's willingness to accept AI has largely focused on the perspective of AI as a tool, leaving gaps in how agentic aspects shape acceptance."

Li's innovative study is the first meta-analysis to synthesize human acceptance of AI through a dual-perspective lens (i.e., AI as a tool versus AI as an agent) and to map actionable design features within a User-Centered Design framework. The researchers also launched a web-based tool that lets users explore the data interactively.

"This research addresses a critical question: As AI grows more powerful, agent-like, and embedded in daily life and work, what makes people comfortable accepting it and how can businesses design AI systems that people are willing to use?" Li asked.

The findings have implications for product development and marketing teams, AI and UX designers, tech media, industry practitioners that are responsible for designing or deploying AI systems, public sector stakeholders involved in AI adoption, interdisciplinary researchers exploring human-AI interaction and others.

For those looking to use the research to increase user acceptance of AI, Li offered the following takeaways:

1. **Know the perspective: Which AI features matter most depends on whether people perceive and accept the AI as a tool or as an agent.**
2. **Design for acceptance: Develop AI features (e.g., capability, expertise scope, role) that increase people's willingness to use AI.**
3. **Apply User-Centered Design: Tailor AI design and messaging using the provided User-Centered Design roadmap to match user needs and context.**

Mizzou's Trulaske College of Business is committed to working to advance transformative technologies as one of its three pillars of excellence.

"As AI technologies like ChatGPT and autonomous agents enter mainstream use, businesses and policymakers urgently need evidence-based guidance on how to encourage user trust and adoption in a rapidly evolving technological landscape," Li said.

Li's study, "From Tools to Agents: Meta-Analytic Insights into Human Acceptance of AI" was published in the June 2025 Journal of Marketing. •



UMIG at Trulaske :

POWERING TOP FINANCIAL CAREERS

BY BONITA TILLMAN

Mizzou students interested in careers in investment banking, private equity, asset management and other capital markets are gaining leadership skills and learning to be changemakers in those fields through a campus club.

The University of Missouri Investment Group (UMIG) Associate's Program in the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business helps students engage with speakers who are leaders in the industry, visit firms in major markets, gain informal mentorship opportunities and benefit from invaluable peer learning.

Reflecting on the success of UMIG graduates, Dean Balaji Rajagopalan said, "The combination of top talent, unparalleled work ethic, the hunger to learn and unwavering support from alumni will continue to develop leaders in the financial services industry and beyond."

In addition, associates in the student-managed club connect with alumni in their chosen career paths in cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Kansas City and St. Louis to get summer internships before graduation and full-time jobs after graduation.

"The blessings that UMIG has brought to me are not only the connections, but also the opportunities to learn more about the industry," said Chase McQueary, a junior finance major at Mizzou and UMIG's chief marketing officer. "Without UMIG, I think I would have been multiple steps behind the competition and would not have understood what it takes to get there."

UMIG meets every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the semester for anyone interested in a financial career, whether they're in finance, accounting, IT, engineering or general management tracks.

The program conducts two interviews – one focused on behavioral attributes and another on technical skills taught in the meetings – before students are eligible to join UMIG. Only 15-20% of applicants are accepted into the club.

Members have an average GPA of 3.85, and when they graduate, 100% of participants earn full-time jobs at financial firms with an average starting salary of \$115,000.

Thanks to that success, recruitment has been fairly strong, McQueary said, and students want to follow the business school's top-performing students. "They apply to UMIG to see what upper-level majors are doing to set themselves apart," he said.

Ajith Chandrasekhar said he heard about the program even before he arrived at Mizzou from a friend who had connected with UMIG representatives. The program fits his desire for an interesting career path.

"I didn't really know what investment banking was heading into college, but I figured it all out pretty quickly," he said. "Once I got immersed in the culture of UMIG, I saw how they push you to really shoot for the stars."



Looking Forward...

TRULASKE STRATEGY PILLAR 2

EXPERIENCE-CENTERED LEARNING

One of Trulaske's greatest strengths is the experience it can offer its students, both inside and outside the classroom. Recent highlights include:

- > **Using Piloted Career Pathway Program with CPG; other career pathways are in development**
- > **Established the Bloomberg Lab with 12 terminals**
- > **Student participation in Study Abroad increased by ~37% over the last two years**
- > **International Trade Center completed 16 projects over the last two years**
- > **Received Mizzou Forward grant to purchase virtual reality sets for sales training through the Center for Sales and Customer Development**
- > **Supported student excellence through several programs of distinction, including the Cornell Leadership Program, the Vasey Academy, the Heartland Scholars Academy, the Allen Access Program, the Career Pathway Program, the University of Missouri Investment Group and the Allen Angel Capital Education Program**

Want to get involved?

Contact Gay Albright, associate dean of academic programs, at albrightj@missouri.edu.

McQueary credits the increased interest in the program to support from Rajagopalan, who has provided travel resources and access to contacts to help students advance their careers.

"The toughest part is just getting a foot in the door, getting in front of employers and showing them that we have smart students who can compete with Ivy League kids," McQueary said. "We need to continue raising the bar year over year."

Looking to positive futures

In the last two years, 24 graduates gained full-time positions with top-level financial firms across the country, including Raymond James, Goldman Sachs, J.P. Morgan Chase, BlackRock, BMO, Five Elms Capital, Lincoln International, Piper Sandler and Bank of America.

Cash Schopflin, a sophomore finance major, is already working as a financial analyst intern at a veterinary consulting firm and anticipating the future experiences UMIG has afforded him.

This summer, he joined Great Range Capital in Kansas City as a private equity intern, and he'll spend summer 2026 as an investment banking summer analyst at Goldman Sachs in New York City — all before his anticipated graduation in December 2026.

"During my first semester, I attended a UMIG meeting to explore finance

careers and was drawn to the collaborative community of the brightest students at Trulaske and the direct pathway it offered into investment banking," Schopflin said.

He praised UMIG's mentoring network of current members and alumni for making the program strong. "From the senior who guided me through my first stock pitch to graduates who open doors at top firms, the support never stops," he said.

Asophomore studying finance and economics, Chandrasekhar said he knew he did not want to work in a "typical business function" and was optimistic about working in a big city like New York or Chicago after graduation.

Now, thanks to UMIG, he is on his way to fulfilling a career dream with a junior year internship.

"I accepted an offer with the Deloitte corporate investment banking division in Chicago for next summer," he said. "I'll be doing industrial mergers and acquisitions (M&A), so I'm super excited for that opportunity."

Schopflin said he owes his focus on the future to the guidance he received in UMIG.

"Without UMIG, my path to Wall Street would've meant countless late nights mastering technical skills on my own, firing off cold emails without a clear strategy and constantly second guessing my next move," he said. •



ITC Students Share Their Internship Experience:

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

A group of four International Trade Center (ITC) students had the opportunity to travel to Nairobi, Kenya, as part of their internship with Kentegra Biotechnology, a leading company in agricultural biotechnology and sustainable farming solutions. This experience-centered opportunity not only allowed the students to apply their academic knowledge in a real-world setting but also offered them invaluable, hands-on exposure to the dynamic world of international trade and global business operations. Through their time in Nairobi, the students gained deep insights into the practical challenges and opportunities of working in the biotechnology industry, while also learning about the cultural, economic, and environmental factors that shape business in the African market. In this Q&A, the students reflect on their transformative journey, the skills they developed and the lessons they will carry forward in their careers.



Kevin Fan

International Business;
Finance & Banking
Emphasis

What was your favorite part about interning with Kentegra Biotechnology this semester?

My favorite part of interning with Kentegra

Biotechnology this semester has been the opportunity to connect with local Kenyans, particularly the farmers contracted by the company. This experience provided me with valuable insights into Kenya's agricultural sector, which

is the backbone of the economy, employing around 40% of the population and contributing approximately 33% of the country's GDP. Through these interactions, I gained a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by farmers, as well as the significant impact that sustainable agricultural practices can have on local communities. One moment that stands out to me is when a farmer shared that, with the salary boost from contracting with Kentegra, they were able to foster a child. It was an incredibly humbling and impactful experience, as it highlighted not only the financial benefits of their partnership with Kentegra but also the broader social and emotional impact it had on their lives. This personal story reminded me of the power of business to create positive, lasting change and reinforced my passion for working in industries that have a meaningful, tangible effect on communities. It was a profound reminder of how business, when done right, can empower individuals and families in ways that go far beyond profit.

Ultimately, this internship has been the first stepping stone toward my career aspirations. It has shown me firsthand how business can be a force for positive change, and I am excited to build on this experience as I continue my education and prepare for a career that allows me to contribute to a more interconnected and sustainable global economy.

What challenges did your group face while working with a company overseas and how did you handle them?

One of the challenges our team faced while working with an overseas company was the inability to meet our clients in person at the start of the project. In business, establishing trust and connection with clients is crucial, especially in

“During my internship, I learned the importance of staying people-focused and saw firsthand how strong relationships within a company and its surrounding community can drive success.”

— Lexi Tucker,
Trulaske Student

consulting projects. Without the opportunity to meet face-to-face until mid-semester, it was difficult to fully understand who we were working with and the nature of their needs. Even after meeting our clients over Zoom, I still didn't feel a strong personal connection. It wasn't until our trip to Kenya, when we met them in person, that we truly got a sense of who our clients were. It was then that we were able to build a meaningful connection, but it came toward the end of the program. Despite this challenge, our team persevered and delivered our best work. We made sure to align our report and presentation closely with the company's core values, as outlined on their website, throughout every step of the process, to ensure it resonated with the clients.



Catherine (Cat) Hinkebein
Finance & Banking Emphasis

What was your favorite part about interning with Kentegra Biotechnology this semester?

My favorite part of interning with Kentegra was gaining hands-on experience working with an international company. I am deeply interested in pursuing a career with an international firm, so navigating challenges

like coordinating across time zones and understanding differing business cultures and customs provided an invaluable learning opportunity. These experiences enriched my understanding of global collaboration and adaptability, both of which will be critical for my future career.

What challenges did your group face while working with a company overseas and how did you handle them?

Many of the resources and databases we utilized during the ITC internship were specific to the United States, which added complexity to our research for Kentegra Biotechnology. Some U.S.-centric data didn't apply directly, requiring us to explore alternative databases and tools that better aligned with Kentegra's international context. While this required additional effort upfront, it ultimately expanded our research capabilities and taught us to adapt to the unique needs of global companies.

How has interning with a company located outside of the U.S. influenced your world view?

Interning with Kentegra Biotechnology, a company located outside the U.S., has significantly broadened my worldview. Collaborating with a team rooted in Kenya allowed me to see firsthand the unique opportunities they have provided for over 37,000 farmers across Kenya. I was unfamiliar with business practices or much of what happens outside of Nairobi in Kenya's business landscape. It was so meaningful to see just how beneficial growing this pyrethrum is for farmers. It has truly changed many of their lives, and it was neat to see the effects this business can have on others.



James Bianco
Management Emphasis

What was your favorite part about interning with Kentegra Biotechnology this semester?

My favorite part of working with Kentegra this semester is being able to be a part of helping a company that does such an important job for the people of Kenya and is a company that does a lot of good for its community.

What does having access to experience-centered opportunities like this one mean to you and your education?

Having an experience like this has been incredibly rewarding. It is one thing to do the project, but to see the impact of what it all means in person brings it to a whole new level. I think as a person who plans on working with global companies, having different cultural understandings is crucial to being successful.



Lexi Tucker
Management Emphasis

What was your favorite part about interning with Kentegra Biotechnology this semester?

My favorite part about interning with Kentegra Biotechnology this semester was working with a company driven by a strong mission to support Kenyan communities and farmers while maintaining excellent

business operations. Seeing how they balance business success with social impact inspired me and deepened my appreciation for purpose-driven work. The experience also provided valuable insights into the complexities of manufacturing operations, where I gained a deeper understanding of the intricacies involved and how precision and innovation drive impactful outcomes. This internship reinforced my passion for making a meaningful difference in my future career.

How do you plan to use what you learned during this internship in your academic or career path moving forward?

During my internship, I learned the importance of staying people-focused and saw firsthand how strong relationships within a company and its surrounding community can drive success. Moving forward, I plan to apply this lesson to my academic and professional endeavors by fostering collaborative team dynamics, building meaningful connections with stakeholders, prioritizing effective communication, and ensuring that people remain at the center of everything I do. Additionally, I gained valuable insight into the importance of long-term vision when setting short-term goals. Kentegra's steady growth, built from scratch through persistence and a clear vision, has inspired me to approach my future projects with a similar strategic mindset.

What does having access to experience-centered opportunities like this one mean to you and your education?

Having access to experience-centered opportunities like this is incredibly impactful to my education. It allows me to move beyond the classroom and gain real-world insights that deepen my understanding of the business world. This experience has shifted my perspective on what it takes to successfully run an organization, especially the importance of leading with heart and fostering genuine connections. Witnessing the impact of Kentegra Biotechnology's business dealings on all stakeholders in the value chain was like connecting all the puzzle pieces, giving the operation a deeper meaning. Additionally, these experiential opportunities have provided me with a clearer picture of what to expect in the future of global business, helping me prepare for the challenges and opportunities. •



TIGERS ON WALL STREET

Meredith Aslin Imber, a 2002 graduate of the Trulaske College of Business, was working in finance on Wall Street when she noticed she was not getting many visits from Mizzou students. Imber brought it up with her father, Mick Aslin, BS Ed '69, MBA '72.

"I told my dad that we needed Mizzou students to visit Wall Street firms if they were ever going to be competitive in this market," Imber said. "They needed to be able to see themselves here. He was on board from the start."

Aslin, retired chairman and CEO of Aslin Group Inc., had been a long-time supporter of the Trulaske College of Business and currently serves on the Dean's Advisory Board. Aslin helped secure funding through fellow Mizzou alum Harvey Eisen, and with leadership by Mary Beth Marrs, an associate teaching professor in the management department, Trulaske took its first Tigers on Wall Street trip in 2008.

"From the beginning, I have been committed to the concept of providing students with an opportunity to interact with the leaders, including many Mizzou alumni, of some of the world's largest and most profitable companies," Aslin said. "Students can see firsthand that graduates of the Trulaske College of Business can and are competing with graduates of the most prestigious business schools of the world."

The trip has become an annual tradition for Trulaske, which takes a group of students to Wall Street each fall for job shadowing and visits to financial offices.

"Tigers on Wall Street has been a successful showcase of the quality of Trulaske students, leading to increased internships and employment opportunities for those interested and making the college more attractive to the best and brightest incoming students," Aslin said.

For Anna Hankins, a senior studying finance & banking, Tigers on Wall Street was a significant factor in her decision to attend Mizzou.

"I come from a very small town where people have the tendency to stay close to home," said Hankins, who grew up in Wardsville, Missouri. "When I saw that Mizzou could open doors to opportunities in places like New York City, I was sold."

In addition to a Broadway show, the trip includes a reception with other Trulaske alumni who are now working in New York. Over the years, the group has grown to dozens.

"Tigers on Wall Street has been very successful, but it's because of the alums reaching back and opening doors for students at the offices where they're at now," Marrs said.

Students selected for the Tigers on Wall Street Program are members of the Cornell Leadership Program, a Trulaske initiative that provides high-performing students with an opportunity to develop leadership skills.

Before attending Tigers on Wall Street, students meet weekly to research the offices they'll be visiting. The sessions are led by Greg Stringfellow, an alum of the Cornell Leadership Program who now works at Charles Schwab.

Chase McQueary, who is studying finance & economics at Trulaske, enjoyed learning about the power of networking and personal branding.

"We learned to emphasize the importance of a degree from Missouri and how to use the nontraditional, hardworking background as an advantage in going through interview processes," he said.

For participants, the highlight of the trip is typically being on the floor of the stock exchange for the opening bell alongside traders and CNBC reporters and meeting notable figures in the world of finance. For Marrs, the real reward is the impact it has on her students.

"The highlight for me is seeing it through the students' eyes," Marrs said. "Seeing them see that there's a big world out there, and that they can compete with a kid from an Ivy League school. Being from the Midwest actually gives them a competitive edge. Trulaske students have the work ethic, the Midwest nicety. Our students can compete with anyone." •

Empowering the next generation:

TRULASKE INTRODUCES CPG CAREER PATHWAY AND BRASE RISE SCHOLARS PROGRAM

BY SARAH DIEDRICH

The Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business recently launched two transformative programs that promise to shape the future of consumer-packaged goods and empower the next generation of leaders: the Consumer-Packaged Goods (CPG) Career Pathway and the Brase RISE Scholars Program.

The CPG Career Pathway is an innovative program designed to cater to students passionate about the CPG industry across multiple areas — sales, marketing, digital marketing, supply chain, procurement and more.

The new programs were introduced during the 25th Making Me Marketable conference, where John Brase, BSBA '90 and chief operating officer with The J.M. Smucker Company, was the keynote speaker.

The goal of the new pathway program is simple but powerful: to provide in-depth exposure to the CPG industry, cultivating a robust understanding of its complexities and preparing students to become high-achieving, performance-ready leaders.

"This pathway is not just about classroom learning — it's about experience-centered learning," said Dean Balaji Rajagopalan. "From hands-on internships, corporate visits and networking events to skill-building activities, case studies, mentoring and coaching, we are providing a comprehensive toolkit for our students to thrive."

The program is designed to empower students with the knowledge, skills and insights they need to excel and drive innovation in the dynamic world of consumer-packaged goods.

RISE(ing) to the occasion

A special part of this pathway is the Brase RISE Scholars Program, which is supported by a transformative gift from Brase and his wife, Allison, who have spent their careers in consumer-packaged goods.

Brase told students during his keynote address that integrity is the greatest attribute a leader can have. "Leadership is earned," he said. "It's not an entitlement."

Designed specifically to support students with financial need, many of whom may be the first in their families to attend college, the Brase RISE Scholars Program exemplifies what it means to raise, inspire, support and empower.

"The Brase RISE Scholars Program is more than just an opportunity — it's a lifeline for ambitious, hardworking students from under-resourced backgrounds," Rajagopalan said. "Through this initiative, we are not only opening doors but also providing the support needed for these students to walk through those doors confidently."

The CPG Career Pathway and Brase RISE Scholars applications are open to first- and second-year students.

"The CPG Career Pathway and Brase RISE Scholars Program are not merely steppingstones to careers — they are gateways to leadership, innovation, and global influence," Rajagopalan said. "At the Trulaske College of Business, we are dedicated to supporting our students at every stage of their journey, inspiring and empowering them to achieve their goals. By doing so, we help them overcome the barriers they face and realize their fullest potential." •

"The CPG Career Pathway and Brase RISE Scholars Program are not merely steppingstones to careers — they are gateways to leadership, innovation, and global influence."

— Trulaske Dean Balaji Rajagopalan



TRULASKE ENTREPRENEUR TURNS PLETHORA OF PEPPERS INTO BUSINESS WITH A BITE

BY KATHY DETERS

Three years ago, Killion Hardesty and buddy Gage Ryan found themselves with a plethora of peppers on their hands — so they cooked up a plan that is blazing a new path within the Columbia condiment crowd. Together the duo founded Kaged Heat, a collection of small-batch hot sauces featuring their own locally grown peppers.

“We grew a bunch of peppers without a plan,” Hardesty said. “Now, we are growing our own peppers with a specific plan to make hot sauce with unique ingredients.”

And by “unique ingredients” he means peppers like the Komodo Dragon, a prominent flavor profile that’s popping up in his latest creation, as well as scotch bonnets, 7-pot, Bahamian goat peppers, habaneros and other peppers that tend to grow in the Caribbean. These homegrown peppers provide the heat for sauces like Smashed Peach, Roasted Poblano and Garlic Ghost.

“We are growing between 15 and 20 different pepper varieties this summer,” Hardesty said. “We are still trying to figure out which peppers grow best in our climate and what peppers work well for hot sauce and other ingredient pairings.”

Unleashing Kaged Heat at the farmers market

As business partners, Hardesty and Ryan are spicing up the local cuisine scene, with Ryan acting as the team’s horticulturist, and Hardesty mixing it up in the kitchen. Heat seekers can find their collabs online, at the Root Cellar and at Clover’s Market, but they’re really spicing things up at the Columbia Farmers Market, where they can connect with other area producers and source local ingredients like onions, garlic and sweet peppers.

“We love selling at the farmers market,” Hardesty said. “It’s a great way to be a part of the community and it’s a great way to meet new people. The market is definitely a special place and a lot of care has

gone into making it what it is. I don’t know if we would be as successful as we are without it.”

Selling at the farmers market requires navigating some red tape, Hardesty advises, so the venue is best for local entrepreneurs who are truly committed to their business. For those who are persistent in pursuing the approval process, the payoff is a venue that brings together a diverse customer base from across the region. It also offers a unique opportunity to learn from other local businesses.

“There are some ‘old-timers’ who have been at the market since it was just a gravel lot in the middle of a field. Now, it has a covered pavilion, with fans for the summer and walls and heaters for the winter,” Hardesty said. “There are multiple generations of farmers, bakers and craftsmen that set up shop every Saturday and the wealth of knowledge there is invaluable.”

Growing the next generation of entrepreneurs

When he’s not nurturing his budding business in a plot at the City of Columbia’s Fairview Community Gardens, Hardesty is helping young entrepreneurs grow in the University of Missouri’s Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business. As an academic advisor, Hardesty helps guide and inspire Trulaske students. He anticipates that the college’s innovative new CPG Career Pathway will ignite an increased interest in consumer goods. In the future, he’d like to give interested students a behind-the-scenes look at Kaged Heat and his experiences with launching a new business, which he hopes will help them as they build their own enterprises.

Trulaske’s programs turned up the heat on Hardesty’s business strategy. Attending workshops hosted by the Trulaske College of Business helped him make better use of technology, says Hardesty, who leveraged AI to develop his business plan, elevator pitch and loan presentation. But it was collaborating with his Trulaske colleagues that truly gave him an edge.

“The people working in this college are smart and passionate about what they do,” Hardesty noted. “Having conversations with my coworkers has helped me formulate ideas and has helped connect me to resources in the greater Columbia community.”

What’s next for this prolific pepper potentate? Hardesty says he’d like to see the pepper sauce pop up in local restaurants and grocery stores, but scaling up, he said, would require specialized equipment, more peppers, “and a lot more hot sauce.” Expanding the flavor selection is on the table, as well.

“For me, the point of growing so many different varieties of peppers is to have a bunch of different flavors of hot sauce,” Hardesty pointed out. “Who doesn’t love an overwhelming number of options to choose from?”

Patience, patience, patience

Mizzou’s Trulaske College of Business prides itself on fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, and Hardesty’s spicy dynasty is certainly proof in a bottle. For other aspiring entrepreneurs, Hardesty has two words of advice: Be patient. With the paperwork. With the process, and most importantly, with yourself. •

“The people working in this college are smart and passionate about what they do. Having conversations with my coworkers has helped me formulate ideas and has helped connect me to resources in the greater Columbia community.”

— Killion Hardesty

MIZZOU'S HUSTLE CULTURE FINDS HOME ON NEW ONLINE RETAIL PLATFORM



BY KATHY DETERS

As a student artist herself, it's no surprise that Kora Lyon found herself drawn to the opportunity to empower fellow artists at the University of Missouri. When Student-Made Founders Lindsay Reeth and Ryan McElhinney spoke to

Lyon's entrepreneurship class, Lyon was intrigued by the inventive online retail platform, which provides college students a national platform to sell their products.

After an interview, Lyon, a psychology major who's also pursuing a minor in entrepreneurship & innovation, was offered the Campus Manager position. Lyon will oversee other Student Managers to ensure the team is meeting its goals. She will also connect with creators and provide support to everyone in Mizzou's Student-Made community.

"It is so refreshing to have a platform that supports and allows this community of people to thrive," Lyon said. "It can be overwhelming learning how to start, and Student-Made provides every resource needed."

The opportunity was made possible thanks to leadership provided by the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI) in Mizzou's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business, and financial sponsorship provided by Trulaske supporter Stuart Bascomb, whose donation is helping to fund the Student-Made program at the Mizzou campus.

According to Sophia Rivera Hassemer, CEI director of operations, the program will provide outstanding experience-centered learning opportunities for students.

"It goes beyond a hands-on experience; it is truly a real-world experience. Students on the platform will be running their own business while maintaining their academic course load. So, while they are enrolled in their usual coursework, they will be reinforcing what they learn in the classroom in real time," Hassemer said.

Joining Lyon as the inaugural Student Managers at Mizzou are Alexis Anderson, marketing manager; Revathi Kurup, events & partnerships manager; Mason Morris, finance & strategy manager; Anyshya Hemphill, website manager; and Molly Levine, community engagement manager.

Hemphill, who is studying computer science and psychology at Mizzou, looks forward to honing her collaboration skills.

"A portion of my role that excites me, is that I come up with new ideas for what can be featured on the Student-Made Mizzou Store," Hemphill said. "I will work with the other Managers to do this, which will position me to communicate my ideas and learn from others. I will also be developing my e-commerce business skills by learning the processes of getting products from a creator to an online platform to a customer."

Kurup, who is majoring in business administration with a minor in entrepreneurship & innovation, will be organizing pop-up events to give student creators a chance to showcase their work in person.

"I was inspired to join Student-Made because I've always wanted to be part of something bigger than myself, something that lets me grow as a leader while making a real difference for others," Kurup said. "As someone who is passionate about business and community, this program felt like the perfect mix."

The team launched the Mizzou Student-Made Store at Trulaske's TruWelcome event Aug. 22. Student-Made goods typically include handmade art, apparel, accessories and more.

While Trulaske is sponsoring and managing the partnership with Student-Made, the platform and opportunities are available to all Mizzou students, regardless of year or major.

"Even if you are not a student entrepreneur, you will now be able to see all the amazing things fellow students are doing across campus," Hassemer said. "Maybe that will get someone thinking, what could I do?, and we will be here at Trulaske to support them through that thought process and explore those possibilities."



It's an opportunity to build upon another pillar of excellence at the Trulaske College of Business: inspiring an entrepreneurial mindset.

The Student-Made program incorporates Trulaske's third pillar of excellence, as well: Providing students with access to transformative technologies.

"Student-Made is an easy access point for entrepreneurs at any and all levels to get their business off the ground and to build their confidence and knowledge in the E-commerce sector, all the while earning 100% of all sales made on the platform," Hassemer said.

In addition to a powerful retail platform and the opportunity to participate in events, creators will also enjoy the built-in support system provided by the Student Managers.

"Student-Made wasn't founded as just a platform to give students a place to sell their products," Hemphill said. "It's about giving creators a support system that can help them through the ebbs and flows of entrepreneurship." •

UZBEKISTAN PROFESSOR SHARES EXPERTISE, LEARNS U.S. CULTURE AT MIZZOU

BY BONITA TILLMAN

Bringing different backgrounds and thoughts together can yield some astonishing results.

Laylo Yakhshiboeva, a professor of Management and Entrepreneurship at the Tashkent State University of Economics in Uzbekistan, was embedded in the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business.



Laylo Yakhshiboeva, a professor of Management and Entrepreneurship at Tashkent State University.

The visiting scholar spent the spring semester at Mizzou learning about cultural differences and similarities between the U.S. and her country while also sharing her entrepreneurial expertise.

Scott Christianson, director of the center who sponsored Yakhshiboeva at Mizzou, said visiting professors bring fresh energy and expertise that ripples through almost every part of a university.

"The campus consensus is that Laylo's visit brought fresh scholarship to Mizzou, and we are excited to collaborate with her in the future," he said.

Chosen from more than 700 candidates in the annual Faculty Enrichment Program organized by the American Council and the Ministry of Higher Education in Uzbekistan, Yakhshiboeva said the experience has been exceptional.

"America is a totally different culture from other places I've visited," she said. "We are far from each other with different backgrounds, but this makes people more innovative and creative when they come together. Our values are the same because we are human."



During her Mizzou visit, Yakhshiboeva:

- > Made presentations on Uzbek culture, entrepreneurship and economics, both to CAFNR faculty and to Trulaske faculty, staff and students during the college's International Week activities;
- > Audited courses in entrepreneurship, strategic communications, business and design thinking; and
- > Co-hosted a presentation on sustainable practices and the economics of sustainability using the En-roads simulator and completed training to become an En-roads Climate Ambassador.

Her insight benefited the larger entrepreneurial community when she presented her business idea at 1 Million Cups, and she became an active member of the local 1 Million Cups community.

Yakhshiboeva also presented research on economic development in rural Uzbekistan at the California Entrepreneurship Educators Conference in San Diego.

"Our students gained from hearing Yakhshiboeva's new perspectives and benefitted directly from her mentoring," Christianson said. "Hosting an international peer raises Mizzou's profile, deepens community and cultural engagement and helped connect local business leaders, faculty and residents to Central Asian heritage and practical climate solutions," he added.

Yakhshiboeva collaborated with Stacie Kane, an associate professor at Trulaske and a fellow entrepreneur.

Developing a joint project

An added bonus of Yakhshiboeva's visit was the opportunity to collaborate with a fellow entrepreneur, TCOB Associate Professor Stacie Kane, who teaches entrepreneurship at Mizzou.

The two combined Kane's line of washable paper bags with brightly colored embroidered Uzbek fabrics and patterns, resulting in an enhanced fashionable bag collection.

"I found out that Stacie's an entrepreneur who makes these amazing, sustainable bags in addition to her teaching job," Yakhshiboeva said. "It was very appealing for me so I brought some bright, colorful handmade embroideries with me and thought we could try something."

Kane said her connection with Yakhshiboeva was almost instant, and she loved the collaboration.

"It's just a good story because my product really matches hers in regard to empowering women and doing something good for society as well as the environment," Kane said. "I think the collaboration we've made is going to be a long-time relationship for sure."

Although she had already researched how to get her bags produced, Kane has faced roadblocks such as Covid. Yakhshiboeva suggested exploring her connections through rural Uzbekistan women, who can benefit from the independence the work would add.

"Some of them have little kids or are widows who have no opportunity to go somewhere to work," she said. "It could be another added value to our project and would empower women in that region."

The collaboration has helped both women's projects. "I wanted to calm down my items because they are too colorful, and I think I brought some color to Stacie's bags," Yakhshiboeva said. "Different people in our society boost creativity. When you see her work and my work, it's two totally different things. But when we bring it together, it's amazing."

Yakhshiboeva introduced the alliance at Mizzou's Culture Couture fashion show sponsored by the International Department and was joined by Kane.

"My message is that entrepreneurship is actually a circle of knowledge, but we are more into mindset to build skills," Yakhshiboeva said. "Even if you are an educator, you are a student of entrepreneurship; it's all about mindset. And you can use the skills anywhere in your life."



Looking Forward...

TRULASKE STRATEGY PILLAR 3

ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET

Through the college's Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Trulaske students have extensive opportunities to develop the entrepreneurial mindsets that empower them to revolutionize the world of business. Recent highlights include:

- > **13 students in Entrepreneur Accelerator**
- > **Launched Student-Made Ecommerce Platform for student entrepreneurs, supported by donor funding**
- > **New pitch competition added; held annually in November**
- > **Piloted Entrepreneurs Without Borders in partnership with University of Western Cape**

Want to get involved?

Contact Sophia Rivera Hassemer, director of operations for the Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation, at sprbq6@missouri.edu.

Lessons to take home

Yakhshiboeva said she has gained great insight during her visit. Her perceptions about the U.S. – based on movies, television shows and the media – have been restructured, especially as it relates to students.

Although initially shy, she found Mizzou students friendly, well behaved and respectful, and they proved to be outspoken and creative with unique ideas, she said.

"In American culture, nobody criticizes you for your opinion or idea," Yakhshiboeva said. "That's why I believe the U.S. stands out as a leading country in innovation. When I observe the wide range of medical technologies, applications, and extensive production lines for recycled plastic products, that's the kind of culture I aspire to bring back home."

"Americans just say, 'Why not? Let's try it.' That's a great culture," she added.

While this was the first time the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation hosted a visiting entrepreneurship fellow, Christianson said he hopes it will not be the last.

"Laylo's semester was very much a pilot — and a resounding success," he said. "Seeing how quickly her presence amplified our courses, research collaborations and community outreach convinced me that visiting scholars can be a high impact, low cost addition to our program portfolio." •

TRULASKE'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ALLIANCE ACCELERATOR LAUNCHES YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

BY KATHY DETERS

At the root of every great business venture is an entrepreneur with a vision. An innovative program at the Trulaske College of Business is helping nurture those aspiring entrepreneurs by providing one-on-one mentoring, pitch events — and even monetary awards.

Trulaske's Entrepreneurship Alliance Accelerator is open to all undergraduate and graduate students across the Mizzou campus. Hosted by Trulaske's Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, this intensive 8-week program runs every spring and supports students as they take a business idea through the process of development. The program is part of Trulaske's commitment to fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in students.

Participants gain an understanding of the entrepreneurial process as they receive one-on-one mentoring from founders, investors and experienced entrepreneurs. The group meets for three hours every Monday throughout the program. Student entrepreneurs learn how to build out their business plan and interview customers, as well as exploring the importance of having a strong relationship with their banker, accountant, insurance agent and lawyers.

During the final two weeks of the program, the students learn how to put together a professional pitch deck and practice pitching. The culmination of the program is a pitch to a panel of judges, many of whom are local entrepreneurs themselves. Judges then decide how to allocate the monetary awards based on two factors: the quality of the presentation and idea, and how much money the participant might need to progress their company to the next level.



“One of the major goals of our accelerator is to build confidence in new entrepreneurs. This way, we can impact and inspire even more students.”

— Sophia Rivera Hassemer



“We pride ourselves in that funding structure, which is different from most other awards on campus that have a traditional first, second and third place award,” said Sophia Rivera Hassemer, CEI's director of operations.

“One of the major goals of our accelerator is to build confidence in new entrepreneurs. This way, we can impact and inspire even more students.”

This past spring, CEI's Entrepreneurship Alliance Accelerator awarded more than \$38,000 to student entrepreneurs in the cohort. The 21 Mizzou students receiving cash awards included 10 students from the Trulaske College of Business, four students from the College of Arts & Science, three students from the College of Engineering, three students from the Missouri School of Journalism, and one PhD student from Human Development and Child Psychology.

Winning pitches from Trulaske included Elizabeth Dekrell and Alyssa Pick's Glutique, a snack box featuring gluten-free treats; Owen Alexander's Bo's Boba, a mobile drink trailer that serves a variety of boba teas; and Nathan Smith and Malaki Doubet's GoldenShare, a roommate sharing service that connects seniors with young adults who are looking for a room and are willing to help with some daily chores.

The Entrepreneurship Alliance Accelerator is made possible by a generous gift from the Donald E. and Trudy K. Steen Entrepreneurship Venture Fund. •



The power of the pivot:

YOUNG TRULASKE ALUM FINDS SUCCESS IN ADAPTABILITY

BY KATHY DETERS

If Isaac Harmon had a superpower, it would be his ability to pivot.

After growing up at the Lake of the Ozarks, Harmon, BSBA '25, transferred to the University of Missouri for, as he describes it, "the entrepreneurial scene."

"As a transfer student, I wanted a fresh start in a place where I could choose who I surrounded myself with," Harmon said. "Columbia and Trulaske stood out for their focus on entrepreneurship and the support they give students who want to take an unconventional path."

After transitioning to a new school, Harmon soon found himself making another pivot. When COVID hit, he was laid off from his job bussing tables, so he picked up dropshipping, a retail fulfillment model.

"From there, I got hooked. I went all-in on self-improvement and building businesses," he said. "I failed at several, but each one taught me something and pushed me to keep going until Harmon Digital finally clicked."

By the age of 21 Harmon's venture, Harmon Digital, a company that helps other businesses break through growth bottlenecks by automating repetitive tasks, had already skyrocketed. Harmon also launched SuperAgents, an agentic platform that enables users to create their own AI agents to manage repetitive tasks, thereby leaving them with more free time to focus on creative work and growing their businesses.

Harmon credits his education at the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business for providing the environment and resources to hit the ground running. Programs like the Entrepreneurship Alliance, mentorship from faculty and staff, and support from his peers propelled him forward.

"I learned how to take risks, solve problems, and actually launch projects, instead of just talking about them," he said.

Harmon's story is indicative of Trulaske's unwavering commitment to fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in its students.

"Isaac is proof that by providing students with access to innovative resources and the expertise of faculty who are leaders in their respective

"You can build in silence, but when you talk about what you're working on and share it with others, you open doors and opportunities you never expected."

— Isaac Harmon, BSBA '25

fields, we can create changemakers," said Balaji Rajagopalan, Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. Dean of the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business.

For other young entrepreneurs, Harmon shared several tips:

- > **Start before you feel ready. If you don't know something, you can figure it out online or ask someone in your network.**
- > **Go to local entrepreneurship events even if you're not running a business yet. Networking is everything.**
- > **Push yourself to go to the events that feel uncomfortable. That's where you'll make the connections that matter.**

Most importantly, Harmon said, his Trulaske education taught him that the first step is to simply put yourself out there.

"You can build in silence, but when you talk about what you're working on and share it with others, you open doors and opportunities you never expected."

As a recent graduate, Harmon plans to continue scaling Harmon Digital, while also growing his SaaS venture, SuperAgents. Most importantly, he is committed to helping others save time on repetitive tasks so they can focus on more fulfilling projects that keep them motivated and creative.

"I'm grateful for the support from faculty and peers at Mizzou who've believed in me and pushed me forward," he said. "Without that encouragement, I wouldn't be where I am today." •



Photos courtesy Disney/Christopher Willard

“It’s a mix of excitement, gratitude and nerves, but ultimately, it’s an incredible platform to highlight the brand we’ve built and the customers we serve every day. I feel so honored to represent the hard work of my team, my family and the customers who have supported us on this journey.”

— Lindsay Mullenger

MIZZOU ALUMNA, PETITE KEEP FOUNDER TALKS ‘SHARK TANK’

STORY COURTESY OF SHOW ME MIZZOU

In January, Lindsay Mullenger, BSBA '10, jumped head-first into the “Shark Tank” — ABC’s business-themed reality television show — with an entrepreneurial dream: making a deal to secure funding with one of the world’s savviest investors.

“Being on ‘Shark Tank’ is truly a surreal and exhilarating experience,” she said. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to share Petite Keep’s story with such a wide audience. As an entrepreneur, you dream about moments like this — where you can showcase your passion, your hard work and the potential of your business to some of the most influential investors in the world. It’s a mix of excitement, gratitude and nerves, but ultimately, it’s an incredible platform to highlight the brand we’ve built and the customers we serve every day. I feel so honored to represent the hard work of my team, my family and the customers who have supported us on this journey.”

Crafted with love and filled with memories

Founded in January 2020, Petite Keep develops trunks to help people store their treasured memories from weddings, births and other major life events in style.

Petite Keep’s touches, including custom embroidery and luxe hardware, set each heirloom piece apart. The quality and style of her products ensure that cherished memories stay safe for generations.

“Our customers have brought us into some of the most important moments of their lives,” she said. “They’re bringing us into these very pivotal moments, and we want to bring them solutions that deliver on protecting these memories.”

Mullenger first developed the idea for her small business in 2018. At the time, she was looking for a special way to hold some items for her oldest daughter, who was 18 months old then.

“I was looking for a nice keepsake box,” she said. “I’m not an overly sentimental person, but I do like to keep a couple nice things, and I like to have them organized in a place. I couldn’t find anything that was elevated to the aesthetic I wanted for the room.”

What started as a side project during free time on nights and weekends quickly grew. After the company produced six figures in revenue during its first year, Mullenger realized a greater opportunity was available to her. So, she left her corporate job in 2021 and focused her attention full-time on growing her small business.

Initially, Mullenger and her husband worked with her parents and fellow Tigers, Mike Durbin, BA '82, and Dorothy “Dotti” (Heiman) Durbin, BS HES '82, to create the products from their homes. But they quickly outgrew that business model, and Mullenger moved her growing operations to a nearby warehouse in the greater St. Louis area.

With her prior experience working with large commercial box store buyers in the consumer packaged goods industry, Mullenger said the opportunity to connect directly to her customers through her online business has been valuable.

“The direct-to-consumer space is a really special space, because you own that relationship with your customers,” she said. “I’m able to speak to them and hear why they’re coming to us and why they’re returning to us.”

A legacy of Tigers

Mullenger — whose brother, Nicholas Durbin BS ChE '15, completes the current family legacy at Mizzou — admits she wasn’t sold on coming to Mizzou as a legacy student. Then, when she was a senior at Kirkwood High School in St. Louis, she met Mary Beth Marrs, an associate teaching professor at Trulaske.

At the time, Marrs had just started as director of the Cornell Leadership Program (CLP) at the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business. Mullenger took a leap of faith, enrolling at Mizzou. She would go on to attend CLP’s first Tigers on Wall Street corporate trip in 2008.

“Lindsay had an insatiable curiosity about everything that was only matched by her optimism and determination,” Marrs said at the time. “She’s absolutely fearless, and Lindsay was a joy to have in class. I am confident these attributes will ensure her success as an entrepreneur.”

Marrs’ words continue to ring true today as Mullenger faces the sharks.

“The University of Missouri played a pivotal role in shaping my career and leadership journey,” Mullenger said. “Through my experience at Mizzou, particularly as a part of the Cornell Leadership Program, I gained not only a solid foundation in business principles but also a deeper understanding of the value of hard work, integrity and resilience. The hands-on learning opportunities and the mentorship I received there prepared me for real-world challenges and helped me develop a strategic mindset.”

Mullenger said Mizzou also gave her the chance to network and build relationships with peers and professors who challenged and inspired her.

“The lessons I learned there — both in and out of the classroom — have stayed with me throughout my career, from my time at Procter & Gamble to leading my own company today,” she said. “I’ll always be grateful for the role Mizzou played in shaping the person and professional I am today.” •

TRULASKE BY THE NUMBERS

200

IT-Compliance reviews
for Trulaske AI use

\$451,104

Trulaske Excellence Fund as of
July 1, 2025 (an increase of 110%)

+ 29.3%

Undergraduate Incoming Class
(From 2023 – 2025, the highest in 10 years)

15

workshops hosted covering
Transformative Technology topics

6

Full courses using paid AI licenses
(ChatGPT, Claude, Gamma)

+ 37%

Increase in Study Abroad
over the last two years

+ 44%

Students with an ACT score of 30+
(From 2023 – 2025, the highest in 5 years)

13

Students in Entrepreneur
Accelerator



SERBIA'S YOUNGEST CHESS GRANDMASTER FINDS HOME AT TRULASKE

BY KATHY DETERS

Young Luka Budisavljevic never stopped moving. Ice hockey. Basketball. Running outside to play with friends. His father just wanted him to slow down a little, so he suggested the game of chess. Who would have guessed an activity designed to help Budisavljevic sit down would end up taking him around the world?

At 6, Budisavljevic picked up the challenging game of strategy in Serbia, where he grew up. At 7, he competed in his first tournament. At the age of 8, Budisavljevic won the European Youth Chess Championship, sparking a meteoric rise in his career. Claiming victories in the National Youth Championships for six consecutive years created new opportunities, like participating in the World and European Youth Championships. It took him to Uruguay and South Africa and put him on the path to achieving a coveted spot in the chess world.

"I am proud that I became the youngest Serbian Chess Grandmaster ever at the age of 16 by winning all of my norms in a span of less than two months, which is a feat that takes multiple years for many Grandmasters," Budisavljevic said.

The lifelong title "Grandmaster" is awarded by the World Chess Federation. While it is a prestigious award that any chess player would wear with immense pride, Budisavljevic said he considers his greatest tournament success to be the 2023 World Juniors Championship in Mexico City, where he tied for first place and won a bronze medal.

"I managed to repeat the same success the very next year in India, becoming one of only a few people to ever finish on the podium of two consecutive World Juniors Championships," Budisavljevic said.

"Once I graduate, I plan to stay at Mizzou for the MBA. I am enjoying my time here and want to use the full six years of collegiate chess eligibility at the place that feels like home."

— Luka Budisavljevic

It's no surprise that he received substantial scholarship offers from universities with accomplished chess programs. But for Serbia's youngest Chess Grandmaster, one university stood out.

"When evaluating my options, I liked Mizzou the most for various reasons, including a beautiful campus and academic prestige," he said. "Once I chose Mizzou, there was no question I would be joining the Trulaske College of Business, as [business] has been my desired area of study, and I recognized that the vast alumni network would be of great help in my future career."

Chess has bolstered his academic career by developing his analytical and problem-solving skills and helping him stay calm under pressure. In turn, his experiences in the Trulaske College of Business have strengthened his game by teaching him networking and an open mindset — both important skills as he travels the world in pursuit of the game.

Budisavljevic is grateful for the opportunities provided to him by the Mizzou Chess Team and the Saint Louis Chess Club, which sponsors the organization. During his freshman year, the team competed in the President's Cup — the Final Four of Collegiate Chess — for the first time in Mizzou's history. The team continued to build on that success by winning the Pan-American Collegiate Chess Championship and the Final Four the following year.

"Luka is not only a crucial player for our team from a performance standpoint, as a Grandmaster and one of the most experienced players on the team, but also as one of the leaders of the team off the chess board," said Ioan Cristian Chirila, head coach for the Mizzou Chess Team. "His personal expertise and the intuitive leadership skills he exhibits in his personal life, as well as his willingness to help others when needed, is what gives our team an immeasurable edge."

Budisavljevic graduates in May 2026. When it comes to planning his next move, his strategy is clear.

"Once I graduate, I plan to stay at Mizzou for the MBA," he said. "I am enjoying my time here and want to use the full six years of collegiate chess eligibility at the place that feels like home."

Trulaske is grateful Budisavljevic has chosen to call Mizzou "home." Balaji Rajagopalan, Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. Dean of the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business, noted the important impact the chess grandmaster has had on the learning community.

"Luka Budisavljevic proves that greatness knows no age limits. As Serbia's youngest chess grandmaster and a rising star at the Trulaske College of Business, he demonstrates how strategic brilliance transcends any single domain," Rajagopalan said. "His rare ability to merge the precision and foresight of chess mastery with cutting-edge business acumen creates unlimited potential. Luka doesn't just represent the future of leadership — he's actively shaping it, showing us all that when passion meets purpose and talent meets opportunity, extraordinary achievements become inevitable." ●

Trulaske researcher explores how hard times hit human capital investments



Joonyoung Kim

BY KATHY DETERS

Joonyoung Kim understands the challenges of guiding organizations through economic downturns. Navigating lean times often demands tough decisions. But should investments in human capital be among them? Kim, an assistant professor of management at the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business, set out to answer that question. His co-authored paper, "Turning the Tide: The Impact of Performance Decline on Human Capital Investment" earned him the 2025 Best Convention Paper Award from the Human Resources Division of the Academy of Management and was recognized at the HR Division Awards Ceremony in Copenhagen.

What was the purpose of your study?

My co-author (Professor Rebecca Kehoe at Cornell University) and I wanted to understand how firms respond when their performance takes a hit, specifically, how they handle investments in their workforce during tough times. Our study looked at whether firms cut back on human capital investment (HCI) during downturns, and what factors influence that decision.

What did you uncover?

We found that firms generally do reduce HCI when performance declines, especially when the decline is steep. But not all firms behave the same. Companies in more dynamic or resource-rich industries, those pursuing people-intensive strategies, or those that have been steadily increasing workforce investments in recent years are less likely to make cuts. So, context really matters.

Why is this research particularly relevant now?

Uncertainty has become the new normal for many firms. Whether it's tech disruptions, supply chain issues, or other challenges, these pressures can hit performance in

unexpected ways. That makes decisions about where to cut (and where to keep investing) even more important. Our study helps make sense of those tough calls and offers a framework for thinking them through.

What sets this study apart from prior research?

We took ideas from a classic theory, Behavioral Theory of the Firm, and applied them to human capital strategy, something that hasn't been done much before. Rather than viewing HCI as a fixed practice, we treated it as a dynamic resource allocation decision that shifts in response to performance signals. We also highlighted key factors, such as industry conditions, strategy, and prior investment patterns, that shape how firms react to downturns.

What are the actionable takeaways?

Cutting HCI isn't always the smartest move when performance declines. If your firm depends on talent to compete — or operates in an industry where conditions are rapidly changing and human capital is critical for seizing external opportunities — it may be wiser to preserve or even increase workforce investments to position for recovery.

How did Trulaske empower you to win this award?

Before submitting this work to the Academy of Management Annual Meeting, I presented it to my colleagues in the management department. They offered generous feedback and encouragement, and I made significant revisions based on their input before the submission. Trulaske also places a strong emphasis on producing high-impact work that bridges theory and practice, and that support has made all the difference. ●

What's buzzing in Room 308?

INDUSTRY PARTNERS POWER UNIQUE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



BY KATHY DETERS

Most visitors to Cornell Hall might expect to find the standard fare: Faculty and staff offices. Conference rooms. Lecture halls. Classrooms. But step into Room 308, and you'll find a high-energy business hub, buzzing with student interns who are supporting partner businesses, while also learning the ropes of sales first-hand.

The Inside Sales Lab (ISL) provides students at the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business with the unique opportunity to complete an internship in the same building where they attend class.

"The Inside Sales Lab is a first-of-its-kind, experience-centered learning program that embeds real companies directly into the student experience," said Natalie Thomas, executive director of Trulaske's Center for Sales and Customer Development. "Through the ISL, corporate partners hire, train, and manage Trulaske students in inside sales and business development roles, allowing students to work out of Cornell Hall while earning course credit and income."

In addition to receiving financial compensation, students participating in the ISL satisfy either the BA4500 Internship requirement or the Sales Certificate internship requirement, while building valuable skills along the way. Interns have the opportunity to gain hands-on sales experience and develop professional confidence, all in a peer learning environment.

The ISL chooses a diverse mix of industry partners to help students develop a wide perspective on sales and business development, while also building transferable skills they can apply to any career. Current partners include:

- > **Abstrakt Marketing** – A new partner in fall 2025 that's bringing fresh energy and expanding student exposure to business development strategies in marketing services.
- > **Walsworth Publishing** – A long-standing partner that connects students with the publishing and communications industry, providing hands-on experience in their yearbook division.
- > **SCREEN Americas** – A global leader in digital printing solutions, giving students direct access to sales experience in a technology-driven, B2B environment.

"I've had an incredible experience with the Sales Lab, and Walsworth has been a huge part of what made it so special," said Lydia Downing, a junior who's studying finance at Trulaske. "They celebrate every success, big or small, as if it were their own, and use every opportunity as a chance to learn."

Mutually beneficial partnerships power this dynamic. Participating businesses hire, train and manage student interns just as they would at their own offices. They also provide industry-specific training and mentorship, model professional standards, and introduce students to real customers, products and pipelines.

"Our industry partners at the Inside Sales Lab help us provide a meaningful, experience-centered learning opportunity for our students," said Balaji Rajagopalan, Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. Dean of the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business. "Their continued support and mentorship make the ISL possible."



In exchange for providing career opportunities and mentorship to Trulaske students, participating businesses have the opportunity to connect with top Trulaske talent. They also enjoy increased campus visibility by having a spot in Cornell Hall and the immediate business value created by the student interns, who contribute to the company's sales goals and customer outreach efforts.

"We don't deploy our interns in the Inside Sales

Lab program in 'direct selling' efforts; rather, we use our interns to expand the reach and personal touch of our sales team and amplify and reinforce our other marketing efforts with a personal approach," said Mark Schlimme, vice president of marketing for SCREEN Americas. "The work the interns perform for us in communicating with our customers and prospects 'stretch' my marketing budget by reinforcing and amplifying our messaging."

For Gabi Buccieri, BSBA '23, the ISL gave her the opportunity to experience setbacks, which ultimately set her up for success. Her internship with SCREEN Americas also helped Buccieri land a job as a sales enablement and business development coordinator with the company after graduation.

"It allowed me to fail and learn the importance of practice as a student, which many students do not have the luxury of having prior to graduation," Buccieri said.

The program equips Trulaske students with a strong sales toolkit grounded in trust-based relationship selling, fluency in CRM and technology, the ability to navigate rejection and a clear picture of how sales can be a rewarding career path.

"Our goal is for students to graduate not just with theoretical knowledge, but with the confidence, resilience, and adaptability that comes from doing the work," Thomas said. ●

"The work the interns perform for us in communicating with our customers and prospects stretch my marketing budget by reinforcing and amplifying our messaging."

— Mark Schlimme, Vice President of Marketing for SCREEN Americas

When lightning strikes:

TRULASKE PARTNERSHIP HELPS DIGITAL MARKETING GROUP BUILD BRIDGE TO FUTURE WORKFORCE

By Kathy Deters

“A lightning strike isn’t a chance event,” according to the slogan for Digital Strike – Targeted Marketing, a St. Louis-based digital marketing group. “It’s the result of the right conditions and a tremendous buildup of energy.” The same could be said for Chris “Wes” Westmeyer’s relationship with the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business at the University of Missouri.

Westmeyer pushed through numerous obstacles to create a path for himself to attend Mizzou, then worked multiple jobs to pay for his education. And somehow, amid all that, he still found time to establish his own fraternity.

After five and a half years of hard work, Westmeyer graduated with a degree from the College of Human Environmental Sciences and went on to found Digital Strike – Targeted Marketing. When HES was later restructured and integrated into other academic programs throughout campus, Westmeyer decided to “adopt” the Trulaske College of Business as his home. With one of his two sons currently studying in the College of Business (the other is in Mizzou’s College of Arts & Science), it felt personal. And Westmeyer was blown away by Trulaske’s leadership, faculty and staff.

“They care so much about students and their success,” he observed. “They are cutting-edge cool.”

As his career gained momentum, Westmeyer decided it was time to create new goals for himself.

“Once I crossed the threshold of 50, I pivoted from just wanting to pursue growth, to still wanting growth but also to make an impact.”

For Westmeyer, that desire to make an impact drove his support for numerous charities, including Angels’

Arms, the Mighty Oakes Heart Foundation and others. It also inspired him to enter a partnership with the Trulaske College of Business.

“We are honored to partner with Digital Strike – Targeted Marketing,” said Balaji Rajagopalan, Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. Dean of the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business. “Their support helps illustrate the importance of leadership, innovation and helping to create paths for others.”

By participating in career fairs, helping to establish Trulaske’s Digital Marketing Certificate, hosting Shark Tank-style pitch events and more, Digital Strike has had the opportunity to grow current Trulaske students into future Digital Strike team members.

“We get a premier spot for the career fair, and last year we had lines waiting to talk to us,” Westmeyer said. “We interview students from a lot of schools. None of them are quite like Mizzou’s. We found an intern who turned into a team member.”

The intern — Henry Right, BSBA ‘25 — spent eight weeks shadowing and working with each of the different teams at Digital Strike, which afforded him the opportunity to gain real-world experience in SEO, account management, PPC campaign management, and sales and marketing.

“It was an amazing crash course in all things digital marketing and gave me a lot of experience to decide what I wanted to specialize in for my career,” Right said.

Ultimately the people and culture at Digital Strike inspired Right to pursue a full-time position there after graduation.

“We’re the mechanics who can fix anything that clients might throw at us. Our partnership with Trulaske provides us with an opportunity to get in front of these students early and teach them how to do what we do.”

— Chris “Wes” Westmeyer, Founder of Digital Strike Targeted Marketing

“The 3 C’s that make up our core values — caring, competitive, and curious — all really spoke to me and were embodied by the people around me,” said Right, who landed a job as a digital marketing coordinator at the company.

For Digital Strike, which leads the industry by staying ahead of the latest trends and technology, building a relationship with students early in their academic career is critical to the continued growth of the company.

“What we do is different than 95 percent of the digital marketing agencies out there,” Westmeyer explained. “We’re the mechanics who can fix anything that clients might throw at us. Our partnership with Trulaske provides us with an opportunity to get in front of these students early and teach them how to do what we do.”

Supporting events like TruWelcome, Trulaske’s annual welcome event for students, also energizes members of the Digital Strike team, Westmeyer said.

“Our staff just goes crazy for it,” he said. “It’s become an internal battle royale to see who gets to go.”

Digital Strike’s collaboration with Trulaske reflects the college’s three core pillars: Transformative Technologies for Business & Society, as students gain exposure to cutting-edge digital marketing tools and analytics; Experience-Centered Learning, through hands-on events like pitch competitions and career fairs that immerse them in real-world problem solving; and an Entrepreneurial Mindset, modeled by Westmeyer himself, whose journey as an entrepreneur demonstrates the vision, adaptability and innovation that the college seeks to cultivate in every Trulaske graduate.

“Our partnership with Digital Strike is more than a collaboration; it is a model for how businesses and higher education can shape the future together. We are deeply grateful to Wes and his team for their willingness to invest in our students through mentoring, career fairs, and hands-on learning experiences,” said Ryan Murray, Trulaske’s director of employer and external relations. “Partnerships like this do not just benefit our students, they also create a stronger pipeline of talent for companies ready to innovate. I invite other organizations to join us in building these opportunities and preparing the workforce of tomorrow.”

Westmeyer and his team have found their partnership with the Trulaske College of Business beneficial, providing an opportunity to build and maintain a bridge to a highly trained and extremely qualified future workforce.

“It is probably the most rewarding partnership we’ve had in 15 years,” Westmeyer said.

For more information about partnerships with the Trulaske College of Business, contact Ryan Murray at murrayj@missouri.edu. •



TRULASKE PROFESSOR TALKS LIFE, TEACHING AND TED LASSO

BY KATHY DETERS

A surprising trajectory took Matteo Binfarè from the soccer fields of Italy to a classroom in the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business. The assistant professor of finance and recipient of the 2025 Provost's Outstanding Junior Faculty Teaching Award spoke with us recently about how his life experiences have shaped his approach to teaching, and what he hopes students take from his classroom.

First off, soccer: You played both semi-professional and professional soccer in Italy before college. What teams did you play for? What position did you play?

I grew up playing for the youth development team of my hometown club, Varese FC, a professional team in Italy. It was an amazing experience because we competed against other top youth squads, including Inter Milan, AC Milan, and Juventus. I played as a goalkeeper.

What was that experience like?

Being a goalkeeper was both rewarding and challenging. You train differently from the rest of the team and carry a unique kind of pressure. If you make a save, it often goes unnoticed, but if you concede a goal, it almost always feels like it's on you. That dynamic taught me resilience early on.

Is there anything you learned from your time on the field that you continue to apply, either professionally or personally, off the field?

The importance of consistency, focus, resilience in the face of adversity, and independence. Those lessons still guide how I approach both work and life.

What first sparked your interest in finance?

I've always enjoyed math, numbers, and a natural curiosity about money. Growing up, I traveled a lot and started collecting currencies from different countries even within Europe before the euro was introduced. That fascination with markets and value sparked my interest in finance.

Can you tell us a little about the path that led you to teaching at Mizzou?

I earned my PhD in finance at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I interviewed with Mizzou in January 2020, just before COVID hit, and later that year I joined the department in August 2020.

What kinds of classes do you teach at Trulaske?

I teach Investments and a new course on Alternative Investments, which covers hedge funds, private equity, and real assets.

You're a long-term cancer survivor. Has that experience shaped your approach to teaching?

Yes. I was diagnosed with Primary Mediastinal B-Cell Lymphoma in 2013 when I was 23 and working in investment banking. That experience reshaped my priorities: health and family come first. It also inspired me to pursue a PhD and eventually move into teaching and research.

As a survivor, I try to always be present and supportive for my students. You never know what someone is going through outside the classroom. I contrast that with my own experience: While undergoing aggressive chemotherapy, I was still required to sit for two finance exams because my school made no accommodations. That left a lasting impression, and it makes me deeply value how student-centric education is in the U.S.

What do you hope students take from their time in your class?

I hope they walk away not only with technical knowledge of investments, but also with the ability to think critically and apply concepts in the real world.

What continues to drive your work at Trulaske?

The incredible support I've received from my department and the truly fantastic colleagues I work with.

Since you're a soccer fan, I have to ask — favorite Ted Lasso quote?

"For me, success is not about the wins and losses. It's about helping these young fellas be the best versions of themselves on and off the field." I try to bring the same philosophy to my teaching. •



"I hope they walk away not only with technical knowledge of investments, but also with the ability to think critically and apply concepts in the real world."

— Matteo Binfarè



CHICKEN N PICKLE FOUNDER DAVE JOHNSON HONORED

ARTICLE COURTESY OF THE MIZZOU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Dave Johnson, BSBA '78, was recognized with the Distinguished Alumni Award by the Mizzou Alumni Association. Johnson has built a career defined by entrepreneurial vision, business leadership and community impact.

After beginning his professional journey at Arthur Andersen & Company, Johnson went on to lead major real estate ventures, eventually serving as chairman of Maxus Properties. He is the controlling shareholder of Verimore Bank, headquartered in Brookfield, Missouri.

In 2016, he launched Chicken N Pickle, a fast-growing chain of family-friendly entertainment complexes centered around food, pickleball and philanthropy. Since opening its first location in North Kansas City, Chicken N Pickle has expanded to more than a dozen locations across the country, earning national recognition for its innovative concept and deep community roots. Each location partners with local schools, nonprofits and service organizations — donating space, raising funds and championing causes that matter most to guests. The company's mission reflects Johnson's belief in meaningful community investment.

As a proud Trulaske alumnus, Johnson has served on the Dean's Advisory Board since 2011 and is a Dean's Distinguished Patron of the Herbert J. Davenport Society, as well as a member of the Jefferson Club and Legacy Society. He and his wife, Sandra Castetter, are proud Tiger fans and have two children — one of whom graduated from Mizzou in 2012.

The Distinguished Alumni Award is part of the Mizzou Alumni Association's Gold Standard Awards, which celebrate the remarkable alumni, faculty, friends and families whose dedication, service and leadership have made their mark on the University of Missouri.

Mizzou R.A.H.! YOUNG TRULASKE ALUMNI HONORED FOR PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

ARTICLE COURTESY OF THE MIZZOU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The **Mizzou R.A.H. (Recent Alumni Honorees) Award** sheds light on the incredible things young alumni are doing across the globe. Candidates for this award are 35 years or younger and have shown exceptional professional achievement in their fields. Here's what they had to say about their most significant professional accomplishments.

Applications open each January, and winners are announced in June.

This year's Mizzou R.A.H. awards recognized three alumni from the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business:



Jordyn Eskijian, BS '19

Program Manager, Investor Relations & ESG — H&R Block (NYSE: HRB)

Growing into a leadership role within my company's Investor Relations team. I've been honored to represent my profession nationally by speaking at conferences, contributing to industry podcasts and being recognized as a 'Rising Leader Under 40' and 'Kansas City Chapter Volunteer of the Year' by the National Investor Relations Institute.



Sophia Mullineaux, BSBA '14

Associate — McKinsey & Company

Graduating at the top of my class with a graduate degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Mizzou instilled the confidence, curiosity and work ethic required to pursue higher education, and my MIT experience affirmed that Mizzou prepared me to succeed anywhere.



Jeremy Terman, BS BA '16

Director, Midmarket and Business Development — 7shifts

Earning a role on the DoorDash Enterprise Sales team, which had just three positions across the entire 300+ person sales organization. Moving from outside sales into Enterprise is extremely rare, but I'd built strong relationships with leadership, consistently ranked as a top performer and made a clear case for my promotion. That opportunity became a career inflection point.



MIZZOU BUSINESS ALUM REFLECTS ON LEGACY OF LATE WIFE, NURSING ALUM

BY KATHY DETERS

Let's make one thing clear up front: It wasn't love at first sight.

"I just started talking to her and I kept thinking, I want to know more about her," Steve Lanham, BSAcc '92, MAcc '93, recalled of his first encounter with Gina Tuter, BSN '86. "There was something about her spirit — her aura — and I just wanted to get to know this person. Everything about her."

Steve met Gina at Pierpont, just outside Columbia, in the late '80s, while participating in a professional program for differently abled young adults. Gina was there as a caregiver, and Steve, who had suffered a spinal injury the year before, was there as a participant, with plans to study computer programming. Though he was independent and didn't need much care, he still found ample opportunities to get to know Gina, who was studying nursing at the University of Missouri.

When he brought a grill to the program, which was situated in a camp-like setting, others asked if he'd prepare steaks and burgers for them if they provided their own meat. Soon it became a tradition within the little community. And Gina would drop by to help with the food preparation.

The two bonded over music, passing back and forth Steve's custom mix tape of Elton John hits (though she asked him to add "Crocodile Rock" and drop "Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy," which to this day he deems to be a crime against both music and good taste).

Just as Gina finished her education at Mizzou, Steve started his, earning a BS in accountancy in 1992 and an MS in accountancy in 1993. Steve describes Gina as having a "magnetic" effect on people, and she surely had one on him. The couple soon wed, with her working at MU Health Care until they relocated to St. Louis.

Steve put his accountancy degree to good use as the director of financial systems for the Metro/Bi-State Development Agency, which partners with public and private organizations to keep the St. Louis region competitive.

Gina, meanwhile, found a spot in labor & delivery at Mercy Hospital, in a location lovingly nicknamed "The Baby Factory" by St. Louis natives due to its popularity with expectant parents and the high number of babies delivered there. Needless to say, being a labor & delivery nurse at "The Baby



Factory" demanded long hours — and it commanded respect from her peers. Physicians sought her input. Fellow nurses who were facing complicated deliveries of their own sought her medical services. But even on the longest days, she came home happy to take calls from neighbors who were nervous about a sick baby, or family and friends needing care.

"It didn't matter where we were," Steve said. "We were on a plane coming back from St. John's and someone was having trouble breathing — it was like she was Superman. Her seatbelt was off and she was running up the aisle. To me, she was always a nurse. And it was understood that was always going to be her number one priority."

While her love of nursing ran deep, so did her love of Mizzou.

"There were times neighbors would say, 'What was your wife screaming at?'" Steve recalled. "And I'd say, 'Well, she was watching Mizzou basketball.'"

When a new nurse joined her team at Mercy, Gina's first question was always, "Where'd you tend bar?," which was nurse slang for, "Where'd you study nursing?"

"If it was Mizzou, she took them on because she'd know they'd know how to properly chart a patient," Steve said.

Given her passion for nursing, it's no surprise that Gina wanted to help advance the profession. Together, Steve and Gina documented an estate commitment to Mizzou to establish two professorships — one in the Sinclair School of Nursing and one in the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business. Supporting the professorships is a perfect legacy for Gina, who continued learning — and teaching — even after her cancer diagnosis. She held onto her passion for education until her death in 2015 at the age of 50.

“There was something about her spirit — her aura — and I just wanted to get to know this person. Everything about her.”

“The school's only as good as its educators, is what Gina would have said,” Steve noted.

Inspired by Gina's commitment to supporting the nursing school, Gina's college roommate and fellow BSN alumna, Kira Seabolt, BSN'86, established The Gina Tintera Lanham Memorial Scholarship in Nursing. Steve continues to support Gina's scholarship on an annual basis.

In March 2025, counting toward Mizzou Giving Day, Steve updated the value of their bequest to more than \$5 million. Steve's continued commitment to philanthropy has earned him the Citation of Merit from the Trulaske College of Business. He is also a member of the Davenport Society, the Nightingale Society, the Jefferson Club, the MU Legacy Society and the 1914 Society.

Dividing the contribution between the Sinclair School of Nursing and the Trulaske College of Business serves a fitting tribute to an unwavering partnership between graduates of the two academic units. The nurse had plenty to teach the accountant, which he put to good use throughout his career: Have a plan and have a backup plan. Be the one who speaks calmly and clearly. Never freak out. And most importantly, don't sweat the small stuff—and it's all small stuff.

On behalf of the Sinclair School of Nursing and the Trulaske College of Business, we thank Steve and Gina Lanham for honoring their legacy in such a meaningful way. Just as their lives were built on a partnership, this gift unites our two schools in preparing the next generation of nurses and business leaders. We are grateful for their generosity and the lasting impact it will create. •





From Trulaske to Texas triumph: **ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET LEADS MIZZOU ALUM TO HALL OF FAME SUCCESS**

BY KATHY DETERS

As chairman and founder of Provident, a Dallas-based team of real estate and financial service professionals that's developed more than \$6 billion in real estate projects, Leon Backes (pronounced BACK-U), BSBA '79, has earned the respect of his peers, having been inducted into the North Texas Commercial Real Estate (NTCAR) Hall of Fame. While he's racked up success and honors in the Lone Star State, he traces his roots to the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business.

You've had a long and storied career in Dallas, but you grew up right here in Missouri. What town are you from originally?

Backes: I grew up in Osage City, Missouri, which is a very small town (250 people when I was growing up) near where the Osage River and Missouri River meet. It's about 15 miles east of Jefferson City. I went to a small Catholic grade school in Taos, Missouri, and Jefferson City Senior High School. I'm the oldest of nine kids.

Do you remember anything in your childhood that first sparked your entrepreneurial spirit?

Backes: My dad and my uncle owned a gas station/truck stop at Apache Flats (just west of Jefferson City). My first job was washing dishes at the diner next door to the gas station the summer after sixth grade. After that I worked at the gas station on weekends and when I got my driver's license worked every night after school till 11, saving money for college. I saw my dad and uncle work every day running a small business, dealing with customers, employees and suppliers. They were entrepreneurs and believed the customer was always right!

What led you to Mizzou?

Backes: I was really fortunate. My grade school class was the same 32 kids for the entire eight years. There were only five of us that went to Jefferson City High School where the class was 480+ kids. It seems like I spent a lot of high school trying to figure out where I fit in. I was lucky enough my junior year to find a group of guys that were intent on going to Mizzou. Before that I thought that would have been too big a leap and probably financially impossible. None of my family had ever gone to college before (my world was pretty small back then). I decided if my friends could do it then so could I. From then on, I just figured it out.

You put yourself through college. What kind of work did you do while you were in school?

Backes: I had lots of jobs. In the summer I worked for a railroad construction company, a roofing company and painted apartments. During the school year I drove a school bus, was a bank teller for Boone County Bank, worked for the Columbia Daily Tribune (I was in the ad department and later had a newspaper route), and I was a janitor and worked for Eastgate Party Shop.

Did that investment in yourself influence how you viewed your education?

Backes: Yes. I always felt I wanted to experience more of the world than the small town I grew up in. My education at Mizzou allowed that to happen and completely changed the trajectory of my life.

What inspired you to head to Dallas?

Backes: I'm dating myself, but I actually graduated Mizzou and moved to Texas in the spring of 1979. Late my junior year at Mizzou the business school had a career day. I had taken a real estate class as an elective and for career day the professor had a young guy who worked for a real estate developer in Kansas City come in to talk to the class about what he did. He explained how he developed a grocery-anchored shopping center in Washington, Missouri. For me it was like a lightbulb went off. I felt like this was something that was exciting and that I could be good at. From then on, I was determined to get into the commercial real estate industry.

The spring of my senior year I started cold calling commercial real estate firms in Kansas City trying to find some way to get my foot in the door. There was a recession going on at that time and I kept getting turned down. Finally, I went in for my second interview with Coldwell Banker Commercial (now CBRE). They told me that although they really liked me, they just didn't hire kids right out of school. I was sure I was about to get another rejection ...but then they said their regional office in Houston had a training program that hired a few recent grads every year, and that if I was willing to travel to Houston and interview, they would give me a recommendation. I drove to Houston, interviewed with their regional managers, took a lot of personality tests and a couple weeks later got a call that said if I wanted to move to Houston, I had a slot in the training program...then they told me it paid a whopping \$750 a month!

I spent a year in Houston. When the training program was wrapping up, I could have moved anywhere CBRE had an office. I chose Dallas. That decision led to a successful, decades-long career in commercial real estate.

What is it that excites you about what you do?

Backes: It's a tough business but an exciting business. You get to see how hard work, perseverance, creativity, and measured risk taking can pay off ... both financially and by seeing real tangible projects happen.

I understand you have an art studio in your home. Are people surprised when they learn about your interest in art?

Backes: The people that have known me a long time, maybe not so much. My mom always had some art project going when I was growing up. When I was a kid, I would enter the weekly drawing contests in the Jeff City newspaper and won a lot of them. In high school I took all the art classes offered and actually had a scholarship for art at Central Missouri State [now University of Central Missouri] in Warrensburg. I chose Mizzou and business school instead.

I think the people I meet now in a business environment might be a little surprised at first but if you visit our office, you'll see a lot of the pieces I've done on the walls.

What type of art do you enjoy creating?

Backes: I paint large-scale oil paintings ... mostly landscapes but also some portraits. Usually with a lot of interplay of light and color.

“It’s a tough business but an exciting business. You get to see how hard work, perseverance, creativity, and measured risk taking can pay off ... both financially and by seeing real tangible projects happen.”

— Leon Backes

How does that creative outlet help drive your professional accomplishments?

Backes: The creative process that goes into creating art and creating real estate are more similar than most people think. With both you get to imagine and create things in your mind before it actually gets physically created. Whether creating art or buildings you need to plan what you are creating before you start actually painting or building. With real estate there is also a lot of financial creativity that goes into any project.

When creating art, a lot of times you see things in a way that others might not. Some of my most rewarding real estate projects were when I was able to see something about a project that others might have missed.

The other aspect of painting is that when I'm doing a painting, it allows me to escape the stress of business. I can get into a “zone” and the time flies by.

What influence did your Show-Me State roots have on your career?

Backes: I think the things I learned growing up helped a lot in my business career. Show up, work hard, a lot of success is about perseverance. When you have success, don't get too full of yourself!

Do you get back to campus often?

Backes: Living in Texas, not as often as I'd like. I try to get back for a football game in the fall. I've still got a lot of family in Jeff City, so if I'm there I try to come by campus. I've also had some friends that stayed in the Columbia area so sometimes I've stayed with them.

If you could give your college self some advice, what would it be?

Backes: Study more...party less! Dream big and believe in yourself. You can do anything you set your mind to. Success comes to those who persevere.

How did the Trulaske College of Business empower you in your professional journey?

Backes: The courses I took at Mizzou gave me a good foundation for my career. The courses I took were very relevant. I think I came out of Mizzou pretty well prepared for the business world.

Anything else you'd like to share?

Backes: I learned a lot both academically and personally during those four years. It expanded my world. I will always be grateful. •

WANDERLUST LEADS WALSWORTH TO EVERY CORNER OF THE WORLD

BY KATHY DETERS

One could argue that Audrey Walsworth's tiny hometown of Marceline in north central Missouri was a physical emblem of small-town America — it was, after all, the inspiration for Missouri native Walt Disney's iconic Main Street USA. The 2020 census puts the town at a population of 2,123. It encompasses 3.5 square miles. But Walsworth, BJ '56, longed to see so much more. Wanderlust first found Walsworth in 1969 at the age of 35. She followed that sense of wanderlust to Lithuania. More than a decade passed before her next trip abroad.

"I thought, 'This might be the last one,'" Walsworth said of that first trip overseas. "And then 11 years later, China opened up, and I was sitting one night, having a drink with my husband, Don, and I said, 'You know what? I'd kind of like to go to China.' Well, next thing I know, he's got me signed up to go. After that I got the fever. And believe me, I really got the fever."

"The fever," as Walsworth described it, took her to all 193 UN-recognized countries and 327 Travelers' Century Club Territories. Walsworth is quick to point out that it was no small feat for someone who didn't start traveling abroad until her mid-30s. And traveling as a woman presented additional challenges.

Walsworth recalls traveling alone to Yemen, a destination that was difficult to reach and not entirely receptive to single female travelers. Upon arrival at her hotel she was informed that she didn't have a reservation, so she quickly showed the hotel manager her confirmation.

"He had to let me have a room, but as far as he was concerned, I was a woman traveling by myself, and so consequently I didn't have a room," she said. "They weren't used to women traveling. Period."

Extreme climates created unique circumstances, as well. On a trip to the South Pole, Walsworth was warned to be careful which geographic landmarks she used for directions, since a little hill made of packed ice and snow could be gone in mere minutes thanks to extreme wind. But for Walsworth, every trip — even those that brought extreme weather conditions and unwelcoming innkeepers — was worthwhile.

"You know, I learned something every single time," Walsworth said. "And if you don't learn something, you're not going for the right reason."

Lessons learned abroad

Walsworth stopped by the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business recently to talk with students about her travels and what they've taught her, in hopes of inspiring

young people to catch that fever, too. First and foremost, what she's learned from traveling abroad is that there's no one way to approach life.

"You can do the same thing 25 different ways. We do it a certain way, and we think it's the only way to do it, but then we see villagers do the same thing in a completely different way and end up with the same result," she explained. "So that's an important lesson to learn."

Thanks to contributions to the Trulaske College of Business, the Walsworth family has provided Trulaske students with the opportunity to expand their perspective of the world by participating in the Walsworth Study Abroad Program.

"Audrey's generosity has supported many students to travel globally and learn from their experiences," said Balaji Rajagopalan, dean of the Trulaske College of Business.

It was the Walsworth Study Abroad Program that provided Jayden Reyes, BSBA '24, with a life-changing opportunity to travel to Peru.

"Hiking Machu Picchu was a bucket list of mine, and being able to do that while gathering unique cultural experiences, building on my resume, and being able to really see what business looks like in another country, as well as making memories that I carry with me for the rest of my life, has truly made a big impact on me and my career moving forward," Reyes said.

Walsworth credits her husband, Don, a longtime Trulaske College of Business supporter, for funding her trips. Though he preferred to stay close to home, he enjoyed seeing the world vicariously through her tales. The COVID pandemic, age and loss of her travel companions ultimately forced Walsworth to give up her travel pursuits at the age of 88, but she holds onto numerous souvenirs, an abundance of cherished memories and a fundamental understanding of humanity that comes only from having experienced it — firsthand — in every corner of the world.

"When you go to Africa and you see a mother taking care of her baby, or you see someone helping an older person getting across the street, you see that all over the world, people treat people the same," Walsworth said. "All around the world, they treat people with kindness, for the most part. We're all the same. We're all human beings with the same love."

TRAVEL TIPS FROM ONE OF THE MOST WELL-TRAVELED PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

Choosing your first destination: “When you’re reading and you find yourself being drawn to certain countries, like you like to read about England ... then maybe you should go someplace like that. Whatever sparks your interest.”

Determining your itinerary: “Do the obvious things. Enjoy doing those and say to yourself, ‘You know what? I liked this place. The people are nice. I understand the language.’ Or if you didn’t understand the language, they helped you understand the language. If you spread yourself too thin, you won’t enjoy any of those places.”

Communicating in a different language: “Frankly, I never had any trouble with the language. I always learned basic stuff like ‘hello,’ ‘goodbye,’ ‘thank you,’ and ‘how much?’ The fact that you try to speak their language goes a long way. It really makes a big difference, because it’ll put a smile on their face.
In fact, if you mispronounce it, it puts a bigger smile on their face, because they know you had to try hard to say it, because some languages don’t come easily for us.”

Remaining flexible: “I always went every place I went because I wanted to go there. Have that kind of an attitude that, I’m here because I wanted to go here, and everything is okay. I just never had expectations of places that weren’t reasonable.”



“I learned something every single time, and if you don’t learn something, you’re not going for the right reason.”



TRULASKE ALUM WADE FOSTER TALKS TECHNOLOGY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ALL THAT JAZZ

BY KATHY DETERS

As co-founder of Zapier, Wade Foster, BSIE '09, MBA '10, is responsible for helping to scale a remote-first automation platform used by millions. Foster and co-founder Mike Knoop, BS, BSME '12, were recognized by Forbes 30 Under 30. He built Zapier into a leading workflow-automation platform connecting thousands of SaaS apps. He's widely recognized as a champion of remote-first culture, async collaboration, and no-code/low-code innovation. And while he's known for his masterful use of technology, he'll tell you that the equipment that first sparked his path toward entrepreneurship was a saxophone.

As a freshman in high school, Foster's saxophone instructor invited him to fill in for a quartet that played gigs at the Governor's Mansion in Jefferson City.

"Something happened and they lost their fourth member," Foster recalled in an Zapier presentation. "The best option they came up with was to invite this scrawny little ninth grader to come to a rehearsal and see if I could cover for the gig. And as luck would have it, or maybe they were desperate, they invited me to play the gig. It was awesome."

After high school, Foster's path led to the University of Missouri, where he studied industrial engineering, followed by the Crosby MBA at the Trulaske College of Business. While working on a marketing project for a Columbia-based software company, Foster decided it was time to learn to build software himself. So he turned to Bryan Helmig, BSBA '11, whom he had met through the University Jazz program.



"I reached out to him and asked, 'Mind teaching me a thing or two about building web apps?' He was kind enough to say yes, but with a catch: his jazz/blues quartet needed a sax player," Foster said. "Of course I said yes. Without that yes, I'm not sure Zapier exists."

Through Zapier, Foster has worked to make technology more accessible to all users by helping businesses automate workflows and move data across nearly 8,000 apps. Zapier now supports 3.4 million businesses ranging from startups to Fortune 100 companies. The team has grown to more than 800 people around the world and earned Foster the EY Entrepreneur of the Year in the Bay Area award in 2022.

Foster has also credited his success to his Mizzou education and events like Columbia's Startup Weekend, which Zapier won in its infancy before moving to the Y Combinator in Silicon Valley. Foster now works to help launch other tech startups and entrepreneurs by returning to Columbia to judge events.

"Wade is a great example of what can be accomplished when you partner an education in engineering with Trulaske's Crosby MBA," said Balaji Rajagopalan, Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. Dean of the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business. "At that intersection lies limitless potential and powerful opportunity."

While Mizzou provided the fuel and Columbia's Startup Weekend served as the launching pad, music — and jazz in particular — helped chart his course. He met his wife, Chelsea, through music, Foster said, and he's played in everything from marching bands to pit orchestras. But it was jazz that shaped how he developed technology.

"Most music shares a common trait. It's written by its composer and then performed every time the same way," Foster noted in a Zapier presentation. "Jazz doesn't share that common trait. A jazz tune is never played exactly the same way twice. The musicians are authoring the arrangement in real time. It doesn't always turn out perfect, but the more skilled the musicians, the more invigorating it is to play."

That ever-evolving act of creation that exists in jazz mirrors Foster's own path to success, he said.

"I think that's why starting Zapier with Bryan and Mike was so fun," Foster said. "It felt like jazz. We had the nugget of a great idea: make it really easy to integrate your web apps. But how to get there? That was an act of creation, composed in real time."

The trio listened to customers, the market and each other to create a product that they hoped would serve customers well — and it did.

"Right now with the pace of AI and innovation it's more important than ever that Zapier can play jazz." •

"I think that's why starting Zapier with Bryan and Mike was so fun. It felt like jazz. We had the nugget of a great idea: make it really easy to integrate your web apps. But how to get there? That was an act of creation, composed in real time."

— Wade Foster





HERZOG'S ADVICE FOR TRULASKE STUDENTS:

- > Be humble
- > Put your organization before yourself
- > Understand the difference between ambition and greed
- > Find what brings you joy and pursue it with hard work, commitment and compassion.

In the hot seat:

TRULASKE ALUM DAVID HERZOG SHARES THE LESSONS HE LEARNED AS AIG CFO

BY KATHY DETERS

When David L. Herzog assumed the position of chief financial officer at AIG during one of the most turbulent times in financial history, it was truly trial by fire. "Being named AIG's CFO in October of 2008 was my first public company CFO role," he said. "I had been an operating division CFO for many years, but this was different."

Herzog, BSBA Acc '82, quickly learned the importance of building a strong team with a wide range of backgrounds and skills.

"I learned the value of shared purpose," he said. "And I learned to trust my own instincts."

In addition to guiding AIG through post-crisis restructuring and financial recovery, Herzog also held senior finance roles at GenAmerica and American General. Herzog cites his education at the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business as providing the groundwork for rising to these challenges.

"Even as far back as 1982, the year I graduated, the business school set the standard for performance excellence very high," Herzog said. "The foundation I left with was solid. It gave me the confidence to expand my comfort zone to take on new roles and challenges."

Herzog hopes the next generation of financial professionals will step into the industry with a sound understanding of the importance of accountability.

"Sound governance and clear lines of accountability are cornerstones of a strong control environment, which is essential for confidence in the capital markets," Herzog said. "No matter the role or discipline, everyone plays a role in building and protecting a company's reputation."

Though each company faces its own unique set of challenges, Herzog notes that a common theme is uncertainty across multiple dimensions, which ultimately affects decision-making. Regardless of the obstacles a company faces in today's business climate or its unique strengths and weaknesses, the solution is nearly always the same: "Agility and preparedness matter," Herzog said.

While Herzog has served on public company boards like MetLife, DXC Technology and Aegon, he's still found time to bring his leadership abilities to Trulaske, where he's provided support for the Tigers on Wall Street Program and served on the dean's advisory board (emeritus). Herzog also chairs the Investment Advisory Committee for MU and delivered a public lecture at Trulaske during the financial crisis.

Balaji Rajagopalan, the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. Dean of the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business, credits Herzog's leadership at Trulaske for helping ensure that the college continues to instill students with the skills, adaptability and values that will be required to thrive in tomorrow's workforce.

"David is truly a testament to what a skilled leader with a strong educational foundation can accomplish," Rajagopalan. "We are tremendously grateful for his continued involvement at Trulaske."

And for Herzog, who is known for empowering others to achieve success, the opportunity to do that at his own alma mater has been rewarding.

"It's all about the students," Herzog said. "Nothing is more gratifying to me than to see people succeed knowing that I had some involvement in their development." •

"David is truly a testament to what a skilled leader with a strong educational foundation can accomplish, we are tremendously grateful for his continued involvement at Trulaske."

— Trulaske Dean Balaji Rajagopalan



TRULASKE ALUMNI INDUCTED INTO MIZZOU HALL OF FAME

NEWS COURTESY OF THE MIZZOU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AND
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Hayes Barnard, BSBA '95, and Robert J. Trulaske, Sr., BSBA '40, LHD '02, both joined the ranks of the Mizzou Hall of Fame, an honor that celebrates alumni whose remarkable achievements exemplify excellence in their fields. Each inductee leaves a legacy, whether through groundbreaking innovation, dedicated public service or transformative philanthropy.

Trulaske was the founder and CEO of True Manufacturing Co. Originally from St. Louis, Bob Trulaske was one of only two graduates from his high school to attend college. While enrolled at Mizzou, he distinguished himself as an ROTC officer, receiving his saber from then-Senator Harry S. Truman. He would go on to serve as a combat pilot in World War II, flying C 47s across the European theater and participating in D Day and the Battle of Holland.

Upon returning home in 1945, Trulaske married Geraldine Mae Mellor and, together with his father and brother, established True Manufacturing Company. Under his direction, the firm became a global leader in commercial, residential and lab-grade refrigeration equipment, and is one of the most trusted brands among food service and hospitality professionals around the world.

Citing Mizzou as the foundation of his success, he and Geraldine created an endowment to support future business students, benefiting more than 280 undergrad and MBA candidates to date. In 2002, the university awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters for his business achievements. Trulaske died on Sept. 25, 2004, at age 86. In 2007, in recognition of his enduring legacy and generosity, the university renamed its College of Business in his honor.

Barnard is the founder, chairman and CEO of GoodLeap, a technology company offering financing and software products for sustainable solutions. GoodLeap has been recognized as a top company by Forbes, Fortune, Fast Company and dozens of others for its innovative platform, which is used by tens of thousands of contractors and has helped more than one million people adopt sustainable solutions.

Barnard also is the founder, chairman and CEO of GivePower, a nonprofit that facilitates solar-powered projects to provide clean water and energy systems to underserved communities. Since GivePower launched in 2013, the organization has affected more than 1,600,000 people across 28 countries by building, installing and maintaining proprietary clean energy solutions.

Prior to GoodLeap, Barnard founded, scaled and sold multiple businesses in the sustainability and finance sectors, including Paramount Solar, which was acquired by SolarCity in 2013. Barnard served as SolarCity's chief revenue officer from 2013 to 2017 and spearheaded the company's growth into the U.S. solar industry leader.



Hayes Barnard, BSBA '95



Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. BSBA '40, LHD '02

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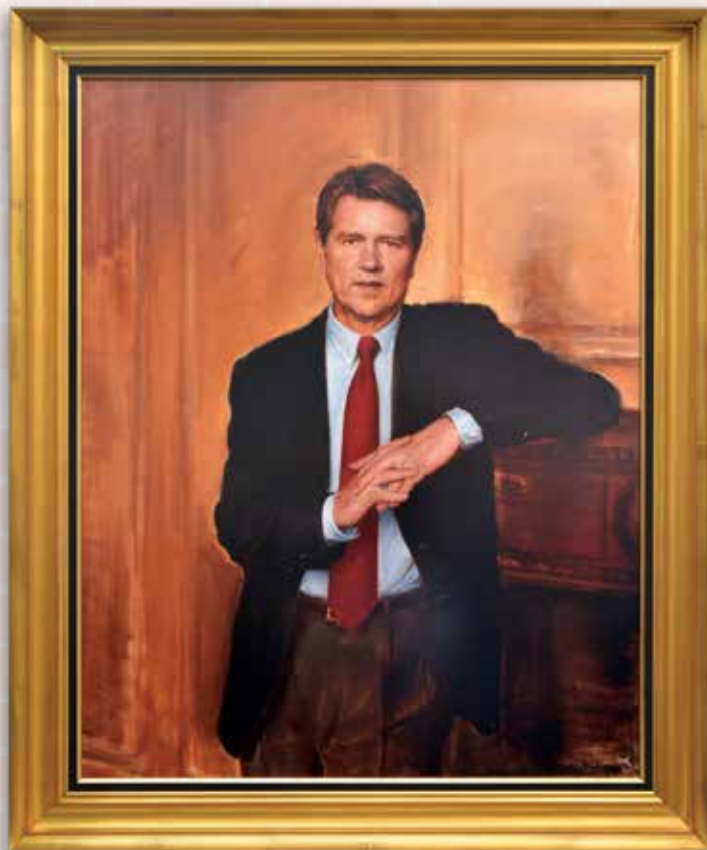
ROBERT J. TRULASKE, JR.

After working to protect the legacy of his father by having the University of Missouri's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business renamed in his honor, Robert "Rob" J. Trulaske, Jr., also now holds a spot of recognition within the college.

"Rob's relationship with Mizzou really was impacted by his dad's relationship with Mizzou," said Jay Sarver, a close friend of Rob's. "Rob could never tell you a story about his time at Mizzou without also recounting a story about his dad. He admired everything his dad stood for. And I think he really tried to model himself after his father."

The Trulaske College of Business recognized Robert J. "Rob" Trulaske, Jr., with a portrait in Cornell Hall. The distinction pays tribute to Rob's commitment to honoring his father, Bob, as well as his philanthropic endeavors, his tremendous professional achievements and his life-long support of the University of Missouri.

"I'm proud to lead a college that bears Robert J. Trulaske, Sr.'s name, and grateful to his son, Rob, for making that distinction possible," said Balaji Rajagopalan, Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. Dean of the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business. "This portrait will hang in Cornell Hall to remind us of the unwavering support that both father and son gave to our institution."



Robert J. Trulaske, Sr.
College of Business

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