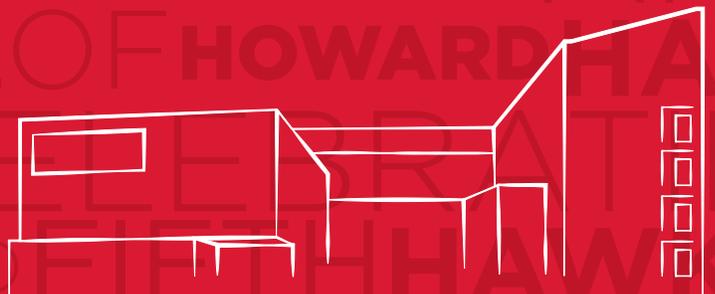
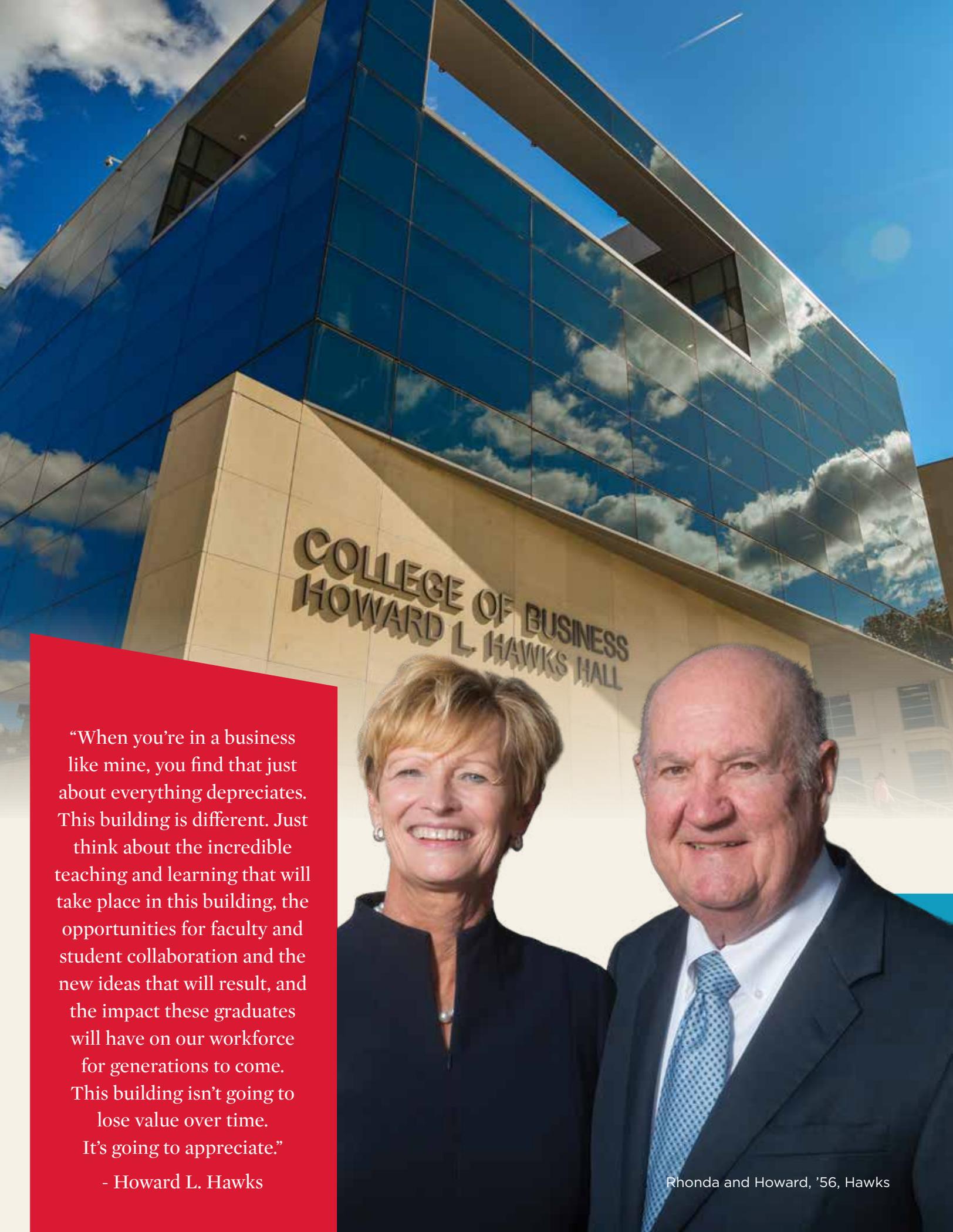


# NEBRASKA BUSINESS

**N** 2022 MAGAZINE

LEADING THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS





COLLEGE OF BUSINESS  
HOWARD L. HAWKS HALL

“When you’re in a business like mine, you find that just about everything depreciates. This building is different. Just think about the incredible teaching and learning that will take place in this building, the opportunities for faculty and student collaboration and the new ideas that will result, and the impact these graduates will have on our workforce for generations to come. This building isn’t going to lose value over time. It’s going to appreciate.”

- Howard L. Hawks

Rhonda and Howard, '56, Hawks



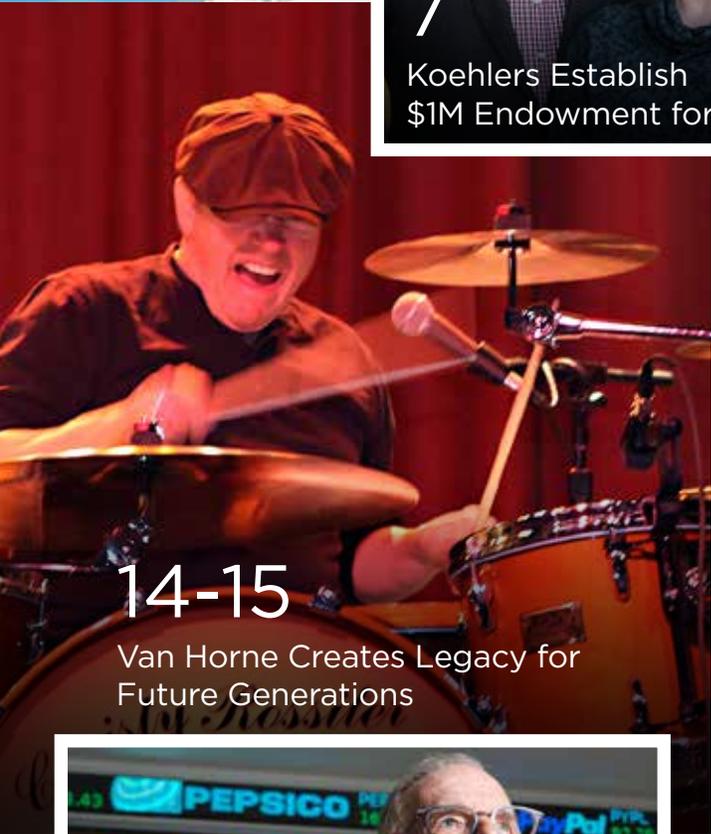
7

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\$1M Endowment for Building



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Through Nonprofits



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Future Generations



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# DEAN'S MESSAGE

## LEADING THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS

When we first opened the doors of Howard L. Hawks Hall five years ago, it was a momentous occasion for Nebraska. The new College of Business was the first academic project of this magnitude in the university's recent history – and due to the generosity of our alumni and friends, it was fully funded through private donations. Built by alumni for future alumni.

So much more than bricks and mortar, Hawks Hall set the bar high. It represented our emergence as a premier business school and a contender in the Big Ten among the most prestigious public business schools in the world.

Hawks Hall inspired and challenged us to aim high and think big as we created our college's strategic plan. With a new mission statement, guiding principles, and success-enabling goals, we continued to build our college inside Hawks Hall.

We fine-tuned our plan last year after affirming our AACSB accreditation for another five years. We are well aligned with the university's N2025 Strategic Plan through our commitment to promoting research and discovery, facilitating learning and transformation, and fostering connection and engagement – thereby fully realizing the promise of our mission.

Now, as we celebrate the fifth anniversary of Hawks Hall, the power of our Nebraska Business community and what we can accomplish together is evident. Our many successes are shared throughout this special issue of the Nebraska Business Magazine including high placement rates (pages 12 & 23) and research rankings (pages 10-12) to new engagement efforts (page 3).

This fall, 39 freshmen chose the Business and Law Major – our most recent collaboration with the College of Law. In fall 2018, we first offered the Law and Business Minor for all UNL undergraduate students and now it includes 82 students including 43 non-business majors.

We've started multiple peer-to-peer mentoring programs to assist students with building a robust network of



mentors and peers, personalize their learning journey through our distinctive programs, and provide access to internships and career opportunities. They include Clifton Strengths Institute coaches, Business Career Center peer coaches, NIL advisors (see page 17), Inclusive Business Leaders Program mentors (see page 20) and supplemental student instructors in our Teaching and Learning Center (see page 21).

The student-led Husker Venture Fund, which provides funding to early-stage startups, also helps students build a team perspective. New student members learn to manage, fundraise, vet applications and more from their peers during an eight-week venture capital bootcamp in the fall. Then, all members work together to make new investment decisions (pages 18-19).

Looking to the future, we will continue to focus on innovative programming, impactful research, broadening engagement, investing in our people and striving for inclusive excellence to elevate the College of Business to the next level. As a provider of high-quality undergraduate business education through distinctive programs, we plan to build on our peer-to-peer engagement and focus on more experiential learning opportunities.

We will support and enhance our student success initiatives including access to internships and career opportunities. We will expand our engagement with middle and high schools and launch additional summer camps to help prospective students explore various careers in business (page 13). We will also enhance diversity and equity while



**1** Dean Kathy Farrell and husband, Sam Allgood, celebrate the fifth anniversary of Hawks Hall. **2** Every first-year student receives one-on-one coaching from trained student strengths coaches. **3** Doug Waggoner, '75 & '77, helped create the Investors With Purpose program to provide an innovative course in asset management, mentorship with finance industry leaders and investment internships. **4** Forty-four entrepreneurs were selected as Entrepreneurship Fellows this fall.



building and sustaining an inclusive community. These efforts will contribute to enrollment growth and increase retention by attracting and retaining our students, faculty and staff.

At the graduate level, we will continue to invest in and maintain a high-quality MBA@Nebraska program with specialized degrees and certificate programs that complement our offerings as efficiently as possible. Our enrollment goals will support and grow the programs to the extent that our budget allows. We also will increase our executive and professional education programming to support life-long learners while also expanding our outreach and the profile of the university.

Additionally, we will increase our research reputation of the college through faculty publications in recognized high-quality business journals and enhanced ratings from various external rating agencies. This aligns with the N2025 goals and helps Nebraska stand out among our Big Ten peer institutions.

Finally, we will need your help. Together, Hawks Hall became a reality, we survived a pandemic, and we have expanded and strengthened our college, but there is still work to do. With your continued support, we will elevate the college to the next level of excellence while leading the future of business.

Together, we are Nebraska Business.

*Kathy Farrell*

## ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

We enhanced our outreach efforts with alumni and business partners through the Business Career Center, the Center for Entrepreneurship (C4E), the Center for Executive and Professional Development (CEPD), Nebraska Council of Economic Education, Center for Sales Excellence and the Bureau of Business Research and partnerships with the NU Foundation and the Nebraska Alumni Association (NAA).

- ▶ **The Entrepreneurship Fellows Program** kicked off with 44 successful entrepreneurs committed to engage with students by guest lecturing, mentoring, connecting them to internships and serving as judges for the C4E's competitions.
- ▶ **Husker Connect** offered to students a way to contact alumni to serve as mentors or provide career insight as part of our required undergraduate Professional Enhancement Program. The CoB has 818 alumni and 711 students engaged on this platform created through partnership with the NAA.
- ▶ The CEPD offered the **Governor's Leadership Academy** in 2019 and 2021 for two groups of leaders in state government. It was modeled after the **Bryan Physician's Leadership Academy**, now in its fourth year, for independent physicians in Lincoln. In 2022, the center launched the **Nonprofit Management Institute** with a strong attendance.

# HOWARD L. HAWKS HALL

SINCE THE OPENING OF

Hawks Hall continues to inspire and challenge us to aim high and think big. It's where research, collaboration and innovation solve problems, and business is taught to be used as a force for good.

It's a home away from home for our students and a hub for our greater Nebraska Business community.

See how we've developed in the building.

## 2017



Teaching and Learning Center Opened Offering Free Tutoring for All Students Taking Business Classes

#15

Online MBA Program in the World - Financial Times

Go to 2022 to see how far we have come!

**Unranked**

in University of Texas at Dallas Business Research Ranking

Go to 2021 to see how far we have come!

Discover Accounting High School Program Launched



Career Closet Created to Provide Students With Free Business Attire

2018

New Online Master's Degrees Offered:

- M.S. in Business Analytics
- M.S. in Finance

Seacrest Teaching Fellows Program Launched



## 2018



Law and Business Minor Offered in Partnership With College of Law

New Online Graduate Certificates Offered:

- Financial Communications in Partnership with College of Journalism and Mass Communications
- Human Resource Management

Executive in Residence Position Created

## 2019



Women Lead Conference Debuted in Partnership With College of Law

2019

#17

Online MBA Program - The Princeton Review

Go to 2022 to see how far we have come!

90%

of 2020-21 Graduates Secured Employment or Graduate School Acceptance Within Six Months of Graduation



2021

Executive Education Programs Expanded and Renamed Center for Executive and Professional Development



Student-Led Husker Venture Fund Created to Support Early-Stage Nebraska Startups

2021

Ph.D. in Business With Supply Chain Management Specialization Established

New Online Master of Science in Supply Chain Management Offered



One Endowed Chair Established

2021



Inclusive Business Leaders Program Started With First Cohort

New Online Graduate Certificates Offered:  
•Marketing Analytics  
•Strategic Marketing

2021

2020

UNL Global Research Rankings of Actuarial Science, Risk Management & Insurance Created

New Online Graduate Certificate Offered in Supply Chain Analytics



Donor Goal Surpassed With Sixth \$1 Million Endowed Chair

2020

World-Class Actuarial Science Campaign Raised \$2 Million



Investors With Purpose Program Launched With First Class

2019

Donor Match Created Five \$1 Million Endowed Chairs

College-Level Research Fund Created



Tutoring Program for Business Classes Expanded

2021



Accelerate Program for Advancing Name, Image, Likeness Opportunities Launched in Partnership With Nebraska Athletics

#54

in the Nation in University of Texas at Dallas Business Research Ranking

2021



Diversity & Inclusion Gathering Space (DIGS) Opened and Named by Students

2022

New Graduate Certificates Offered:

- Financial Analytics
- Sales Excellence
- Strategic Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Annual College of Business Scholarships Surpassed

**\$1 MILLION**



Honors Academy Welcomes 10th Cohort in Fall

2022

Actuarial Science Program Selected for Society of Actuaries University-Earned Credit Program Enabling Students to Earn Credit for Professional Exams in College Courses



#8

Online MBA Program - The Princeton Review

Nonprofit Management Institute Created as Professional Development Opportunity

Middle School Day Piloted for Eighth Graders

Endowment Established for Building Enhancements



Experiential Learning Requirement Implemented for Undergraduate Students

2022

#9

Online MBA Program in the World - Financial Times



Franchising Club and Courses Relunched



Business and Law Major Offered in Partnership With College of Law

# KOEHLERS ESTABLISH \$1M ENDOWMENT FOR BUILDING

Paul, '76, and Mary Ann (Czeschin), '77, Koehler donated \$1 million to establish a permanently endowed fund for the College of Business. The endowment will provide annual support to the college to make enhancements at Hawks Hall.

“We are grateful to Paul and Mary Ann Koehler for their generous gift that will allow us to continue to enhance our building,” said Dean Kathy Farrell. “This endowed fund will help students, staff, faculty, alumni and business partners in the college forever by ensuring that we have the highest-quality facility in which to teach and learn about an ever-evolving business world.”

In recognition of the Koehlers’ gift and longtime support of the college and its students, the college named the vaulted, multi-story entryway on the south side of Hawks Hall the Paul H. and Mary Ann Koehler Gallery. The Koehlers were recognized during a dedication ceremony for the Koehler Gallery in May.

The Koehlers said they were especially interested in creating the endowment to enable current and future generations of Nebraska Business students to continue to have a great place to call their educational home.

“Buildings have the power to bring us together to share experiences,” Paul said. “They don’t just facilitate, they focus and motivate while satisfying our basic human need to be together. They can create communities that inspire us to be more than just a gathering of individuals. They enable us to get to know each other and, together, accomplish greater goals, establishing connections that can last a lifetime.”



Paul, '76, and Mary Ann (Czeschin), '77, Koehler, and Dean Kathy Farrell (left) cut the ribbon for the Paul H. and Mary Ann Koehler Gallery.

The Koehlers have historically funded scholarships to create opportunities for students to excel at Nebraska. This includes establishing the Paul H. and Mary Ann Koehler Endowed Scholarship that provides annual financial support to students in the School of Accountancy who have an interest in financial accounting or auditing within the nonprofit or government sectors. They also created the Paul H. and Mary Ann Koehler Honors Academy Accounting Scholarship to support students who are studying accounting and have been admitted to the Nebraska Business Honors Academy.

The Koehlers spent their entire careers in the Lincoln business community. Paul earned his business administration degree as the top graduate at the College of Business. As a certified public accountant, he dedicated much of his career to teaching accounting and auditing to others in the profession across the country. Mary Ann earned a business administration degree and had a career in the banking industry followed by service to the university for more than 30 years in accounting and business.

## 2023 AND BEYOND



**110** College of Business Celebrates 110th Anniversary

Online Master of Professional Accountancy Launches



Discover Actuarial Science Summer Program for High School Students Begins

 Nebraska Business at Standing Bear High School Program Starts

# PH.D. STUDENT PREPARES TO LEAD AS FACULTY THROUGH SUPPORT OF MENTORS

Izu Mbaraonye, Ph.D. student in management, hoped to satisfy his own curiosities about management practices within companies by pursuing his Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln College of Business. Now in his fifth year and in the job market, Mbaraonye feels more prepared than ever to serve in a faculty role thanks to the mentorship and research opportunities he received at Nebraska.

“I decided to pursue a Ph.D. in management because I wanted an area that allowed for a more holistic understanding of companies. Management is uniquely positioned in that management research seeks to understand companies at all levels of analysis,” he said.

From day one, the Department of Management supported Mbaraonye, connecting him with Varkey Titus Jr., associate professor of management, who helped hone his research efforts and served as a teaching mentor. Even as a new member in the department, the first-year graduate student felt like a peer among the faculty.

“My first year working with Varkey, I found I had very good chemistry with him. He was always open to new ideas and easy to work with. He treated me like a colleague instead of a student,” Mbaraonye said.

Mbaraonye’s research interests led him to collaborate with Mirzokhidjon (Mirzo) Abdurakhmonov, assistant professor of management. With an environment that encourages collaboration between Ph.D. students and faculty members,

Mbaraonye found opportunities to work on high-level research projects with tenure-track professors.

“I was interested in understanding corporate political activities, like lobbying or political action committee contributions, and Mirzo did just that, so I was able to connect with him. Working with him and Varkey, I got to understand how research works, what’s feasible and what has or has not been done,” Mbaraonye said. “It’s helpful to work with more senior professors like Varkey or Mirzo because they help point you in the right direction.”

With a 2-1 ratio of tenure-track faculty to Ph.D. students at the College of Business, students have the opportunity to work one-on-one with renowned industry thought leaders and learn from them.

“One of the most important things we offer is mentorship and hands-on experience. Engaging in the activities of being a professor is critical, but it is also important to have conversations with people who have gone before you to help you make sense of it all. That sense of ‘we’re all in it together’ is a big part of developing as a professional, as it reminds you of the importance of your input into a broader process,” Titus said.

The College of Business employs more than 80 tenure-track faculty who have authored 172 articles in top peer-reviewed journals since

2017. Ph.D. students often co-author these articles.

“Students in our department have the freedom to identify faculty with whom they are interested in working. We encourage this—a student taking initiative by reaching out to a faculty member and saying ‘I have an idea for a



From left to right: Varkey Titus Jr., Izu Mbaraonye and Mirzokhidjon Abdurakhmonov



Ph.D. student Izu Mbaraonye (middle) works with Varkey Titus Jr. (left) and Mirzokhidjon Abdurakhmonov (right) on high-level research projects.

To learn more about the Ph.D. programs at the College of Business, visit: [business.unl.edu/phd](https://business.unl.edu/phd)

## PH.D. STUDENT FELLOWSHIP FUNDS

Join our community of alumni and friends who are helping boost financial support for Ph.D. students – beyond what they received as research and teaching assistants – so they can focus their attention on innovative research projects with their mentors. The fellowship funds also help attract the brightest students from around the world.

Six Ph.D. funds can be designated using the link below:

- School of Accountancy Fund
- Economics Department Fund
- Finance Department Fund
- Management Department Fund
- Marketing Department Fund
- Supply Chain Management & Analytics Fund

Through ample opportunities for research, publication and teaching, they are honing their skills to make a positive impact as university professors, leading economists and business leaders in Nebraska and beyond.

Donate to the fund at:  
[go.unl.edu/cobphd](https://go.unl.edu/cobphd)

research project,' can be a win-win for the student and faculty member," Titus said.

Currently, Abdurakhmonov, Mbaraonye and Titus are researching variables that predict why firms engage in political activities, such as lobbying. An uncommonly discussed topic in academic literature, the relevant research could impact government and the public.

"The societal impact of our research is to ensure that the public knows how firms behave in political arenas and what are the (un)intended consequences of a firm's decision to engage in political activity. Together, we use a computer-aided tax analysis to code from 10K reports for information about why firms engage in lobbying and how it affects their operations," Abdurakhmonov said.

Mbaraonye plays a significant role on the research team by ideating and identifying data sources, as well as collecting, cleaning, coding and analyzing the data, theorizing and developing conceptual models. This hands-on approach provides him valuable experience in the research process.

"As a Ph.D. student, I've gained the skills to develop research questions and obtained applicable data while writing manuscripts with top management

journals. I've also enjoyed learning how to complete the correct statistical analysis to examine research questions," Mbaraonye said.

Having a Ph.D. student like Mbaraonye assisting in research is also beneficial for faculty.

**"One of the most important things we offer is mentorship and hands-on experience."**

- Varkey Titus Jr.

"Izu's creativity and reliability has made substantial contributions to my own research. I sometimes joke with him that he enables some of my more unorthodox ideas, as

he's got a real strength thinking through ways to find and collect data that help us address different kinds of research questions," he said.

With the college's 100% post-graduation placement of Ph.D. students in recent years, Abdurakhmonov envisions a bright future for Mbaraonye.

"Izu's work clearly shows that in a short amount of time he has demonstrated the ability to lead projects and overall been very productive in the research arena. This speaks to the drive, ambition and work ethic Izu possesses," Abdurakhmonov said.

Originally from Lagos, Nigeria, Mbaraonye resides in Omaha, Nebraska, and feels confident in his abilities to lead in any capacity as a faculty member. Until then, he remains committed to numerous ongoing research efforts at Nebraska Business.

# OMER PUBLISHES IN TOP SIX ACCOUNTING JOURNALS WITH FORMER STUDENTS

Currently ranked No. 1 in archival tax all topics, No. 2 in archival tax and No. 5 in archival audit in the BYU Accounting Research Productivity Rankings, Tom Omer joined the College of Business in 2013 as the first Delmar A. Lienemann Sr. Chair of Accounting. While elevating research at Nebraska and guiding Ph.D. students, Omer joined an elite group of academics who published in all six top accounting journals – with all six co-authored by former students he helped teach and mentor.

“Ph.D. students are the future of research, and I want to pass along anything that will make their careers better because they are prepared,” said Omer, who teaches seminars as the Ph.D. coordinator for the School of Accountancy. “We are social scientists, and when faculty begin to work with students to publish articles, that raises their stature and reduces the time spent trying to figure out what they want to do with their careers.”

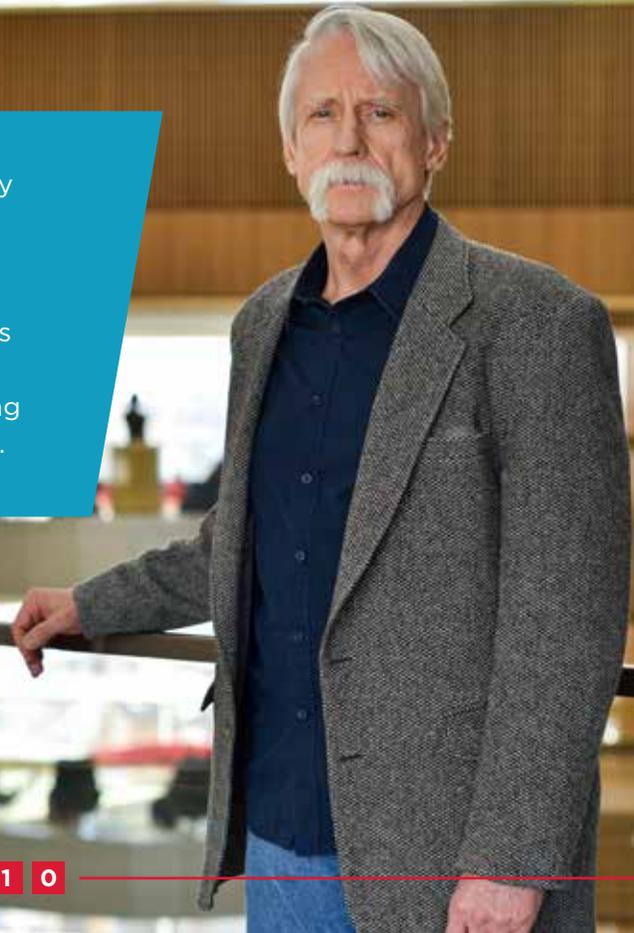
Working with 34 Ph.D. students during his career at Nebraska, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Texas A&M University, Omer published with 26 students so far – with more underway. Omer notes that collaboration often leads to new ideas for future research.

“The best part of research is the intense form of teaching that occurs one-on-one. It might start with a co-author at your door asking a question about methodology and the answer turns into a paper idea,” said Omer. “That one-on-one research aspect of my job is what brings me to work and keeps me conducting research to try to address the questions that arise.”

Kathleen Harris, '16, an assistant professor of accounting at the Carson College of Business at Washington State University, shared how learning from Omer helped her find top career placement after graduation.

“Not only were the coursework and seminars at Nebraska fundamental in preparing me for my first job, but the mentorship and collegiality motivated me each day. I

The School of Accountancy faculty ranked **#3** worldwide in tax research and **#5** in producing tax research in the last 12 years based on the Brigham Young University accounting ranking database for 2021.



1



2

1 Tom Omer published in the top six accounting publications with former students he helped teach and mentor. 2 Kathleen Harris, '16, worked with Tom Omer as a student and published with him as an assistant professor at Washington State University. 3 Omer teaches, mentors and conducts research with current students in Howard L. Hawks Hall and will retire in May 2023.

worked closely with Dr. Omer on developing research, and he provided guidance and support to further my research capabilities. Much like an apprenticeship, this experience offered me an opportunity to refine my understanding of how to research and develop a portfolio,” Harris said.

In 2020, Omer published “Distraction Effect of Non-Audit Services on Audit Quality” in the *Journal of Accounting and Economics* with Erik Beardsley, a former student from Texas A&M who now serves as an assistant professor of accountancy at the University of Illinois, and Andrew Imdieke, assistant professor of accountancy at the University of Notre Dame. This was his fifth top journal placement.

His sixth happened in 2022 when he co-authored “Does Task-Specific Knowledge Improve Audit Quality: Evidence from Audits of Income Tax Accountants” with Harris and Nathan Goldman, associate professor of accountancy at North Carolina University. Published in *Accounting Organizations and Society*, Omer answered the following questions to help break down the research.

#### What’s This Research About?

“The accounting literature looks toward the auditor’s expertise when considering the quality of audits performed. This study asks: When auditing the tax accounts of audit office clients, are high-quality audits (lower misstatements in the tax accounts) related to

tax knowledge expertise or the expertise of the task performed? It asks the question, are audits of the tax accounts of clients in different industries dependent on the tax expertise of the audit team (i.e., there is an industry tax expert on the team for each specific industry), or does it depend on the task (the auditing of the tax accounts) expertise in the audit office. We ask this question about the audit office, not individual auditors. We find that it is the expertise in auditing the accounts and not the tax expertise in particular industries that provide better audit quality.”

#### Why Does It Matter?

“It is important for several reasons. First, it adds an additional explanation of what expertise might mean when considering its effect on audit quality. Many prior studies measure expertise based on dollars of revenue in a particular industry in a particular city or metropolitan statistical area to proxy for expertise. This study suggests that these are particularly noisy proxies of expertise and extends our notions of the different expertise types that might benefit the quality of audit services. Second, the measures of expertise used in the literature provide inconsistent results. This might help future research consider characteristics of audit offices that might indicate higher quality audits that are not based on proxies for expertise that are revenue driven.”

# PH.D. PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS

**100%**

of our Ph.D. graduates  
secured employment within  
six months of graduation

**80%**

placed at universities  
or colleges

**20%**

placed at corporations or  
government agencies

## Who Can Use It?

“We expect that other researchers in the audit literature might use the results to discern better the factors that produce higher or lower audit quality. Practitioners might use this to allocate audit office resources differently when planning an audit engagement.”

As part of what he calls an “unknown in size but somewhat exclusive” group of published researchers in the top six accounting journals, Omer announced his upcoming retirement in May 2023. His plans after teaching include learning new methodologies, Python programming and spending more time with his children and grandchildren, while continuing his research.

“My goal is to continually find and understand the means of addressing questions in my discipline that go unanswered or have multiple conflicting answers. Mixed answers can result from methodological differences, design differences or other factors that limit the conclusion validity of results. I teach the introductory Ph.D. seminar and in it, I think about what students need to know but also how to refine my thinking and about how to address these issues in my own work. If I have learned anything it is that learning to be adaptive is a lifelong process and failing to adapt is not an option,” Omer said.

## BEST RESEARCH PAPERS

- ▶ **Les Carlson**, '80 & '85, Nathan Gold Distinguished Professor emeritus in marketing, received the Outstanding Paper Award 2021 from the Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice for a research article he co-authored titled “The Future of Advertising Research: New Directions and Research Needs.”
- ▶ **Jake Messersmith**, '01, associate professor of management, won the Best Paper Award for HR-Entrepreneurship Research in the Human Resources (HR) Division of the Academy of Management. The award-winning article is titled “Built to Last: A Human Capital Resource Perspective on Diversity and New Venture Survival.”
- ▶ **Alok Kumar**, Steve & Jennifer David Chair in Business and associate professor of marketing, and his co-authors of the 2014 Journal of Marketing article, “Customer Orientation Structure for Internet-Based Business-to-Business Platform Firms,” received the 2022 Louis W. Stern Award. The Interorganizational Special Interest Group (IOSIG) of the American Marketing Association’s Stern Award recognizes an outstanding article published in a widely recognized and highly respected refereed journal that has made a significant contribution to the literature on marketing and channels of distribution between three and eight calendar years after publication.

## SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS AND PRODUCTIVITY

- ▶ **Fred Luthans**, George Holmes Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Management, won the Academy of Management’s Distinguished Scholarly Contributions Award earlier this year. He is also ranked No. 94 in the world and No. 43 in the U.S. among business and management researchers by Research.com. **David Olson**, '81, James & H.K. Stuart Chancellor’s Distinguished Chair and professor of supply chain management and analytics, ranked No. 251 in the world.
- ▶ **Özgür Araz**, Ron and Carol Cope Professor of supply chain management and analytics, and **Olson’s** article, “Role of Analytics for Operational Risk Management in the Era of Big Data,” was one of the top downloaded articles during its first 12 months of publication in Decision Sciences. The paper examines recent developments in academic operational risk management literature from the data analytics perspective.
- ▶ **Araz’s** research titled “The Importance of Widespread Testing for COVID-19 Pandemic: Systems Thinking for Drive-Through Testing Sites” was the most read article in Health Systems in 2020. Health Systems is a leading journal published by The Operational Research Society, which is a prominent international learned society in the field of operational research with more than 3,100 members.

The college ranked **#54 IN RESEARCH** among U.S. business schools based on the University of Texas at Dallas database of publications in 24 leading business journals in 2021.

Our actuarial science and insurance faculty ranked **#8 IN THE WORLD** in the latest Nebraska Global Research Rankings of Actuarial Science and Risk Management & Insurance™.

**1** The Nebraska Business at Standing Bear High School program, a partnership between Lincoln Public Schools and the College of Business, launches in fall 2023. The high school is currently under construction near 70th Street and Saltillo Road in southeast Lincoln. **2** Dean Kathy Farrell announced the partnership with Chancellor Ronnie Green, former LPS Superintendent Steve Joel and Principal of Standing Bear High School Sue Cassata.



## NEBRASKA BUSINESS AT STANDING BEAR BEGINS IN FALL 2023

Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) and the College of Business are joining together to launch Nebraska Business at Standing Bear High School. The newest LPS focus program opens in fall 2023.

“We exist to create opportunity for Nebraska, and today we are boosting access to exceptional business education for Nebraskans,” said Chancellor Ronnie Green. “Partnering with LPS and Standing Bear High School in this new way with our College of Business builds on a historically strong relationship and expands opportunities for students right here in Lincoln.”

Standing Bear High School students will learn about the dynamic world of business and take courses to explore and learn more about potential business career opportunities. Students in grades 9 and 10 at Standing Bear High School will have business coursework integrated into other classes they take. Students in grades 11 and 12 can choose to take classes for college credit through the focus program and will receive reduced tuition. Non-credit experiences will be available to students free of charge. The program is designed to be affordable and accessible to students and their families.

“Students in the focus program could earn between 3-12 hours of college credit depending on the number of college courses in which students decide to enroll. It’s a great opportunity to earn credit for courses that count toward requirements or electives for a business major at the College of Business or electives for other majors,” said Lindsay (Burger) Tillinghast, ’04 & ’13, director of Nebraska Business at Standing Bear High School.

Through hands-on immersive experiences and early college pathways, the focus program will allow Standing Bear students to explore their passions and opportunities in the areas of accounting, economics, finance, marketing, management and supply chain. Pathways are designed for students who wish to pursue a two- or four-year college degree, as well as for students who plan to enter the workforce after graduating from high school.

“CoB faculty have been collaborating with LPS teachers to shape the program’s curriculum,” said Tillinghast. “We look forward to welcoming our first students and helping them become future business leaders.”



## MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAMS TO EXPLORE BUSINESS

The College of Business continues to expand programming for middle and high school students. The second Middle School Day was held this fall in partnership with Lincoln Public Schools.

The college also hosts many high school summer programs including Discover Accounting for rising high school juniors and seniors who learn about the language of business and the DREAMBIG Academy, which provides diverse, upcoming high school seniors with the chance to develop business and leadership skills while learning about the college and career opportunities. In summer 2023, the college will add Discover Actuarial Science for rising juniors and seniors interested in learning more about the field, careers and the college.

To learn more, go to:  
[business.unl.edu/precollege](https://business.unl.edu/precollege)



A drummer, J. E. Van Horne Jr., opened for Joan Jett, Pat Benatar and AC/DC and worked with Johnny Cash, Chubby Checker, The Judds and 311.

To hear Van Horne perform, go to: [soundcloud.com/applecopter/albums](https://soundcloud.com/applecopter/albums)

# VAN HORNE CREATES LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Opening for big entertainers like AC/DC and Pat Benatar, J. E. Van Horne Jr., '75, took his business degree from Nebraska on the road making a career as a musician and sound engineer. Adding a surprise encore, Van Horne decided to match the funding for not one but three endowed chairs at Nebraska Business – with the third to be named by Jim and Georgia, '72, (Lord) Thompson.

“We’re all lucky – any of us that ended up with cash we can give back. It could have gone the other way just as easily,” said Van Horne, who created opportunity through his gifts and ensured that top professors can be hired and retained. “If you don’t take care of other people, why have money? You have to push students to be the best they can be, and the faculty who receive these chairs will do that.”

Born in Kansas, Van Horne moved to Nebraska at age eight. His family worked in the banking business for 140 years, and his grandmother graduated from Nebraska in the early 1900s followed by his father, aunts, uncles and many cousins.

“We believe in Nebraska and want to improve our state. You do that by giving back,” he said.

He first met the Thompsons in 2019 when they provided half the funds for five endowed chairs, challenging others to match them. As an added benefit, the Thompsons allowed the matching donors to name the chairs, they helped fund. Van Horne jumped at the opportunity twice and created both the Van Horne Family Endowed Chair and the Amy & J. E. Van Horne Endowed Chair.

“After we funded two chairs with the gift from the Thompsons, I wanted to continue that momentum and help the college with another chair. It was time for Georgia and Jim to have one to name the way they wanted,” said Van Horne.

His vision to create a legacy in Nebraska harkens back to a conversation he had early in his career when working sound for one of the biggest names in country music.

“It all comes down to Charley Pride,” he said, referring to the legendary singer and guitarist who scored 50 top 10 hits on the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart. “He asked if I thought of going to a bigger city. I told him I worked at a 24-track music studio in Omaha where I can record

**“We believe in Nebraska and want to improve our state. You do that by giving back.”**

- J. E. Van Horne Jr.

whatever I want, whenever I want. He said, "Think long and hard before you give that up because if you go someplace else, you work for someone else, and they'll always tell you what you're going to play and when you're going to play it." That's why I stayed."

Van Horne's career was an adventure working with prominent entertainers in all genres of music. He provided sound for Johnny Cash, Chubby Checker, The Judds, John Denver, Steppenwolf and The Bangles. He also earned a 3M Visionary Award for engineering the Boyz II Men song "The Birth of Christ" in 1992.

"My band opened for big names like AC/DC and Pat Benatar and played with the Ramones at the 20s Club in Omaha," said Van Horne, who used the skills learned in his business law class often. I would leave Omaha in May and be doing sound at various places three to five nights until October with different acts like Gloria Estefan and Mel Tillis."

Van Horne's work continues to shape his commitment to education – using his gifts to start something now for future generations.



Jennifer Ryan, professor and chair of the Department of Supply Chain Management and Analytics, was named the Van Horne Family Endowed Chair.

"J. E. is one of our shining stars," said Dean Kathy Farrell. "In August, Dr. Jennifer Ryan, professor and chair of the Department of Supply Chain Management and Analytics, was named the Van Horne Family Endowed Chair. Endowed chairs create meaningful partnerships, support faculty and raise the stature of the college. Ultimately, they establish excellence in academics to help our students maximize their talents."



1



2

**1** The endowed chair donors include (from left to right) Alice Dittman, '52 & '56; J. E. Van Horne Jr., '75; Georgia, '72, and Jim Thompson; and Jennifer, '70, and Stephen, '70 David. **2** Van Horne matched the funding for two endowed chairs and then provided a challenge gift to the Thompsons to name their own. **3** The Thompsons provided the initial matching gift challenge in 2019 for five endowed chairs. **4** Stas Nikolova, finance, received the Alice Dittman Endowed Chair this fall. **5** Former College of Business Dean Cynthia (Hardin) Milligan also provided funding for an endowed chair.



5



4



3

# NEBRASKA BUSINESS HONORS ACADEMY



2022 Nebraska Business Honors Academy Cohort

## HONORS ACADEMY BY THE NUMBERS

**10**  
cohorts of students

**60%**  
of academy students attain 2 or more internships (averaging \$20 more an hour)

**20%**  
of academy alumni attend law school or other graduate programs

**\$10,000**  
more earned than other graduating seniors

Donate to the fund at:  
[go.unl.edu/BizHAScholarship](https://go.unl.edu/BizHAScholarship)

## TEN YEARS OF IMPACT: NEBRASKA BUSINESS HONORS ACADEMY

Whether founding their own insurance company, leading the marketing for an on-the-rise bank or graduating from Harvard Law, Nebraska Business Honors Academy graduates make their mark wherever they go. Their post-graduation success starts with their experience at Nebraska.

“This fall we welcomed our 10th academy cohort. Our students continue to get better and better as our academy evolves. Our programming also changes to stay up to date with their desires and current trends in business,” said Erin Burnette, who started as academy director along with the first cohort in 2013.

With dedicated courses using active-learning teaching methods, students frequently take part in case studies, interactive discussions and hands-on consulting projects with employers. The engaging learning environment develops critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills for academy students, who boast an average 3.8 GPA across all 11 business majors.

“The hands-on, cohort-based learning, smaller class sizes, and faculty and staff support made the experience unique, challenging and fun.

The faculty brought so much energy and joy to each class. More importantly, they were always willing to spend extra time with me to ensure I understood the material,” said Kelly (Schatz)

Kuester, '17, mergers & acquisitions manager at Carson Group in Omaha.

With select faculty and dedicated academic advisors fluent in university resources, the program takes an individualized approach to supporting students and understanding their goals, strengths and struggles.

“The faculty and staff were major contributors to my success in college and jumpstarting my career. Who else can say that the director of the School of Accountancy or the dean of the College of Business were their professors for intro level classes? Their advice and

support helped land me in a Colorado Springs accounting firm where I feel connected to my work and co-workers and enjoy what I do,” said Ashley (Quiring) McDowell, '17 & '18.

For Larissa (Wiebelhaus) Goodman, '17 & '20, the program's focus on connections helped her excel as an attorney.

“My clientele base primarily consists of referrals I receive. This makes my network one of my most invaluable assets. Because the academy promotes creating authentic relationships and connections, I developed my networking skills and built reciprocal, supportive relationships,” Goodman said.

“Our students continue to get better and better as our academy evolves.”

- Erin Burnette



## THOMSEN, FRANCHISE OWNERS REINVIGORATE FRANCHISING

Before founding the global home health care franchise Home Instead, Paul Hogan, '85, first started a franchise club at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln after a franchising course inspired him. Lindsay Thomsen, '01 & '03, assistant professor of practice in management and director of business development for the Center for Entrepreneurship, joined the College of Business to relaunch Nebraska Franchise Club and teach a fall franchising course with help from Hogan and other successful franchise owners in the spring.

“Franchising is often misunderstood, which prevents people from pursuing it. Franchisors offer the chance to buy into a business under an already established business model and trademark,” Thomsen said. “Most people think of fast food when they hear franchise, but there are many other industries like health and fitness, automotive, financial, insurance, computers and phone repair. Whatever career path you’re interested in, it’s represented in franchising.”

To ensure Nebraska students know why franchise owners experience higher rates of success compared to those with an independent business, Thomsen enlisted several local and national franchise owners to share their experiences and insight with students at Nebraska Franchise Club.



**1** Lindsay (Novak) Thomsen, '01 & '03, joined the college as assistant professor of practice in management and director of business development for the Center of Entrepreneurship last spring. **2** Students learning in the new franchise course this fall. **3** Don Eckles, co-founder and chairman of Scooters Coffee, and Paul Hogan, '85, who founded and franchised Home Instead, spoke to students in-person and virtually during a joint event with the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Other franchise speakers included Charlie Colón, '90 & '05, franchise owner of Chick-fil-A; Laura (Cintani) Frantz, '10, franchisee of House of Colour; Carey (Rademacher) Gille, '99, president and co-founder of Franchise Fastlane; Eduardo Heredia, president of Double O's Coffee franchise; and Ashley Kloxin, '13, franchisee at Perspire Sauna Studio.



## BOWMAN STARTS STUDENT-LED NIL ADVISOR PROGRAM

When Husker Football center Cam Jurgens, '22, needed to trademark his Beef Jurgy brand, College of Business senior Jake Bowman connected him with the College of Law Weibling Entrepreneurship Clinic. Starting the first peer-led Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) Advisor program at Nebraska, Bowman helps student-athletes navigate NIL and campus resources to build a business around themselves.

“The NIL Advisor program at its core is designed to help our student-athletes thrive and reach their potential off the court and field,” said Bowman, a management major from Lincoln. “With NIL being so new and having vast applications, our goal is to help equip student-athletes with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful now and after graduation.”

Read about the college helping student-athletes achieve their NIL potential: [go.unl.edu/accelerate](https://go.unl.edu/accelerate)



To learn more about the fund, visit [business.unl.edu/huskerventure](https://business.unl.edu/huskerventure)

In April, the Husker Venture Fund received the university's New Student Organization Award after investing \$100,000 in Nebraskan startups while providing a hands-on learning experience for its members.

To donate, go to:  
[go.unl.edu/givetohvf](https://go.unl.edu/givetohvf)

## FUNDING NEBRASKA'S EARLY-STAGE STARTUPS

Building upon a successful first year that included investing \$100,000 in Nebraskan startups and winning the university's Outstanding New Student Organization Award, Husker Venture Fund (HVF) student leaders set goals to grow their impact on the state and the future of venture capital investing.

"It was awesome to see all the hard work done by our first managing directors last year, who built HVF from the ground up, pay off in a tangible way. It's thrilling to win such a great award, as it pushes us to be better," said Maria Heyen, a senior international business and Clifton Builders management major from Astoria, Oregon, and one of three students serving on the HVF executive team.

Built by alumni and university supporters, the fund is managed by more than 30 students under the supervision of the Center for Entrepreneurship, the University of Nebraska Foundation and Invest Nebraska. All Nebraska-owned early-stage startups in any industry are eligible to apply for HVF funding, with priority given to student-led businesses.

"HVF works to fill out a long-underserved gap in the Nebraska entrepreneurship ecosystem – venture funding that's often called the super early 'friends and family round,'" said Ateev Bhandari, a senior accounting and business administration major from Amritsar, India. "As a student-led venture capital fund at Nebraska's premier educational institution, it's only right that we lead the charge across the state with such intentional investments."

They made four \$25,000 investments in startups operating from around the state including Sentinel Fertigation, Nestimate, Snappy Workflow and Maxwell. Their first investment into Sentinel Fertigation, an ag-tech company, enabled the company to work with farmers across the Midwest in a paid pilot program this summer.

Jackson Stansell, '21, a biological engineering Ph.D. student, who founded Sentinel Fertigation, said, "I'd heard from a lot of investors that we're too early or there's not enough traction. Ultimately, you need to hire people and have resources and support to execute. That funding gap can slow down progress. The Husker Venture Fund was built to get these things off the ground."

HVF plans to invest in four to five startups this year from Nebraska-based founders and reviews applications on a rolling basis. Every applicant receives a guaranteed screening meeting to pitch their company to the managing directors. From there, it becomes a hands-on learning experience for all members.

“If more than 50% of our members vote to move forward, we assign a lead,” said Samuel DeZube, managing director and junior finance major from Stilwell, Kansas. “We divide up the due diligence report into sections and assign them to members to complete. The lead communicates back to the entrepreneur if more information is needed and compiles a summary used when we vote. To make an investment, 80% of members must vote yes.”

“The fact that we are entirely student-led makes us unique.”

- Samuel DeZube

Members prepare for this process through an eight-week, student-led venture capital bootcamp. The membership structure resembles a typical venture capital fund with students selected to join as general members who can advance.

“The fact that we are entirely student-led makes us unique. This means that everything from screening companies to actually voting on investments is entirely done by students. This gives our members experience that is as close to real-world venture investing as possible,” DeZube said.

Recognized by the university in its N150 Commission Report as an innovative student experience preparing graduates to be lifelong learners and contributors to the workforce in Nebraska and beyond, HVF enables students to gain venture capital experience in a field known for its exclusivity and closed doors.

“Husker Venture Fund has been the most rewarding experience of my college career. The hands-on approach and autonomy are matched by few student programs on campus. The impact we have had is inspiring,” said Bhandari. “Everyone around us wants us to succeed and is willing to help. The fund is a direct product of the support system around it, and I’d like to thank our donors who made the fund possible and our advisors Ben Williamson, Sam Nelson, ’11, and Joe Petsick, ’95, for their counsel.”

## Husker Venture Fund Investments

HVF members awarded four investments to early-stage startups in its first year. Each Nebraska entrepreneur received a \$25,000 investment.

### Sentinel Fertigation | Lincoln | November 2021

CEO: Jackson Stansell, '21, biological engineering Ph.D. student  
Sentinel Fertigation looks to solve profitability and environmental sustainability issues in agriculture caused by inefficient nitrogen fertilization. By using tech to create more efficient nitrogen applications in the field, it saves farmers money while also being more environmentally conscious.

### Nestimate | Lincoln | March 2022

CEO: Kelby Meyers, '12, economics and finance  
Nestimate provides the first software-based solution enabling guaranteed income in retirement plans in a scalable manner. It also fills a gap in the retirement planning space by presenting retirement data in a clear, concise manner.

### Snappy Workflow | Kearney | April 2022

CEO: Dusty Birge  
Snappy Workflow helps electric utility companies lower inspection costs by automating thermal inspections of power lines using proprietary data collection software. Inspectors install a roof-mounted thermal camera on a vehicle to speed up the inspection process by 10 times.

### Maxwell | Omaha | July 2022

CEO: Adriana Cisneros Basulto, '07, MBA  
Maxwell makes it easy for small to midsize employers to offer personalized employee benefits and rewards, as well as attract and retain the talent they need. Client companies assign a budget for employees to use on curated benefits, reimbursements or purchases made with their Maxwell debit card.

### Share This Opportunity

Nebraska-based founders in any industry seeking investment can submit funding applications anytime and are reviewed on a rolling basis. Learn more: [business.unl.edu/huskerventure](https://business.unl.edu/huskerventure)

Sentinel Fertigation founded by Jackson Stansell, '21, a biological engineering Ph.D. student at Nebraska, received the first HVF investment.



**1** The Inclusive Business Leaders work with Elina Ibrayeva, associate professor of practice in management. **2** IBL students hang out in DIGS, the college's Diversity and Inclusion Gathering Space. **3** Sophomores Niko Schultz and Naree Philavanh serve as mentors in the IBL program.

Learn more about IBL at: [business.unl.edu/leaders](https://business.unl.edu/leaders)



## SOPHOMORES MENTOR SECOND COHORT OF INCLUSIVE BUSINESS LEADERS

As members of the inaugural cohort of the Inclusive Business Leaders Program (IBL), sophomores Naree Philavanh and Niko Schultz joined the program set on advancing diversity and inclusion efforts on campus and in the workplace. The two now serve as mentors in the program, which prepares first-year business students to lead in today's diverse work environment.

As part of the program, students receive a \$2,000 scholarship and take an IBL course together where they learn more about diversity, equity and inclusion through theory, group projects and discussions. The program also offers formal mentoring and hands-on learning opportunities, encouraging a sense of community among the students. Recognizing the program's impact in its first year, the Council of Advancement and Support of Education awarded IBL the 2022 Best of CASE District VI Award in the leadership category.

Within this supportive community, Philavanh found a space to express herself in a welcoming environment where she felt like she mattered.

"This program gives me a place to be myself without judgment and accepts my input as to how to improve the program for future IBL students. Our course prepared me to be a business

student by providing a safe space in the college where my voice is heard and a community that celebrates and supports one another," said Philavanh, a management and marketing major from Lincoln, Nebraska.

For Schultz, a marketing major from Joliet, Illinois, the peer mentorship component of the program helped him succeed when he struggled with a course.

"I had no hope of passing a class, and one of my mentors, Ann Vu (junior marketing major), put me in contact with another mentee who was in the same class as me. We came up with this amazing studying strategy, and both ended up passing the class with an A," he said. "After this experience, I knew I wanted to help other mentees with their freshman year experience."

This spring Philavanh earned the IBL Change Agent Award, recognizing her involvement in improving inclusion on campus, and Schultz, the IBL Community Builder Award, for going above and beyond to make other IBL members feel welcomed, valued and respected. Their positive experience propelled them to pay it forward by serving as mentors to the next cohort.

"I want to help incoming first-year students navigate life in college and be there to see their growth throughout the program," Philavanh said.



### INCLUSIVE BUSINESS LEADERS POINTS OF PRIDE

**31**  
first-time  
freshmen

**10**  
student  
mentors

**\$2,000**  
student scholarship

To donate, go to:  
[go.unl.edu/iblfund](https://go.unl.edu/iblfund)



Bob FitzSimmons (third from the left) provides funding for student tutors who work in the Teaching and Learning Center at the College of Business.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER ELEVATES EDUCATION AT COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Since opening in 2017, the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) supplements and advances education in the College of Business. Students, faculty and staff benefit from the programming offered including tutoring, workshops and panels.

The center held more than 9,000 tutoring visits since 2018 with 2,747 of them taking place last spring – a record-breaking feat while serving 686 students. The free service connects students of any major taking a business course with a trained peer to help review course material or break down difficult to understand concepts.

With more than 30 tutors covering over 30 business courses, the center also trains and certifies every tutor using the International Center for Supplemental Instruction's curriculum. For many students like Eleanor Dunning, a junior

business administration major, working with a tutor becomes an integral part of their learning experience.

Faculty also benefit from programming, with workshops and panels centered on teaching, technology, assessment, pedagogy and course design. As the new faculty director of the TLC, Sam Allgood, Edwin J. Faulkner Professor of Economics, plans to support classroom learning for professors.

Currently, the TLC is piloting a new Learning Assistant Program, who provide specific support to instructors, in addition to tutoring the course through in-class activity facilitation, grading assistance, course communications and individualized student check-ins. The program looks to expand instructor impact and strengthen student engagement.

**TEACHING  
AND LEARNING  
CENTER  
POINTS  
OF PRIDE**

**1-on-1**

free tutoring  
available from  
trained peer tutors

Employs

**33**

tutors across

**33**

courses

Visited by record-  
breaking

**2,747**

students last  
semester

To donate, go to:  
[go.unl.edu/TLCfund](https://go.unl.edu/TLCfund)

## MBA Alum Prioritizes Giving Back While Building Successful Career

Recently nominated for the Forbes 30 Under 30 List for social impact, Aakriti Agrawal, '16 & '22, champions making a difference at work and in her communities. An award-winning nonprofit founder and data governance expert, she recently graduated from the MBA@Nebraska program in May and moved to Phoenix, Arizona, to launch her career as a manager of data governance at American Express (AmEx), a Fortune 100 company.

"I loved my MBA experience. I could immediately apply what I learned in class to my professional and nonprofit life through classes such as Initiating and Managing Entrepreneurial Growth (ENTR 821) and Nonprofit Management (MNGT 871)," Agrawal said. "I met people from around the world who continue to be close friends and mentors for me and help me grow my own knowledge even after we've gained our degrees."

At AmEx, she took on the role in a newly created team and was soon asked to lead a major project. Two months later in a global town hall meeting, Agrawal received recognition for her contributions to her business line.

"With 73,000 people in the entire company, I was shocked to be recognized, especially while being so new! I'm fortunate to be on a team that shares my desire to get things done," she said.

Agrawal first came to Nebraska from India for her bachelor's degree in actuarial science and finance. After graduation, she set onto a path toward a career in data governance and started teaching herself how to code. With this knowledge, she co-founded Girls Code Lincoln, a Nebraska-based nonprofit, to teach fourth through ninth grade girls how to computer program and built a community of supporters who wanted to help close the gender gap in STEM.

"Founding a nonprofit with no nonprofit experience is tough, but we leaned on our community. My co-founders — Nicci (Poehling) Peterson, '16, and Justin Stark — and I spoke to dozens of people to learn how to do this, and the community helped make our vision a reality," Agrawal said. "This year, before I stepped down from the board, we hosted the Girls Code Lincoln podcast where we interviewed inspiring women in various areas of STEM and leadership, such as Tracy Bohaboj of Duncan Aviation and Connie Collingsworth of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, who we met at the college's Women Lead Conference."

Agrawal presented a TEDxOmaha talk about closing the gender gap in tech through the principles used at Girls Code Lincoln. The talk currently has over 3,000 views on YouTube. She continues to challenge herself with impactful speaking opportunities and plans to present at her first national data governance conference this December.

"My time at Nebraska taught me to step outside of my comfort zone. There were a lot of opportunities that I never expected to lead to anything, but they did — so I learned early that I should try different things and see where they take me," she said.

A few days apart in 2021, she won Lincoln's Inspire Founders Award and was named Emerging Leader of the Year by the Lincoln Chamber Young Professionals Group.

"It was an honor to be recognized for my community involvement, and I was so proud to celebrate with my parents," she said. "I've been so fortunate, and I couldn't have done any of it without Lincoln or the College of Business."

With her “Start Something” attitude, Agrawal was selected as an inaugural Entrepreneurship Fellow where she will mentor students through the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship. While continuing to engage with the college’s community, she plans to remove barriers for other nonprofit founders globally through her new venture, The Nonprofit Org.

“My time at Nebraska taught me to step outside of my comfort zone.”

- Aakriti Agrawal, '16 & '22

To learn more about the MBA@Nebraska program, visit: [mba.unl.edu](http://mba.unl.edu)

## MBA@NEBRASKA POINTS OF PRIDE

**99%**

of MBA@Nebraska graduates secured employment within six months of graduation (August 2020-May 2021)

MBA@Nebraska Program

**#1**  
best value

**#3**  
in the nation

**33%**  
alumni salary increase

- Financial Times, 2022

## BUILDERS CONSULT WITH BUSINESSES TO ENHANCE LINCOLN WORKPLACE CULTURE

Christine Weeks, '01, CEO of Eleanor Creative in Lincoln, sought to maximize strengths-based coaching at her branding agency. Through students in the Clifton Builders Program, she learned strategies to transform culture by aligning productivity with employee fulfillment.

The Clifton Builders Program identifies and develops students with high leadership and entrepreneurial potential. Trained to lead high-performance teams, builders turn their classroom knowledge into action by consulting with area businesses in the Building a Life for Impact (MNGT 324B) course.

“Working together as a cohort, the Clifton Builders are challenged to create, positively disrupt and manage effectively. Rather than teach the concepts of employee engagement or work through a case study, we teach the basics and then send the students out to learn by doing,” said Tim Hodges, executive director of the Clifton Strengths Institute and assistant professor of practice in management.

Weeks and her Eleanor Creative team completed a survey and then met to discuss the results. The Builders also provided recommendations and discussed implementation.

“It was a great experience as a team and very informative for me as a leader working to find ways to keep our employees engaged and connected to meaningful work,” Weeks said. “I’m also grateful that college students are getting hands-on experience working with employers.”



Christine Weeks, '01, CEO of Eleanor Creative in Lincoln, Nebraska, helped four Clifton Builders prepare for the workforce.

To learn more about the Clifton Builders Program, visit: [business.unl.edu/builders](https://business.unl.edu/builders).



MBA@Nebraska student Morgan Hoken, '20 recently presented at the 2022 Clifton Strengths Institute Summer Conference sharing about her experiences as Miss Nebraska and in the new course called Strengths-Based Leadership.

To learn more about the Clifton Strengths Institute, visit: [business.unl.edu/strengths](https://business.unl.edu/strengths)

## STRENGTHS-BASED LEADERSHIP EXPANDS INTO MBA@NEBRASKA

Students in the No. 1 ranked MBA@Nebraska program for best value by Financial Times regularly apply what they learn to their careers in real time. First offered this summer, a new elective course called Strengths-Based Leadership (GRBA 896) helped students learn ways to incorporate CliftonStrengths® into their leadership style and professional role.

“The course opened my eyes to the ways in which differing strengths play a vital role in engagement and well-being in a workplace. Now more than ever, businesses and leaders are concerned with how to keep employees engaged and motivated. Learning how to lead with strengths not only maximizes the talent of the individual but the entire team,” said Morgan Hoken, '20, who served as the 2021 Miss Nebraska.

Taught by Tim Hodges, '00, '01 & '20, executive director of the Clifton Strengths Institute and assistant professor of practice in management, the course focuses on leadership development. One of their assignments pairs up students for a one-on-one interview for more understanding of their strengths and how to apply them in their current positions.

“Our MBA students are already in roles where they coach other employees. This activity helped increase their level of self-awareness by talking about their strengths while also growing their appreciation for another person’s set of strengths,” said Hodges. “We also spent time focusing on great leaders, great leadership teams and why people follow.”

Using the book “Wellbeing at Work” in class, students met authors Jim Clifton, chairman of Gallup, and Jim Harter, '86, '89 & '97, chief scientist of workplace management and wellbeing at Gallup. Both shared insight and answered questions about building resilient and thriving teams.

“The addition of this course means the MBA@Nebraska program values a well-rounded individual who not only grows in knowledge of business but also how to work with different types of people and motivations,” said Hoken. “This course is special because it combines business and positive psychology with research that started on our very own campus.”



Dick Kelley, '60, retires this year from a successful career in finance.

## ***FINANCIAL ADVISING CAREER HIGHLIGHTS KELLEY'S ACHIEVEMENTS***

### **Alum's Philanthropy Helps Nebraska Business Students Thrive**

Richard "Dick" Kelley, '60, graduated from Nebraska Business ready to gain on-the-job experience before settling into a long-term career. Fifty-five years later, his decision to help others through financial advising supports countless families and laid the foundation for philanthropic contributions bettering the lives of the Nebraska Business community.

"I wanted to be permanently placed in my career by the time I was 30," said Kelley, who married his long-time girlfriend Helen Hockabout, '60, whom he met as a student at Omaha Central High School, just 20 days after graduation. "That was during the Vietnam War, and I didn't know my draft status. My wife had a job teaching senior honors literature at Omaha Westside High School, so I took the first job I could find."

He worked at Northern Natural Gas for two years before finding a sales position that better suited his friendly, outgoing nature. He sold advertising for the Omaha Sun Dundee, a local newspaper, to those in the area where he grew up until he and four friends decided to start something of their own.

"I loved selling ads, but I always wanted my own business. We started selling manufactured power humidifiers for forced air furnaces, and I set up a national sales organization. We built them with our wives in a partner's basement and sold them all over the country through manufacturer reps," Dick said. "It was a good little business."

When he and Helen started their family, Dick sold advertising for the minor-league professional Omaha Knights hockey team. As he approached his 30th birthday, his wife suggested he utilize his talents in finance.

"Helen said, 'You're investing our money better than the stockbroker we're using. Why don't you become a stockbroker?'" said Dick, who thrived as an advisor in a small operation. "I interviewed at 11 financial firms in Omaha and received 11 offers. I did not want to work for a big firm so I took a job with a regional company out of St. Louis. When our small company would eventually get bought out by a major firm, we all quit and opened another regional office."

Dick officially retires from RBC Wealth Management at the end of 2022, just two days before he turns 85. He made his mark by earning the trust of clients, relating to their needs and conveying a passion for his work.

“When I started in 1968, the market was so active, and they didn’t have big computers. The markets closed at noon, and I would walk up and down the Omaha business community knocking on doors looking for business. Helen and I would drive by businesses, she would write them down for me, and I would call on them with a smile on my face. It was pretty effective,” he said.

One of Dick’s great joys was making money on behalf of clients. Although financial advising changed a lot since the ’60s, his friendly, yet determined attitude never did, and that helped him build a prestigious client base and many great friendships.

He first met Carl Mammel, ’55, a visionary leader shaping the insurance and business landscape, when discussing a position in Mammel’s business. Instead, Mammel decided to work with Dick and his investment firm to identify prospects for his business and handle his investment needs.

“Dick and I are very good friends. I started playing tennis with him five or six days a week. Later, we decided to play golf together weekly,” Mammel said. “My wife and I would ask Dick and his wife to visit our lake home in Alexandra, Minnesota, each summer.”

Years later after establishing a foundation to provide financial support to nonprofit organizations, Mammel asked Dick to join its board and serve as treasurer.

“Dick has been very helpful in helping us manage not only my personal funds, but the funds held by our foundation. We value his advice and have enjoyed continued involvement with him either when fishing, playing golf or helping us manage our funds. Whenever I have needed his help, he has been ‘Johnny on the spot,’ and I always benefit from his advice and service,” said Mammel.

Dick also shared how college helped build a solid foundation for serving his clients. He fondly recalled an insurance course with the late Curt “Doc” Elliott, who was a renowned economist at Nebraska.

“Doc had a sense of humor that made it fun to learn. He was very thorough, and when we walked out of his class, we knew a lot about insurance,” said Dick.

He also learned about ethics and personal responsibility by serving on the student tribunal in college. The experience of serving as chair of the board, “sorting out discipline issues,” taught him a lot about navigating difficult situations.

Amid his many college experiences, he recalled giving his Phi Delta Theta pin to Helen in the fraternity’s pinning ceremony as the best. The couple raised three children – Allyson Baffert, Beth Smith and Richard “Rick” Kelley Jr. – and all three currently live “within 10 minutes” of Dick. Helen succumbed to Alzheimer’s disease in October 2020.

“When you put your fraternity pin on her, you know it means you’re in love, and we were,” said Dick, who was also proud of his wife’s community involvement. “She served on the Westside School Board for 15 years, and even testified in front of the Supreme Court in a case involving Westside Community Schools.”

Dick volunteered with the Omaha Children’s Hospital for 26 years, serving as chair of the board for two years. Dick also shared that he and Helen decided to donate to their alma mater “while living on pennies” just a year after graduation.

Dean Kathy Farrell said, “Both Helen and Dick have been tremendous advocates for the University of Nebraska. They sent their very first gift soon after graduating when just starting their careers and lives. They also were instrumental in helping us fund Hawks Hall, which benefits our entire Nebraska Business community.”

**“You’re investing our money better than the stockbroker we’re using. Why don’t you become a stockbroker?”**

- Helen Kelley, ’60



Dick Kelley and his wife, Helen, have given back to the College of Business since their graduation, including donating toward building Hawks Hall.

After retiring in December, the Kelley name will continue at RBC Wealth Management. Rick, who also works at the firm, will take over Dick's many accounts.

"I've loved my financial advising business from the day I started, and I'm still the first person in the office at age 84. I'd encourage all students to get your feet wet. Don't be afraid to quit a job and try something else until you find what you really want to do for your career and your life," said Dick.



**1** Dick Kelley visited Dean Kathy Farrell this fall. **2** Dick's photo as a senior in the 1960 Cornhusker Yearbook. **3** Dick (first row, second from right) served as chair of the university's Student Tribunal, which heard and recommended actions for student disciplinary cases. **4** Dick celebrating Helen's 80th birthday with their grandchildren.

## DEFUSCO HONORED WITH TRIBUTE SCHOLARSHIP

The college's Department of Finance Advisory Board recognized Richard DeFusco for nearly 40 years of outstanding leadership and service by establishing the Richard DeFusco Tribute Scholarship in September.

"After reading about Aaron Crabtree's scholarship honoring the former School of Accountancy director, I thought about how Richard is a continuous learner who tests out new ideas, supports students and provides them with opportunities. I wanted to honor Richard in that way," said Karen Plessinger, '86, director of SouthWest Water Companies, who spearheaded the scholarship effort and chairs the board.

DeFusco came to Nebraska in 1985 as an assistant professor of finance. He led the charge to designate the investments track in the finance major – and later the Master of Science in Finance – as a CFA® Institute University Affiliated Program. Since 2017, he has served as department chair, which includes working with the advisory board.

"We've known each other for a long time and worked extremely close over the last three years with the Investors With Purpose class. It's been very meaningful to me. Richard has been a great partner and professional. Also, he's been a great friend, and I have truly enjoyed every interaction," said Doug Waggoner, '75 & '77, who provided matching funds for the scholarship that kickstarted a wave of contributions.

DeFusco earned multiple teaching awards as well as the college's Faculty Service Award and an award for his commitment to students' career development.

"He's very deserving of the scholarship tribute, a minor token to allow him to continue to give back to the university," said Bayard Closser, '82, president of Investment Planners, Inc.

Karen Plessinger, '86 (left), Dean Kathy Farrell (right) and members of the Department of Finance Advisory Board and College of Business honored Richard DeFusco (middle), department chair and professor of finance, with a tribute scholarship.



Donate to the scholarship at: [go.unl.edu/defusco](https://go.unl.edu/defusco) or contact Justin Swanson at: [justin.swanson@nufoundation.org](mailto:justin.swanson@nufoundation.org)

# FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SHARES IMPORTANCE OF SCHOLARSHIP

A sophomore accounting major and business analytics minor from Lincoln, Nebraska, Alex Nguyen shared his story at the Nebraska Business Scholarship Brunch in September. The event brought student scholarship fund recipients and scholarship donors together to connect and engage, share stories and learn about one another.

By Alex Nguyen

Thank you to our donors for your direct assistance in furthering our education. I am a first-generation student, so this scholarship provides a lot for, not just myself, but my entire family. My parents have shown me firsthand what a great work ethic looks like and continue to work tirelessly to provide for my siblings and me. I hoped to apply and receive as many scholarships as possible to provide some financial relief for my parents.

I am extremely grateful for this opportunity, this school and what everyone here has given me and my fellow students to provide some of that relief. I am also the oldest child in my family and the first-born American, so I hope to lead the way for the rest of my family. Thanks to the financial aid given to me last year, I was able to live on campus and immerse myself in the culture here at Nebraska and meet many other scholars who motivated my learning. Though I tried to cover all my schooling expenses with financial aid, I still had a significant amount I had to pay out of pocket. I stressed about my current and future financial situations. This stress weighed on me throughout the semester, impacting my studying and attending extracurricular activities.

Stress is just expected when you're going to college, but the hope is that it's just from classes and not finances. This year, I opted to live off-campus and my expenses dramatically decreased with this scholarship. I can work fewer hours at my job and focus more of my time on studying. I wake up at 5 a.m. for marching band and study in the College of Business Teaching and Learning Center every day. It's a great place with intelligent student tutors who are always helpful and encouraging. I go to the gym to



Alex Nguyen, a sophomore accounting major

focus on my physical health, but most of my time is dedicated to studying, which is the priority for my family and me.

My career goals are to work for one of the Big Four accounting firms or a private firm that will align with my values of helping one's community. I hope to be part of something bigger than myself.

TeamMates is a nonprofit organization with the mission to positively impact the world by

inspiring youth to reach their full potential through mentoring. I recently became a TeamMates mentor because my parents aren't from the U.S., and growing up, I didn't have that help or guidance through the educational system. I wished there would've been another adult to help and guide me. Mentors and mentees are paired up based on similar personalities, experiences and career goals. I look forward to meeting one-on-one with my student each week to play board games, talk and be another adult figure in their life. Giving advice and guidance is probably one of the most rewarding things I've done this year. Like our donors, seeing potential and being able to give back is a fantastic thing. Thank you to our donors for what you have given us.

**"Stress is just expected when you're going to college, but the hope is that it's just from classes and not finances."**

- Alex Nguyen

To donate to the Scholarship Fund, go to: [go.unl.edu/supportCoB](https://go.unl.edu/supportCoB)

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