

# BRYAN

## BUSINESS REPORT

### Net Gain

When MLS announced plans to bring a "NEXT Pro" team to the Triad, Reese McCormick '23 (Marketing) was ready.

**p. 10**



**UNC GREENSBORO**

**Bryan School of**  
Business and Economics

# MESSAGE

## FROM THE DEAN



**McRAE C. BANKS, PHD**

*Margaret and Harrell Hill  
Distinguished Professor  
and Dean*

[mcbanks@uncg.edu](mailto:mcbanks@uncg.edu)

Writing the dean's letter for the Bryan Business Report each year is difficult. There are so many great new initiatives, outstanding accomplishments, and heart-warming stories to choose from that it never feels like we have enough space. For that reason, instead of teasing ahead to the great storytelling in this magazine as I have done in years past, I will use this valuable real estate to tell the story of our School's new BONUS! Initiative (or Bryan Online Nontraditional Undergraduate Student Initiative).

For this initiative, we are launching an effort to enroll more undergraduate students between the ages of 25 and 45. Most likely, these prospective students will have some college but no degree, and they will be balancing full-time work and family commitments that preclude them coming to campus. This group is not unknown to us as 27 percent of our undergraduate students are 25 or older and 73 percent of our students work a full-time or part-time job alongside their studies. Despite our success in this space, there are 1 million North Carolina workers who have some college credit and 4 million more who have no higher education credit. As a state, we can do better, and the Bryan School is leading the way.

To be successful we will need to build the same high-quality, high-touch recruitment and admission processes that have helped us set record graduate enrollments for six straight years. We are doing that with UNC Greensboro's Undergraduate Admissions and Financial Aid offices in collaboration with the university's Enrollment Management Division. We will also need to expand our exceptionally effective student success initiatives, including personalized professional advising, and extending both our Bryan Blueprint Series for professional development and our successful YOU BELONG! initiative we launched last year to help new students learn about the sincere culture of care that exists in the Bryan School.

As you read this year's Bryan Business Report, pay close attention because you will read about the incredible successes of some of our nontraditional students. These stories only solidify our belief that we can be successful with our BONUS! Initiative. There are, of course, stories of other exceptional problem solvers and our engagements.

Whatever you take from this latest edition of the Bryan Business Report, I hope most of all that you enjoy it. I hope it comes through that we do not want to be a well-kept secret. That when we say your career is our business, we put tangible resources toward helping our students get to where they want to go. And I hope it rings true – to those who know first-hand – how anyone can belong at Bryan.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "McRae C. Banks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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## Design

Kerri Lindley

## Photography

Mackenzie Francisco, Mike Micciche,  
Becky VanderVeen, Bert VanderVeen

## Contributing Authors

Mackenzie Francisco, Pat Holmes,  
Dawn Martin

## Printing

Mittera



# A FOREST OF KNOWLEDGE

**Dr.** Vidyaranya Gargeya has been shaping minds and impacting students for 30 years. And it is a calling that may have always been his destiny – in Sanskrit his very name, Vidyaranya, means “forest of knowledge.” He has lived up to that moniker as a much beloved and revered professor at the UNC Greensboro Bryan School of Business and Economics since 1993. Now retiring, Gargeya gave his “last lecture” during Alumni All-Access Weekend and received a standing ovation from a nearly packed auditorium at the School.

The crowd included fellow faculty, university staff members, recent graduates, and long-time alumni who are now business owners, executives, and professors themselves. For Gargeya, the outpouring was both moving and humbling. “I had no intention to make an impact on others,” he said. “I see myself as a facilitator of learning, an academic coach; I coach the mind.”

“My goal is simply to add value everywhere. When I get up in the morning, that’s what I’m thinking about.”

In the moments before his final lecture, Gargeya ran up and down and across the auditorium, shaking hands, sharing jokes, and hugging attendees as they arrived. “Karen, Karen,” he told one retired colleague, “Have you not had enough of me yet?”

## ‘He’s the Benchmark’

Gargeya is an institution at the Bryan School, having served twice as head of the Department of Information Systems and Supply Chain Management, director of the MBA program, co-director of the university’s Quality Enhancement Plan process, and a member of the Senior Leadership Team for UNCG during a key credentialing process.

Originally trained as a chemical engineer, he spent years as a manager in the petroleum industry before bringing that knowledge to UNCG, routinely visiting businesses across the state to consult and conduct research.

Over the years, he has visited every college in North Carolina, taught in every classroom of the Bryan building and presented in every lecture hall at the university. Working under seven provosts, six chancellors and six university presidents, Gargeya estimates he has taught close to 5,800 students.

One of them was David Effren, who is now an executive with a New York-based data analytics firm in the automotive industry. “The passion that you saw from him today was every day,” Effren said after Gargeya’s last lecture, which was co-sponsored by the Bryan School Climate Committee. “Few people can ‘bring it’ for 30 years at that energy level. But Dr. Gargeya lives and breathes education every day. He’s the benchmark.”

Jason Goddard, another former student, is now a vice president for Wells Fargo and an adjunct business professor for both UNCG and Wake Forest University. He remembers that Gargeya always set a high bar for students and even seemed to have a sixth sense about who





was prepared for class. Those who had not read the assignment would usually be called on first for discussion. When students would admit they hadn't read, Gargeya would direct them to the course syllabus, which he called the "memorandum of understanding." That contained a section about coming to class prepared. They wouldn't make that mistake twice, Goddard said with a smile.

### 'Learning Should Be Uncomfortable'

"Deep thinking and learning should be uncomfortable, provocative and 'shake the very ground you stand upon,'" Gargeya says. He strives to build creative thinkers and risk-takers, rather than simply students who earn 4.0s by playing it safe. And he believes universities should not only broaden students' knowledge and skills but also instill key attributes such as honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and many others – all of which are needed for success in business and in life.

Fellow faculty members credit Gargeya with mentoring them as well. Dr. Channelle James, a lecturer in the department of Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality & Tourism, joined UNCG in 1996. "I was young, and I didn't know much," she said. "But he looked at me like he expected that I knew something – that I was a faculty member just like he was a faculty member. That meant so much to me."

Jim Weeks, former dean of the Bryan School, said UNCG did not know what it was getting when hiring Gargeya all those years ago. "We knew we were getting a good faculty member, but we didn't have any idea how good," Weeks said. "We did not know we would get this person with so much passion and energy and positive attributes. Very few people can cite the kind of service he has given to our university system."

For three decades, shaping students has been Gargeya's driving force. It is what he thinks about when he wakes at 4 a.m., when he walks to the University's statue of Minerva, and when he recites daily a Hindu chant that is over 4,000 years old. "May we all be protected," he translates. "May we all be nourished. May we walk together with great energy. May our intellect be sharpened. May our learning be effective. Peace in me. Peace in nature. Peace in the universal forces that govern us all." ■

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL MICCICHE



## feature story

WRITTEN BY DAWN MARTIN

“

I tell parents of prospective students: if your child doesn't graduate with a job, they didn't go to class. It's all right there.”

**Aliyah Robinson**  
'23 (Marketing)

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# Answering the Call

How one intern sold herself by outselling everybody else

**C**old-calling can be a lonely task in the sales field – one that requires persistence, a thick skin and a whole lot of self-confidence. It's a job at which Bryan School graduate Aliyah Robinson '23 (Marketing) excels.

Robinson was so successful at generating leads during her sales internship with TPx that she secured a part-time job working remotely for the company before she graduated. Today, she is on the sales staff of the national IT service provider. She credits the curriculum at the Bryan School of Business and Economics, her professors and a company mentor with helping her grow into the role while completing her marketing degree with a minor in sales in May 2023.

"I think every business professional should start with a sales job," she said. "Sales teaches you a different level of persistence and patience. I learned to keep a good attitude and just keep calling. The more shots you make, the more you'll have a chance to hit something."

## Well-Trained Sales Talent

It's a lesson that served her well at UNC Greensboro, where Robinson was an active student, serving as an orientation leader, a campus tour guide, a marketing assistant with dining services, and a member of the North Carolina Sales Institute. The institute, based in the Bryan School, offers sales training for students and professionals, helping them to develop their skills while also meeting companies' needs for well-trained sales talent.

The Bryan School and NCSI helped Robinson build her resume, practice job interviews, work on sales pitches and even connect with prospective employers. This was instrumental in helping her secure an internship and later a job, she says.

"I tell parents of prospective students: 'If your child doesn't graduate with a job, they didn't go to class,'" Robinson says. "It's all right there. The Bryan School makes it very easy to graduate with employment."

Robinson's career trajectory began in a sales class when she heard about a new internship offered by TPx. At first, Robinson wasn't sure she wanted to work at an IT company, but when she heard that the summer job would be in Orlando and housing was provided, she took the next step. Her role was to review databases, build lists of leads and then cold-call businesspeople to see if they'd commit to attending a meeting to learn more about the services TPx could offer.

## Call to Action

During her first month, she was able to set up eight meetings with potential customers, while other interns were booking 20 and more. But a mentor at TPx told her to keep a positive attitude, be confident in her abilities, and remember that each "No" would get her closer to a "Yes."

She tried to bring a personal touch to each call, making a connection or sharing a joke. In the second month, she outsold the entire sales floor, including her mentor, lining up 42 people who were willing to have that second meeting.

"Aliyah has drive, a great work ethic, and she just kept going," said Sara MacSween, a lecturer in marketing at the Bryan School and the faculty advisor for the NC Sales Institute. "I've been so impressed with her persistence in this role – it's a very challenging one, but she's pursued it and worked hard at it."

MacSween had also coached Robinson and another UNCG alumna when they were two of 300 selected for a National Collegiate Sales Competition at Kennesaw State University. "I was so proud of them," MacSween says. "Companies across the US go to this one event to recruit sales professionals. They worked that room and made connections."

Ultimately, Robinson hopes to transition into marketing, and she believes sales has given her a good start. "The biggest takeaway is that your pitch can be perfect, but someone may still tell you 'No,'" she says. "You just keep your confidence, pick up that phone, get that 'No' and then dial the next number for that 'Yes.'" ■



# FIRED UP

Firefighters are often the ones people call when they need problems solved – whether it’s putting out a blaze, saving a cardiac arrest victim, extricating someone from a car crash or even rescuing the proverbial cat in the tree. So it’s no coincidence that Greensboro Fire Captain Nick Loflin ‘01 (Physics, Mathematics) chose to continue his education at an institution that prides itself on “developing exceptional problem solvers.”

Loflin hopes to merge the resources and opportunities he’s found at the Bryan School of Business and Economics with what the fire department has taught him to make a significant impact on those around him.

“My goal is to take what have I learned and use it to improve things for folks around me, whether that’s my family, my workplace or my community,” he says.

## Applying Economics

As part of his research toward his master’s degree in applied economics, Loflin has created a practical economics model that will help fire service administrators and government officials determine when and where to build new fire stations. Using principles of cost-benefit analysis, Loflin’s goal was to provide citizens with the best, most equitable services while ensuring the highest return on public investment. It’s a formula he hopes will be used by city and county governments on a broad scale.

“It’s always been a passion of mine to use data to help explain things and then rely on that to bring about change,” Loflin says. “So

when you’re speaking to stakeholders and they’re spending tax dollars for a fire station, I wanted to translate the impact of those dollars in terms of improved quality of life.” Loflin’s research first examined how reducing response times through expanded fire services could save lives threatened by cardiac arrest or overdose and also reduce structural losses due to fire. Then, he modeled where those savings could have the most impact, showing sites where the return on investment would exceed expenditures.

The research has been invaluable, says Greensboro Deputy Fire Chief Alex Gossett. “We want to expand our services in the areas of highest need first because there are only enough tax dollars to go around,” Gossett says. “Our goal is to use the tools Nick developed to illustrate the need and help educate government officials about expanding services.”

## Off and Running

Loflin, who expects to earn his master’s in December, brought a unique skill set to the work. After receiving his undergraduate degree in math and physics from UNC Greensboro in 2001, he taught high school before pursuing his lifelong dream of fighting fires. “I decided that burning buildings was easier than teaching,” he says with a laugh. Today, he also wears some other hats. He has used his data analysis skills to advocate for improved benefits as an executive board member of the local firefighters’ union. A husband and father of three, he finds time to run two digital marketing and analytics businesses, both of which grew out of early efforts to promote charity fundraisers and events. One of his best-known accomplishments is Greensboro’s annual Running of the Balls 5K. Loflin co-founded this race in 2011 and has seen it grow to more than 5,000 participants during the winter holidays. The run raises money for Second Harvest Food Bank and to date has provided more than 7 million meals.



As a Graduate Student Ambassador, Loflin says he appreciates how the Bryan School allows students to further projects they are already working on and expand their real-world experience. That is a hallmark of Bryan School programs, says Dr. Jeremy Bray, an economics professor and Loflin's adviser. "Our goal in applied economics goes well beyond crunching numbers or running statistics," Bray says. "It's about seeing a need and understanding that what you are learning can help solve the problem. Nick just took that to heart. He's a great example of how a master's degree can help you make an impact in your workplace and give back to the community in such an effective way." ■

“

It's always been a passion of mine to use data to help explain things and then rely on that to bring about change”

**Nick Loflin**  
Greensboro Fire Captain  
'01 (Physics, Mathematics)



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY BERT VANDERVEEN



# A NEW CHAPTER FOR TEXTBOOKS

It's no secret that Gen Z gets its information in ways that are vastly different from how their pre-iPhone parents learned and did research. But rather than lamenting students' changing reading habits, Dr. Jeff Sarbaum is embracing the transition and using it to innovate.

Sarbaum, a senior lecturer in economics at the Bryan School, recently co-authored an online interactive textbook that meets students where they are in this digital world. Economics Interactive – published by Pearson Higher Education – went live nationally last year, and experts believe it has the potential to set new active learning standards across the publishing industry and academia.

"Students learn best by doing, and that's what the authors have recognized," says Thomas Hayward, economics product manager at Pearson, one of the world's largest college textbook publishers. "They've created an experience that puts learners in the front seat of their own education."

## Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover

While a typical e-book often contains links to outside digital platforms where students can find multimedia resources or do homework assignments, Economics Interactive offers all of this in one place so students don't have to toggle back and forth. Each chapter is bookended with brief videos of Sarbaum sharing stories that explain challenging economic concepts in clear, relatable terms. Short chunks of text are punctuated with multiple choice questions, "apply it" videos, and even interactive graphing exercises in which students can change inputs to practice difficult concepts such as supply and demand curves.

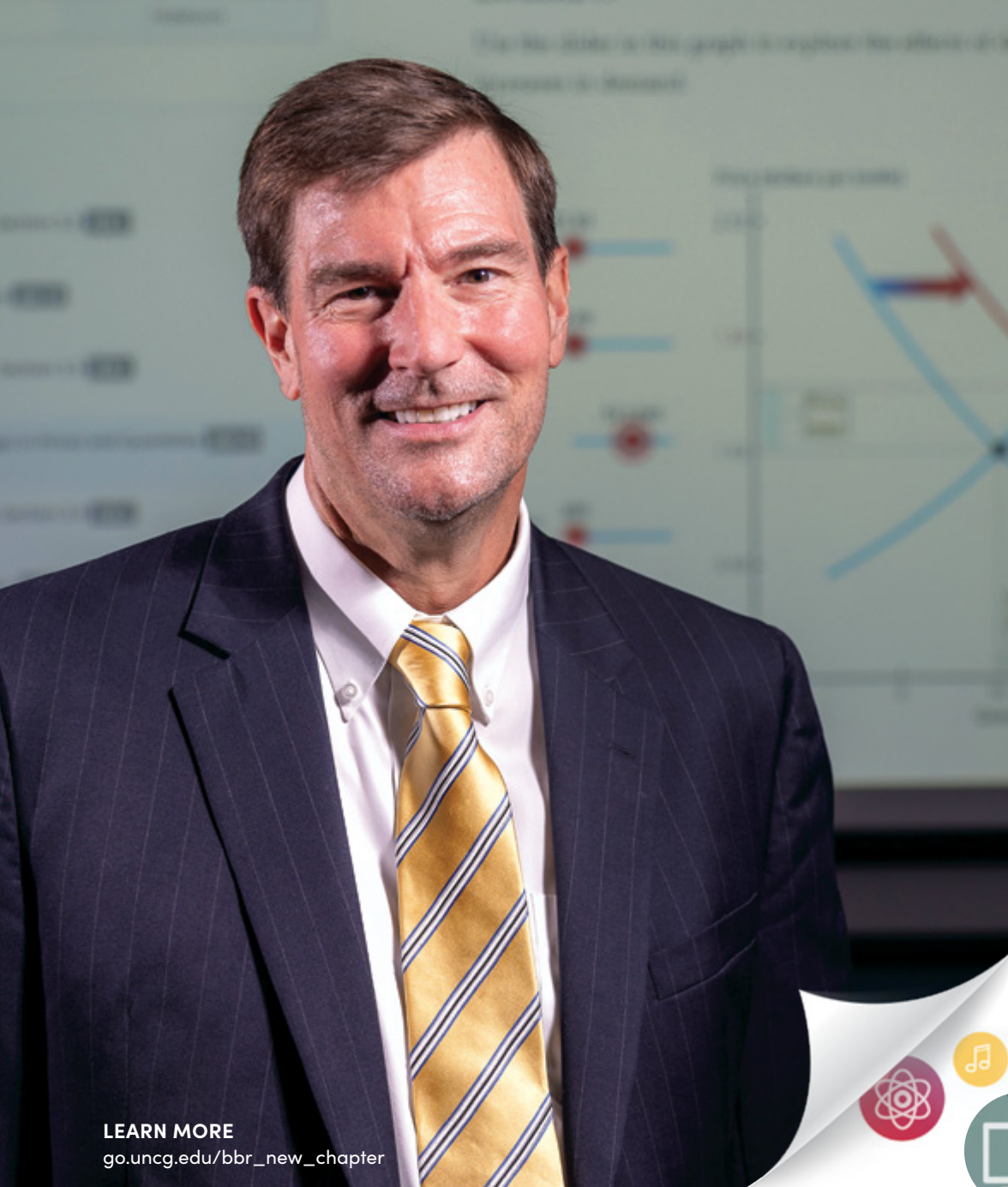
"We tried to eliminate as much of the text-heavy content as possible and to use embedded multiple-choice questions as an active learning tool," Sarbaum says. "This helps keep students' brains focused." Some of the videos are stopped at specific points to ask students questions and confirm their understanding – the publisher calls these "learning speed bumps." Students can review concepts, earn credit, and find motivation along the way.

By the time the student has completed an online chapter, the homework for the next day's class has been completed as well. "Our marketing tagline is: The textbook is the homework, and the homework is the textbook," Sarbaum says. This allows the professor to use classroom time to cover more material and branch out to group-based learning activities to reinforce concepts.

The methodology is rooted in learning science as well as Sarbaum's own observations after teaching more than 20,000 students in two decades. One of his co-authors, Michael Parkin, a renowned economist who has published more than 40 textbooks, said Sarbaum's classroom experience was vital to the project.

"We tried to put ourselves in the position of 18- to 22-year-olds and consider what they would find an attractive way of learning," Parkin says. "Jeff has an incredible attention to detail regarding what students are doing today and how to keep them engaged."





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“We tried to eliminate as much of the text-heavy content as possible and to use embedded multiple-choice questions as an active learning tool, this helps keep students’ brains focused.”

#### Dr. Jeff Sarbaum

Senior Lecturer

Department of Economics



## Best in the Business

Hayward agrees. “Jeff is well known among economics educators as being someone who is dedicated to his students and who is doing very innovative things focused on interactivity and engagement in the classroom. What Jeff provides is the voice and passion and understanding of teaching students in a remote environment, and he has decades plus experience in doing that.”

The textbook, which was piloted at UNC Greensboro, is currently being used at about a dozen universities and Pearson engaged in a marketing push last summer aimed at broad pickup across the country. In keeping with students’ broad digital preferences, the product can be accessed via desktop, laptop, iPad or iPhone. The authors also hope its price point, which is lower than most print books, will support educational equity.

Sarbaum feels grateful to have been involved with this project. He credits the Bryan School for giving him the flexibility and instructional freedom to develop online education over the years, recognizing it was a growing way to meet its diverse student body’s needs for access.

“If UNCG hadn’t supported creative efforts and out-of-the-box thinking about how to do education a little differently, I wouldn’t have been brought into this project,” he says. “The ability I had to do these things with the Bryan School enabled me to do this on a national stage.” ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BERT VANDERVEEN

# NET GAIN



When Major League Soccer announced plans last November to bring a “NEXT Pro” team to the Triad, Reese McCormick ’23 (Marketing) was ready with her resume. As it turned out, her lifetime of soccer experience, her marketing degree and recent internships came together to provide the winning shot on goal.

McCormick, who graduated in May, is now the marketing and partnership coordinator with the Triad’s new professional soccer team: Carolina Core FC. Based in High Point, Carolina Core FC will kick off its inaugural season in 2024, serving as a professional development league on the pathway to MLS and bringing professional soccer to the region.

“It’s an absolute dream job,” says McCormick, who has played soccer since she was 4 and coached for many years. She now has a front row seat to the development of an exciting new sports offering here that will be the nation’s 28th MLS NEXT Pro team. “Instead of having to go to Raleigh or Charlotte, people from anywhere in the Triad can now go 30 minutes down the road and have a chance to watch professional soccer,” McCormick says. “I get to come to work and talk about soccer and all my passions while marketing the area I grew up in.”

## Transfer Window

McCormick attended High Point’s Wesleyan Christian Academy, where she played soccer, before heading off to play briefly at the University of South Carolina at Aiken. After a semester, she decided she wanted to be closer to home and have more time to focus on academics, so she transferred to UNC Greensboro’s Bryan School of Business and Economics. While there, she excelled as a student and as a Team Leader in the School’s unique offering called the Blueprint Series.

The series, required for the majority of Bryan students, takes students through four professional development courses focusing on competencies employers are looking for in new hires. Students

learn to identify their own personal strengths and values, build their communication and problem-solving skills, write resumes and cover letters, develop networks and even practice interviewing for jobs. UNCG is the only school in NC to require this type of for-credit course, which is co-taught by student Team Leaders selected for their high GPAs and leadership skills.

## Practice Makes Perfect

In addition to serving as a Team Leader, McCormick has helped train other students to lead in the program. She was a perfect fit for that role because she took ownership immediately, worked hard and committed herself to her goals, says Maggie Breitenbach, the undergraduate professional development specialist with the Bryan School. “Reese leads authentically, which has made it possible for other students to see themselves as leaders. She’s helped educate her peers on why soft skills – such as how to effectively communicate, lead and solve problems – are so important.”

McCormick relied on these skills herself to land three distinct internships while in school, including one that she co-created with her employer to fill a need. She worked with Imago Dei Soccer Academy, overseeing social media and marketing for U23 teams and successfully growing social media engagement by 632 percent. She followed that with a graphic design internship, designing brochures and marketing materials for Kotis Properties. Finally, she worked at Mack Trucks as a communications specialist intern.

All that led to a role in the front office of what can seem like an episode of *Ted Lasso*. She and Breitenbach hope her trajectory serves as a model for other students in the Blueprint Series.

“Reese truly has taken this program to heart, put in the work and now she’s seeing those incredible results,” Breitenbach says. “She’s shown students that if you buy into what we’re teaching here, you can get your dream job before you even graduate.” ■



“

I get to come to work and talk about soccer and all my passions while marketing the area I grew up in.”

**Reese McCormick**  
‘23 (Marketing)

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# Trailblazer

**UNCG Bryan School alumna blazes trail  
for African American business students –  
like her daughter**

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**Y**ou will go to college” are words that UNC Greensboro Bryan School of Business and Economics alumna Loretta Shaw Helton ’81 (Business Education) heard growing up in Durham, North Carolina. Raised in the cotton and tobacco fields of South Carolina, her parents weren’t afforded the opportunity. When her brother tragically passed away in an automobile accident before he could complete his degree, she would be the first in her family.

UNCG wasn’t on Loretta’s list, but when a high school counselor informed her the school was looking to expand its African American enrollment and asked her to apply, she did.

“I haven’t regretted that decision once — I haven’t looked back,” she said.

Loretta was one of approximately 20 students recruited and accepted from predominantly African American high schools in North Carolina to what would eventually become the Bryan School. She majored in business education — a major no longer offered at the School — with the goal of becoming a school principal.

Back in ’77, though, she wasn’t thinking about the fact that her college experience would help blaze the trail for future African American college students at UNCG. She didn’t know that by Fall 2023, non-white students would make up more than half of the Bryan School’s population.

“My thoughts were more centered on enjoying school and graduating on time,” she said. “I had a goal in mind to achieve the college degree which my parents weren’t afforded and my brother couldn’t complete.”

Loretta thrived on campus. She lived in Winfield Dorm, started UNCG’s chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. and developed friendships that are still maintained today. Her skin tone only came into play in the classroom. From 1977 to 1981, Helton experienced many moments of being the only brown person in class, and professors asked her to present

her viewpoint of the issues as an African American person.

“I was raised to speak my mind and know that my thoughts mattered, so UNCG and the Bryan School helped me build on that,” she said.

Loretta also credits the Bryan School for helping her develop an eye for communications, business and technology — three key components of her future professional life. She obtained her master’s degree in business education from North Carolina Central University, but her goal of becoming a principal changed after she was recruited by IBM in North Carolina’s Research Triangle Park working in Information Technology. She’s since worked with Duke University, the State of Louisiana and is currently with Legal and General America as the Team Lead for their System Administrators and Engineers.

Loretta is married and the parent of three adult children, all of whom have college degrees.



### Like Mother, Like Daughter

“You will go to college.” Loretta passed those familiar words on to her daughter, Chloe’ Love Helton ’17 (Business Administration) nearly 36 years later. The question was — which one? After a campus tour, Chloe’ knew it had to be UNCG.

“My sisters and I will tell you our mom is our superhero,” she said. “She always talked

about how much she learned at UNCG, so being able to follow in her footsteps that closely is an honor.”

The parallels between Chloe’ and her mother’s experiences are hard to miss. Like her mom, Chloe’ was assigned to Winfield Dorm and chose the Bryan School, majoring in Business Administration. While at UNCG, Chloe’ had an opportunity to be a student ambassador, Resident Advisor, intern at local businesses, study abroad for a semester in France, and participate in various leadership programs on campus.

“There were so many perspectives, cultures and experiences brought into the classroom, in part because of those students 40 years ago — because of students like my mom,” Chloe’ said.

### Family Ties

Loretta currently resides in Washington, DC and spends her time on the road with her husband, who is a Methodist Bishop. Chloe’ works in content marketing at a digital marketing firm in Charlotte. Despite their physical distance, the Helton women pay a visit to campus every now and then.

“We constantly reflect on the changes that have occurred over the course of the 40 years since I stepped on campus — so many changes that helped forged a wonderful experience for my daughter and me,” Loretta said. “I see better things in store for future Bryan School generations.”

One of Loretta’s favorite moments at UNCG is her bringing Chloe’ to UNCG as an infant and showing her the UNCG Alumni Walk where she donated a brick.

“When I pointed out my brick to Chloe’, I had no idea that one day I’d share another favorite moment with her — graduation day in 2017,” she said. “It’s a very special feeling sharing the UNCG experience with my daughter.” ■

## feature story

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
MACKENZIE FRANCISCO

# IN THE BUSINESS OF NETWORKING

## Setting the Stage for Real-World Success

The Bryan School is committed to providing students with ample opportunities to engage with employers in the community and beyond. In addition to hosting weekly Company Spotlights with employers, we've kicked it up a notch with the addition of two new employer relations events.

In September 2022, the Bryan School welcomed its students and area business leaders to the Elliott University Center for the Bryan School Professional Development Conference. From informational sessions and free headshots to a Company Mixer, students spent the day honing their professional development skills while networking with representatives from more than 30 companies.

Also new to the event lineup is the Bright Futures Dinner. In March 2023, students enjoyed mocktails, dinner, and a leadership panel. More than 30 companies joined us in the EUC as connections were made and students got a taste of what it's like to interact in a formal environment.

Helping our students gain real-world professional experience is always a priority, and we are incredibly grateful for our business partners and their continued support. We look forward to another successful year of networking, learning, and growing. ■

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## Company Spotlights

FALL '22

**17**

events

**466**

student attendees

SPRING '23

**10**

events

**233**

student attendees

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## Bryan School Professional Development Conference

**700**

students participated

**37**

companies attended Company  
Mixer and engaged with  
more than 300 students

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## Bright Futures Dinner

**200**

students attended

**30+**

business partners  
attended



EMPOWERING

# NOVATION

Student Consultants Collaborate  
with Local Incubator





“There was so much data. Students needed to be very clear on what they were promising to deliver.”

**Dr. Mike Beitler**

Senior Lecturer & Director of  
MBA Capstone Projects

Sam Funchess and Lisa Hazlett dream about revitalizing a historic but now empty steel plant, turning it into a bustling and vibrant destination space in east Greensboro.

They envision the cavernous factory – next door to the Nussbaum Center for Entrepreneurship – as a potential home to renewed urban manufacturing and later a farmer’s market, artisan entrepreneur space, community kitchen, restaurants and maybe even a brewery.

But first they need investors who believe in The Steelhouse and its potential. They turned to a Capstone Project at the Bryan School of Business and Economics, through which a team of UNC Greensboro MBA students would act as real-world consultants to help them tell the story. As part of the project, the team analyzed the economic impact of the Nussbaum Center and the potential future impact of The Steelhouse. Their effort not only helped the Nussbaum Center develop information for investors and granting agencies, it also helped the students learn to gather and analyze key business data and present the findings to a client group.

## Keeping It Local

As Greensboro’s nonprofit small-business incubator, the Nussbaum Center has been helping local businesses thrive by offering entrepreneurs reasonably priced office space, shared support facilities and business and technical assistance since 1987. Today, the Center’s businesses bring in an estimated \$23 million in annual revenue. Since its founding, its businesses have also paid out \$110 million in staff wages, much of which is reinvested locally.

“At this point in our journey, we needed data on the economic impact that the Nussbaum Center has had on people in Greensboro and Guilford County – put together in a way that people could easily understand – so we could cite that when seeking new funding,” said Hazlett, president of the Nussbaum Center. “When you are going after grant dollars, officials want to know the return on their investment.”

Several of those officials, including Guilford County Commissioners Carly Cooke and Pat Tillman, attended the students’ Capstone presentation in May. Nussbaum Center staff and board members also heard the report on the impact of the Center, which is home to 62 businesses that employ an estimated 170 associates.

While national statistics indicate a mere 35% of small businesses survive after 10 years, the Nussbaum Center’s business survival rate far outpaces that at 61%, according to the MBA students. In addition, more than 74% of Nussbaum businesses are minority- or women-owned, nearly double the county and state average. Once developed, The Steelhouse would add an estimated 600 new jobs and pay out \$42 million in additional annual payroll. Together, the Nussbaum Center and The Steelhouse are expected to hit annual revenues in excess of \$80 million, the students found. As student Robert Furter said, “If you build it, the businesses will come.”

## Statement of Work

These numbers mean that the state could recoup a potential \$25 million grant investment, thanks to the increased tax revenue, in less than 8 years, students shared. This would also be capital that is reinvested largely into the local economy.

Hazlett and Funchess, who is CEO of the Nussbaum Center, said the presentation provided them with vital new ways to look at the information. While they had an idea of the number of jobs the Steelhouse would create, they did not have estimates on annual payroll and revenue, which would be helpful in seeking the \$36–40 million they need to develop the project.

Students crafted their presentation to appeal to both listeners’ heads and hearts, said Capstone team member Jonathan Cron. To help shape the information, they analyzed raw data taken from a survey of Nussbaum businesses, looking at job creation, revenues, and payroll and tax information. They also conducted site visits, scoured databases and industry reports, analyzed competitors in the marketplace, and interviewed entrepreneurs who got their start at the Nussbaum Center.

One of the students’ key tasks was to develop a “statement of work” to clearly define project deliverables and outcomes. “There was so much data,” said Dr. Mike Beitler, Director of MBA Capstone Projects and Senior Lecturer at the Bryan School. “Students needed to be very clear on what they were promising to deliver.” All this experience will benefit them as they further their careers, he added.

UNCG MBA students Nathan Perry and Matthew Smoker said they found it fulfilling to analyze and provide the information in a way that was appealing to current and potential investors. ■

## LEARN MORE

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# BRYAN Research

We are extremely proud of the culture of care that exists between Bryan School students and their professors. But it would be a disservice to our world-class educators if we didn't also highlight their prolific research. In 2022, Bryan School professors published **165** unique peer-reviewed journal articles – with **16** of them in world-leading journals. Additionally, seven faculty members hold **13** editorial positions at eight of the world's best business journals. Our innovative, hands-on curriculum is a potent compliment to their hard work creating and disseminating knowledge about the theory and practice of business.





# SHORT SELLING EFFICIENCY

Every time Dr. Dayong Huang publishes a paper, the world learns a little more about the nature of the U.S. stock market.

“For years one thing that always intrigued me was what determined the value of stocks,” says the UNC Greensboro Bryan School professor of finance. “But from the early stages of my research, I was more theory focused and never paid enough attention to what the traders actually do.”

Huang has shifted gears in recent years, focusing on the relationship between the market and various types of traders – whether retail traders, or institutional traders such as hedge funds. He recently co-authored the paper “Short Selling Efficiency” in the Journal of Financial Economics which analyzes short selling as a predictive mechanism.

“Short selling is a trade that bets on the decline on the stock prices and is an important player,” says Huang. “So short selling is often used on overpriced stock, which is the case on average, but there are plenty of times that short selling is not allocated to the correct stocks.”

Throughout his research, Huang monitored thousands of stocks, attempting to calculate and explain future aggregate stock market performance based on the intensity of short selling activity by checking if short selling is placed on the correct or overpriced stocks. Huang said the intensity of short selling at any given time matters to the market, and the practice has predictive power that is stronger during periods of recession, high volatility in the market, and low public information. It performed better than simple aggregate short interest as it used a different weight among individual stocks.

For any retail – or nonprofessional – investors reading, Huang notes that hedge funds conduct the lion’s share of short selling and wouldn’t recommend the practice to the layperson. He also notes that the audience for his papers tends to be investment professionals and relevant institutions.

Huang, who earned his PhD in financial economics from West Virginia University in 2005, says he has been trading throughout his academic career if only to gain practical insights into what he teaches his students.

“I decided to pick up trading because I teach it,” he jokes. “There are good things in the textbook, after 20 years I’ve learned the market is formidable so an average investor needs to consider seriously simply holding the market. Trying to time the market or select a few stocks to buy or short sell is difficult.”

## LEARN MORE

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**Dr. Dayong Huang**  
Professor



**Dr. Elena Karpova**  
Putman & Hayes  
Distinguished Professor

## IS THIS SUSTAINABLE?

Growing up in a small town above the arctic circle in Soviet Russia, UNC Greensboro Bryan School professor Dr. Elena Karpova says she was drawn to clothing from an early age. That curiosity stemmed from a shortage of apparel options, lack of brands, and market competition under the centrally-planned economy in the country – so as a teen, she decided to make her own clothes.

Now the Bryan School's Putman & Hayes Distinguished Professor in the Department of Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies, Karpova is in the midst of an impressive stretch of research on the topic of consumer sustainability, logging articles not only in top academic journals but also frequently in *The Washington Post* featuring titles such as "Why you should almost always wash your clothes on cold" and "Why should you air dry your laundry? Let's count the ways."

Karpova earned her first PhD from St. Petersburg University of Technology and Design before landing in the United States by way of a competitive program administered by the U.S. Department of Education. She received her second PhD from UNCG, and her academic journey took her to Missouri and Iowa before she returned to North Carolina. However, her interest in a world full of brands and consumers never wavered, subjects that were foreign to her as a child.

About a decade ago, she recalls, the focus of her consumer research gradually became greener.

"At the time my son was little, and I thought of what type of life he was going to have, what, as parents, we are leaving for our children in terms of the environment. That made an impact on me and my own consumption habits," she says.

Consumers are not solely responsible for turning the tide against rising global temperatures, Karpova says, acknowledging that there is a significant role for the public and private sector to play in helping to incentivize greener social norms. But in lieu of opening a browser and beginning to comb through her recent impactful work, Karpova says there is one place we can all start the next time we're shopping.

"When you want to buy a garment, think about how much you like it on a scale of one to 10. I really recommend you only buy 9s and 10s, and be honest with yourself. You deserve to wear 10s, and you don't need more 7s and 8s in your closet," she says. "Wear what you love, take good care of it, and keep it as long as you can. You will be the most sustainable consumer!"

### LEARN MORE

[go.uncg.edu/bbr\\_sustainable](https://go.uncg.edu/bbr_sustainable)



## A BRIEF INTERVENTION

It has been a busy year for Dr. Jeremy Bray, Jefferson-Pilot Excellence Professor in the Bryan School's Department of Economics.

On top of finishing up published survey research on Americans' alcohol consumption habits during the COVID-19 pandemic, he has been planning the 19th International Network on Brief Interventions for Alcohol & Other Drugs (INEBRIA) global conference that will take place right here on UNC Greensboro's campus this fall. All the while, he's been consulting with the World Health Organization – yes, that World Health Organization – about a promising approach called alcohol screening and brief intervention, which involves physicians taking a simple but more proactive approach with their patients to inform them of the dangers of consuming alcohol.

**Dr. Jeremy Bray**  
Jefferson-Pilot  
Excellence Professor

Bray's pandemic research was published in the Journal of Patient-Reported Outcomes. "The pandemic definitely impacted drinking behaviors," he says. "The one that got the most attention was the increase in drinking."

But it is what Bray has learned since conducting this research that has piqued his interest the most – how much we put ourselves at risk every time we drink.


"We now know that alcohol causes cancer, so we recommend drinking limits are getting lower – the current U.S. Department of Agriculture moderation limits are no more than one per day for women, two per day for men; and those do not carry over. So, zero today doesn't mean four tomorrow," he said. "This is the part that is the biggest education piece – we aren't talking about alcohol dependence or alcoholism; this is a health behavior. Alcohol is a carcinogen. The more you drink, the more you put yourself at risk for a variety of cancers related to the digestive tract."

For some, these numbers may come as a surprise – which is why the WHO has taken an interest in Bray's expertise.

"As president of INEBRIA I'm getting invited to these WHO meetings. The European Union is paying for a large brief intervention implementation program across Europe and they're working with the WHO on that, so I've got a meeting scheduled to help consult on the implementation," Bray said. "A little bit of advice from a doctor can go a long way. Alcohol is different than nicotine, for example, in that it is a consumption health behavior many people can control, like red meat or salt or sugar. It's not exempt from the rule of all things in moderation."

### LEARN MORE

[go.uncg.edu/bbr\\_intervention](https://go.uncg.edu/bbr_intervention)

A portrait of Dr. Hamid Nemati, a middle-aged man with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue blazer over a light blue shirt and light-colored trousers. He is standing with his arms crossed, looking slightly to the right. The background is a warm, orange-toned abstract pattern.

**Dr. Hamid Nemati**  
Professor

# ADAPTING TO MACHINE LEARNING

Dr. Hamid Nemati, professor of Information Systems and Supply Chain Management at UNC Greensboro's Bryan School of Business and Economics, has been studying Artificial Intelligence (AI) for longer than most.

While pursuing his PhD at the University of Georgia, Nemati did his dissertation on using AI methods to optimize flows in networks. His interest in AI only grew stronger after his arrival at the Bryan School and has hit a fever pitch as advances in AI technologies, including ChatGPT, have made them more widely used.

One research project that Hamid and his research team have been excited about is on using AI methods to mitigate child abuse and maltreatment. "As AI technologies have moved forward and it has become possible to apply them to areas that we didn't think applicable before," said Nemati.

Their research in this area culminated in a seminal work "An Adaptive Machine Learning System for predicting recurrence of child maltreatment: A routine activity theory perspective" published in the prestigious journal of Knowledge-Based Systems. Nemati's team tasked itself with developing a robust AI system that could help predict child abuse using a well-known dataset.

"We want to do a large-scale implementation of the system and want different agencies to use the system and get their feedback," he said. "So, what we're trying to get is get a better sense of how these systems can become part of the daily routine for child protective agencies."

For this project, Hamid and his colleagues – including former doctoral students Dr. Minoo Modaresnezhad and Dr. Yuzhang Han – used nationally known data the U.S. government began collecting in the 1990s that was curated by Cornell University. The data includes detailed information about reported child abuse down to the zip code. Hamid says those in the AI space have a high interest in this type of structured, detailed data collected over a prolonged period.

Describing it as a tragic national epidemic, Hamid said he was heartbroken to see the number of child abuse cases. He is elated, however, at the prospect that his research could help mitigate the problem, and that his principal coauthors had previously been his PhD students.

As far as what's next, Hamid has his sights set on solving the bias problem in AI. The data from this recent project was riddled with racial, ethnic and socio-economic bias, he says, a trend that is a well-documented result of systemic and structural racism and bias. "This bias is reflected in data collection and reporting is problematic and must be dealt with before the data can be used for training AI systems," he said.

## LEARN MORE

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# HARNESSING EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY THROUGH REWARD – AND CHOICE

If your workplace asked its employees for ideas on how to improve the business, how much effort would you put into your response? According to new research from UNC Greensboro's Bryan School of Business and Economics, that depends on whether your company is offering a reward – and a choice – in return.

Bryan School Management Professor Dr. Aichia Chuang was the co-author of a recent paper, "Enhancing Employee Creativity: Effects of Choice, Rewards and Personality" that originally appeared in the Journal of Applied Psychology.

Many organizations launch formal suggestion programs to solicit innovative ideas from their rank-and-file employees. Suggestion programs are easy for organizations to set up and convenient for employees to use. In these programs, employees are encouraged to submit ideas about almost any topic such as ways to streamline work processes, improvements to employee benefits policies, or ways to enhance customer satisfaction.

For their research, Chuang's team gathered test subjects and solicited fresh, creative ideas that would be of value to an organization. Certain individuals were offered not only a reward for submissions in the top 20 percent of ideas, but a choice of reward: \$80 to keep, priority to select preferred days off, \$80 for your team to split, or \$80 for the charity of your choice.

Using two main criteria – novelty and usefulness – Chuang says those given a choice not only offered more ideas, but those ideas were also more creative. "Every job has some kind of creativity employees must show – some industries require more than others. Front-line employees know best about what customers need," said Chuang.

Chuang, who earned her PhD from the University of Minnesota in 2001 before returning to Taiwan for a role as an assistant professor, has been at the Bryan School for four years. Spending much of that time directing the School's PhD in Business Administration program, she says there's no place she'd rather be from a research perspective, noting the opportunities for collaboration in particular.

In the coming months, Chuang says she'd like to further explore the sizable data set from this latest effort, having only examined a portion of the variables. "After receiving a reward, what will happen? We predict these workers will feel more committed and find more meaning in their work," she said.

## LEARN MORE

[go.uncg.edu/bbr\\_employee\\_creativity](http://go.uncg.edu/bbr_employee_creativity)



**Dr. Aichia Chuang**  
Professor

# GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

When you hear the word tourism, you might picture autumn foliage, a corn maze, or perhaps a hot beach and a cold drink. Dr. Chantell LaPan, Assistant Professor in the Bryan School's Department of Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality and Tourism, doesn't quite see it that way. Or, at least, she has dedicated her career to painting a fuller picture of a complex industry.

"It's not really whether tourism is inherently positive or negative on a region or place," she says. "But you begin to see the pressure it puts on residents if too high a percentage of the economic activity relies on tourism."

LaPan earned her PhD from NC State in 2014. For close to a decade, she has covered a variety of topics, from the sociocultural sustainability of gender and tourism to the economic sustainability of rural and agricultural tourism. LaPan's latest work examines the realities of tourism and human trafficking in a book chapter she is cowriting with MEHT Department Head Dr. Merlyn Griffiths and Dr. Channelle James, lecturer and Dean's Fellow for School Climate.

"It's a little bit more critical of structures that keep women in oppressive areas such as human trafficking," she said. Regarding her more feminist research, she explains: "It's bad for women in other places, but rural communities tend to have more traditional values and what we've learned is traditional values don't empower women in ways that make their lives better."

When it comes to things that seem picturesque or traditional – there is such a thing as selling the ideal in tourism, LaPan says. For example, every moment the farmer spends setting up a corn maze is fewer hours spent farming. The notion of getting away from it all is also tied to the reality that vacationing is inherently a pleasure-seeking

activity. In some cases, like at the Super Bowl or World Cup, there is a darker, hedonistic bent going on behind the scenes.

LaPan is excited about the directions her tourism research could take her, but with it comes disheartening topics to tackle, such as assaults and unsanctioned digital surveillance through platforms like Uber and Airbnb. A theme she continues to return to is sustainability – not in the environmental sense but economic and sociocultural. "When things are good for people, when people have sustainable development goals there is more access to equitable work and people can work with dignity," LaPan said.

LaPan encourages people to do their research before booking their next getaway. Who owns what you are doing? Travel agents, LaPan jokes, still exist and can even help with this. "Put your money where your heart is," she says.

**Dr. Chantell LaPan**  
Assistant Professor

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# Spartan STORIES

Our alumni are changing the world – in ways big and small – every day. Here’s what a few of them are doing, and their thoughts on life, work, and the impact of their Bryan School education.

## LEARN MORE

[go.uncg.edu/bbr\\_spartan\\_stories\\_2023](https://go.uncg.edu/bbr_spartan_stories_2023)

### ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

## Never Stop Learning

When **Anthony Edwards** '09 (Finance) appeared in the Fall 2020 Bryan Business Report, he was just coming off his graduation from the Virginia Bankers School of Bank Management, hosted at the University of Virginia, and embarking on a new chapter at the Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University.

To say the least, he has been busy ever since. “I’ve heard before that to be successful you must always keep a student mindset. Never stop learning. Stay goal-oriented. Since my time at the Bryan School, I have continued watching for learning opportunities while staying open to tackling complex projects,” he says.

Alongside graduating from GSB-LSU and becoming a father (twice over), Edwards led the “Paycheck Protection Program” at Skyline National Bank during which his team deployed over \$125 million in critical funds to businesses during the pandemic. The team was mentioned in Forbes Digital Magazine for its efforts as a community bank.

Over the last 4 years, Edwards has served as a Vice-President in Credit Administration managing special projects and efficiency opportunities. He is now taking on the role of Senior Credit Risk Officer for the bank managing loan review and complex credit analysis. But unsurprisingly, he’s still looking ahead, preparing to begin pursuing his MBA in the next couple of years. Despite his forward momentum, Edwards refuses to forget his time at UNC Greensboro.

“My undergrad degree in Finance immensely prepared me for this role and my time before as a credit analyst, commercial lender, project manager, and credit administrator,” he said. Edwards also credits the Bryan School for instilling in him the importance of service to the community, another constant in his life. He has served on the leadership team and as a Financial Officer of the Junior Appalachian Musicians for more than a decade, as President of his Regional Chamber for more than 5 years and takes part in ministry work for his church through online outreach.



A finance degree from the Bryan School set my foundation for success. If this career path interests you, you’ll never regret your financial undergrad work at UNCG.”

**Anthony Edwards**  
'09 (Finance)

## ALUMNI

## CONSUMER, APPAREL, AND RETAIL STUDIES

## Growth Opportunities

**Morgan Weeks** '13 (Consumer, Apparel, & Retail Studies) is always looking forward.

For example, she always knew she wanted to work in the apparel and fashion industry.

"The CARS program in combination with it being local to the area where I grew up made the UNCG Bryan School an easy choice," she said. "The program allowed me to get a variety of courses and training within the industry and help me decide which area within the field I wanted to focus in."

This kind of thinking has remained true throughout her career. In her former position, she assisted in the launch of a kids' apparel line called Generation Joy, earning her a write up from Charlotte's WRAL. The line itself sounds futuristic, with WRAL describing its "grow with me" technology, cooling fabrics, cover stitching, and reversible construction.

In the months since, she's transitioned into a more digital marketing-centric role with Champion Activewear where she oversees social media channels and digital content creation.

"The most challenging thing, which is also rewarding in a way, is to know that perfection isn't the goal – progress is and there's always something new to learn in this industry," she said. When she takes a moment to look back, Weeks credits her CARS background for giving her the skills she's needed to remain nimble in her time as a professional, from studying abroad to visiting New York City as an undergrad to get a behind-the-scenes look at different facets of her industry.

"Soak up everything you have access to in college," she said. "Being able to take the core and elective CARS classes helped me get a variety of insights into roles across the industry."



The program allowed me to get a variety of courses and training within the industry and help me decide which area within the field I wanted to focus in."

**Morgan Weeks**

'13 (Consumer, Apparel, & Retail Studies)

## INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

## Finding a Second Home

After getting married and moving from India to North Carolina in 2017, **Sridevi Kesavarapu** '19 MS made the decision to pursue her M.S. in IT and Management. Through her research, she discovered that the Bryan School was known for its diversity, which prompted her to enroll.

"It was the best decision I have ever made," she said. Not only did Kesavarapu feel as though she belonged at Bryan, she also found the school's faculty and staff to be top-notch in helping her on our journey.

"I liked all of my professors. They were very friendly and encouraging. Out of everyone, my program director Ms. Apoorva Patipati Ramesh was my favorite. She encouraged me to participate in a Data Dive Challenge in which our team won second prize, and that challenge helped me to apply my analytical knowledge."





## ECONOMICS

## Icing on the Cake

When asked to describe what he does for a living, **Vincent Lorenz** '19 MA said his team's mission statement is to put data and insights at the heart of decision-making while utilizing data literacy and strategic thinking to guide the future of the organization. Lorenz's actual title? Manager, Data Ops & Business Analytics for the National Hockey League's Carolina Hurricanes.

"It's the type of thinking the Bryan School instilled in me," he says of his impactful, accurate analyses. "And it helps us, as a department, provide value to an NHL team. Pinch me, right?"

A Greensboro native, Lorenz considers himself lucky that he didn't have to travel halfway across the country to get his degree. He had everything he wanted in a graduate-level economics program right here in his hometown: intimate class size, strong funding packages for students, opportunities for assistantships, and a chance to be close to friends and family.

"I think my favorite memory of the Bryan School is just the relationships that I had with my professors. I wasn't really the type to speak with my professors or pick their brain as much as I should have as an undergraduate, so for me to turn over a new leaf and start to cultivate these relationships was incredibly fun and rewarding," he said. "Attending pre-semester parties at a professor's house or just talking shop was always a great time."

Lorenz says he's grateful to the Bryan School for equipping him with both the hard and soft skills needed to thrive in his career, despite the occasional untimely playoff exit.

"At the end of the day, we can never get too high or too low on the team as we all still have jobs to complete. For instance, after we dropped Game 4 to the Panthers (during the 2023 playoffs), we still had to come in and wrap up the season and everything was OK. One positive is that they're able to melt the ice which allows me to wear short-sleeved shirts again," he joked.



It's the type of thinking the Bryan School instilled in me. It helps us, as a department, provide value to an NHL team. Pinch me, right?"

**Vincent Lorenz**  
'19 MA

Kesavarapu landed a job in her field of study at Labcorp, working as an Analytics Administrator where she dives into data every day. "I create dashboards which are used by business leaders to make key business decisions. There were many successful dashboards like Covid testing tracking, testing anomalies tracking, logistics performance dashboards which helped the management to identify problematic areas and find solutions," she said.

Her time at Bryan, she says, has been instrumental in her career. And though a lot has changed since her initial decision to attend UNC Greensboro – she became a new mom during the summer of 2023 – one constant has been her confidence in the Bryan School to have a positive impact on her professional and personal life. She has since reenrolled and is pursuing a second master's, this time in Business Administration.



Most people don't know how diverse UNCG is. For students with diverse cultural backgrounds, it's like a second home."

**Sridevi Kesavarapu**  
'19 MS



I am proud to be where I am today. I took a long path, but I am grateful for all the experiences that got me here.”

**Kingsley Ibeh**

'15 (Business Administration)

**MANAGEMENT**

## A Foundation for Success

**Kingsley Ibeh** '15 (Business Administration) says his advice to students would be to think about an area of focus – and that doesn't mean spending every waking minute narrowing down exactly what they plan to do after their time at the Bryan School.

“Business Administration is flexible and can be used in many different ways. My concentration was in Human Resources, and I was fortunate enough to find opportunities while at UNC Greensboro that helped me gather working experience in the field,” he said.

Ibeh's concentration decision – and the path that followed – has culminated in his current role of Employee Relations Partner for Google, LLC, based out of the company's Atlanta, Georgia offices. He supports Googlers across a wide variety of workplace concerns, specifically around Standards of Conduct violations.

For Ibeh, it was the Bryan School that helped lay the foundation that set him up for success in his career, whether it was attending Company Spotlight events, talking with his academic advisor, or even being chosen as class speaker for the May 2015 commencement ceremony.

“I am proud to be where I am today. I took a long path, but I am grateful for all the experiences that got me here. Looking back and reflecting on my time at Bryan – it was my professors and the undergraduate student office staff that made my experience special. The connections and lessons learned helped prepare me for life after UNCG.”


**MARKETING, ENTREPRENEURSHIP,  
HOSPITALITY & TOURISM**

## Dreaming Big

Looking back, **Casey Bright** '20 (Marketing), '23 MBA says she would have allowed herself to dream bigger.

“Starting out as a first-generation student, I thought I would be the outlier not being a student who lived on campus experiencing the traditional student life. For example, I never thought I could achieve an MBA – I thought that wasn't in the cards for me,” she said. “But early on I found out there was a big community of hybrid learners, just like me, who understood my experience.”

After earning a bachelor's in marketing, Bright set her sights on a master's in business administration, a program she found allowed her to further hone organizational skills and boundary setting. While learning to balance her life outside of school and work, Bright also got more involved on campus by becoming a graduate ambassador for the Bryan School.



# LETTER FROM THE BRYAN SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

## FELLOW BRYAN SCHOOL ALUMNI,

As we settle into a long-awaited sense of normalcy, I am thrilled that we are now able to reconnect in person for sporting events, fundraisers, and meet-and-greets. It is with deep gratitude and honor that I assume the role of the 2023-24 Bryan School Alumni Association Board President.

My journey to the Bryan School was a long and winding road. The education I received and the networks I established during my time here continue to benefit me today. As a non-traditional student, I was married and working full time while pursuing my degree. Balancing these important roles would not have been possible without the support of teachers, fellow students, friends, and family, who remain the pillars I turn to when making important life decisions.

The Bryan School transformed my life by providing me with a clear path and a roadmap for my future. I have dedicated my time on the Bryan School Alumni Association board to giving back to this exceptional institution that has done so much for me, our community, and the countless students who have come before us.

The Bryan School Alumni Association is dedicated to serving all alumni of the Bryan School. Our aim is to foster meaningful



engagement opportunities and I welcome you to get involved and let us know how we can better serve each and every one of you.

To stay updated on our activities and find out how to engage with us, please follow us on social media. It is crucial to keep your contact information current so that we can ensure you stay informed about our latest initiatives. For any detailed inquiries, please don't hesitate to reach out to Madeleine Carey at [mfcarey@uncg.edu](mailto:mfcarey@uncg.edu).

In closing, I want to express my deep appreciation for the opportunity to serve as your President. Let's unite our collective strength and enthusiasm to propel the Bryan School Alumni Association to new heights, strengthening our bonds and empowering our fellow alumni.

**Marimac McLendon '92 (Accounting)**

2023-24 Bryan School Alumni Association Board President  
[mclendon@learnlivebe.com](mailto:mclendon@learnlivebe.com)

"With unwavering support from my friends and family, I was able to take hold of an opportunity to keep moving and learning," she says. "When I look back on my MBA, graduation seemed light years away at the time – but it actually flew by. I got to work with some amazing companies. And I absolutely believe that my UNCG experience helped open important doors for me to get where I am now."

Earlier this year, Bright landed her dream role as a Digital Marketing Strategist at Pace, a Greensboro-based integrated marketing agency. Once again at the start of a new leg of her journey, she isn't putting any limits on herself this time.

"Marketing allows you to be creative and analytical. It gives you space to be able to work in any industry, so you aren't tied down. It pushes you to ask questions and grow. I truly learn something new and face new challenges every day," she says. "I'm truly so excited to see where my career takes me, I can't believe I made it to where I am today."



I get to work with some amazing companies who have a substantial global reach, and I absolutely believe that my UNCG experience helped open important doors for me to get where I am now."

**Casey Bright**

'20 (Marketing), '23 MBA



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