

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_2024

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

From Landscapes to Ledgers



Initially a landscaping architecture major, it may be fitting that the career path for **Xiaoning Zhang** '20 MSA has had a few unique twists and turns.

“After I got my bachelor’s and did some projects I thought, ‘This is not what I want,’” said Zhang. “So, I started to explore other opportunities and finally made the decision to change to

an accounting career. The MSA program at UNCG’s Bryan School allowed me to build up my accounting knowledge and skills from a beginner level until now.”

It was a mixture of MSA program reputation and available graduate student resources that drove Zhang to UNCG. “Bryan provides students with a lot of opportunities to explore different areas of accounting. I studied auditing, taxation, finance, and other courses,” she said. “The design of various projects also offered a comprehensive overview of the industry, which facilitated the career planning decisions I was navigating. Simultaneously, the program solidified a foundation for me to successfully complete the CPA examination.”

Looking back, Zhang doesn’t view her career pivot as challenging, she just remembers taking it step-by-step and trusting in the support of her family as well as the support system available at Bryan. “I just tried my best,” she recalls.

For prospective students, Zhang emphasizes the comprehensive preparation the MSA program provides. “The program equips students with all the necessary tools and knowledge to be an industry professional – encompassing both foundational and practical aspects,” she said. “Bryan also offers services like resume writing, as well as help establishing connections with company and firm recruitment teams.”

Now a Tax Analyst with Unifi Manufacturing, Zhang is grateful for her transformative experience at the Bryan School. “All of my Bryan memories are precious,” she said. “I hope this MSA program can become known by more and more people and those people can become more and more successful.”

CONSUMER, APPAREL, AND RETAIL STUDIES

A Passion for Fashion

Faith Constantine '23 (Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies) discovered her passion for the business side of fashion early on. "Since high school, I knew that I wanted to pursue a degree in fashion. At first, I was hesitant because I didn't want to design," she recalls. This led her to research universities extensively, ultimately choosing UNC Greensboro's Bryan School of Business and Economics for its accredited, award-winning CARS program.

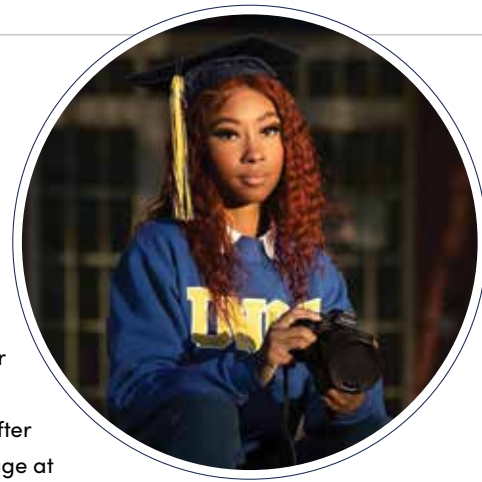
Attending Spartan Orientation, Advising, and Registration cemented her decision. "After attending SOAR, I knew I was going to enjoy my time," Constantine said. Her college journey was unique, starting before COVID-19 and continuing through the pandemic. Despite the uncertainties, she says she was able to thrive under the guidance of exceptional educators like CARS Lecturer Anne Wood and Putman and Hayes Distinguished Professor Dr. Elena Karpova.

Constantine's proactive approach to her education included joining some of the many campus clubs and organizations that aligned with her career aspirations. "I was a part of the National Retail Federation Association, which is actually how I got my job as an Allocation Analyst," she explains. Her role with TJX Companies, Inc. – a Fortune 100 company that operates stores including TJ Maxx, Marshalls, HomeGoods, and more – was one Constantine

didn't have to wait long for, and was a move that brought her up to Massachusetts almost immediately after walking across the stage at graduation.

Reflecting on her favorite Bryan School memory, Constantine also fondly recalls the annual THREADS fashion show, a signature event for another of the popular CARS student groups. "It was so amazing to see how everyone came together from designers to models to makeup artists to bring the show to life. It amazes me every year," she said.

For prospective students, Constantine emphasizes the value of a Bryan School education. "I believe students interested in the Bryan School should know that it is an investment that will take them far," she said, adding the hands-on classroom experience and a vast array of student organizations played crucial roles in being able to launch her young career.



ECONOMICS

Finding His Stride

Dan Rust '20 (Economics), MBA '22 is no stranger to the Bryan School of Business and Economics. A two-time alumni and track-and-field athlete while at UNC Greensboro, Rust was off to the races when it came to his professional development. And it's safe to say he's still running strong at the start of his professional journey.

As an undergraduate, Rust wasn't always sure what career path he wanted to take. "I quickly found my stride thanks to the school's emphasis on developing exceptional problem-solving skills," he said. Reminiscing about his time at the Bryan School, Rust credits the school for equipping him with essential skills that have aided in his success thus far at Lenovo, where he has transitioned from Inside Sales Specialist to Inside Sales Representative to his current role as PC Account Executive for Corporate Southwest Acquisition.

"My journey as a student at the Bryan School was transformative," Rust said. "Pursuing my MBA at the Bryan School further deepened my understanding of the business world and expanded my professional network. Leveraging these experiences, along with internships facilitated by the Bryan School, I was able to secure my position at Lenovo."

Rust recalls tackling the hurdles of extracurricular commitments and challenges during his time as a student. "Running track and playing soccer at UNCG, along with working as a resident advisor on campus, all added layers of responsibility to my schedule. As someone prone to taking on more than I could handle, I often found myself stretched thin and exhausted," he said. "However, these experiences taught me invaluable lessons in time management and prioritization. Rather than rushing into solutions, I now approach challenges thoughtfully, considering all aspects before taking action."



Rust says the time he spent at the Bryan School offered more than just a degree; it provided an enriching experience and a supportive environment for personal growth. From the personalized educational experience, the low faculty-to-student ratio, and the Bryan School's dedication to its students, Rust feels that time spent in a dynamic learning environment enriched his educational journey and instilled in him a lifelong love for learning and a commitment to continuous improvement.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

From Bryan School Grad to Graduate Program Director

When asked to describe his time at the Bryan School, **Allen Rogers** '16 MS, spoke highly about multiple faculty members. "The supportive network of faculty, staff, students, and alumni at the Bryan School propel you to succeed. While it is ultimately up to you to get the work done the resources and leadership available to a student are limitless with endless possibilities," he said.

Rogers' journey through the Bryan School was marked by dedication, inspiration, and a passion for integrating technology with business. Working full-time in the Bryan School's Administrative Services suite, he found a mentor in John Eatman, ITS director and Information Systems and Supply Chain Management lecturer. His encouragement led Rogers to believe he could grasp and apply the principles of information systems and data science. This spark, aided by the tuition waiver program for state employees, allowed Rogers to pursue his Master of Information Technology and Management degree part-time.

The most challenging aspect of being a student was balancing a full-time job while juggling his academic responsibilities. However, Rogers fondly remembers Dr. Hamid Nemati's Business Analytics course. There, he learned the data science behind the book "Moneyball" which uses baseball to teach the importance of choosing the right variables when making predictions.

"Baseball had always been a passion of mine and combining analytics with that passion made my studies no longer feel like work. That is the beauty of the MSITM program, it is customizable to one's passions and interest because data science can be found in everything that we do," Rogers said.

And his journey extended far beyond education – one of Rogers' favorite experiences in the master's program was traveling to study at the University of Mannheim.

"We were connected with Bryan School alumni in Germany and got to tour BASF and the Deutsche Bank. Culturally it was a wonderful experience where we toured a vineyard, tried apple wine and indulged in Schweinshaxe, or pork knuckle," he said.

Though Allen wishes he would have pursued more internships while at the Bryan School, he is grateful for the customizable nature of the MSITM program. After eight years of applying the principles and concepts learned at the Bryan School in the professional world, he has returned to UNC Greensboro where he now serves as a Graduate Program Director within the ISSCM department as well as a lecturer. His decision to come back felt like a homecoming, driven by a desire to contribute to the community that had shaped his career.



MANAGEMENT

How a Bryan School Transfer Forged a Financial Career

Seeking a path that would align with his passion for numbers and problem-solving, **George Chung** '09 (Business Administration) transferred from SUNY Stony Brook to UNCG during his sophomore year. While Bryan School coursework played a pivotal role in shaping Chung's career, it was support from outside the classroom that truly propelled him to explore careers in the corporate world, specifically the financial services industry. Originally, Chung had planned to attend graduate school immediately following his undergraduate studies. However, the real turning point in his academic career came through a connection with Bryan Career Services, wherein Chung found the guidance he needed to navigate his ultimate career path.

"There was a particular counselor who was extremely helpful and ultimately helped me land an internship which unfolded into a full-time offer post-graduation," he said. "I remember being in her office working on my resume when she asked me if I was attending a Bryan alumni panel event. I hadn't planned on attending but after speaking with her I changed my plans and attended that evening, where I met an alumnus who was employed at J.P. Morgan Chase (JPM). Fast forward two weeks and I had accepted an internship offer with JPM, which really launched my career in financial services."

Chung now serves as the Director of Balance Sheet Management at Bank of America and has been with the bank for nearly 15 years. His advice to students – and that includes transfer students like himself – is to immerse yourself in everything the Bryan School has to offer such as support services and extracurriculars. "All of my opportunities at Bryan would not have been possible without a close partnership with Career Services," he said. "I wish I had engaged more with clubs and student organizations on campus. Being a transfer student I guess you could say I had a slow start – but I'd recommend taking any opportunity to expand your network."

MARKETING, ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

Making Her Mark in Marketing

RiAnica Allen-Jones '11 (Marketing) says her marketing journey was first influenced by her business-savvy family. "Marketing has always been a passion of mine," she says. "With an older brother working in marketing at major companies such as Blockbuster and Sony, I was fascinated by the 'glitz and glam' of the marketing world."

Allen-Jones, now a Web Production Manager for the well-known file hosting service Dropbox, attributes her time at UNC Greensboro's Bryan School of Business and Economics as laying a strong foundation for her career. Not only did the Bryan School allow her to foster a passion for marketing, Allen-Jones was able to immerse herself in the college experience at UNCG as a Spartan cheerleader, also earning a minor in dance performance. She says her network within athletics allowed her to shadow professionals and gain exposure to the marketing aspects of college sports.

LETTER FROM THE
BRYAN SCHOOL ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

HEY BRYAN FAM!

I am thrilled to step into the role of your 2024-25 Bryan School Alumni Association Board President. For me, assuming this position was a no-brainer, as I owe so much of my personal and professional development to the experiences and education provided by the Bryan School. Without them, I wouldn't be where I am today.

When it comes to the Bryan School Alumni Association Board, I am privileged to serve alongside a group of individuals who share a deep appreciation for our alma mater and a commitment to the Bryan School's continued success. Whether through academic achievements, professional accomplishments, or personal growth, we have all been shaped by our time here.

As we reflect on our journey and celebrate our achievements, let us also look to the future with optimism and opportunity. Together, we can make a meaningful impact on the lives of future Spartans and alumni. By staying connected, supporting one another, and giving back to our alma mater, we can ensure that its legacy endures for years to come.



I challenge you to get involved! Follow the Bryan School on social media and visit bryan.uncg.edu/alumni to learn more about how you can participate. Also, be sure to update your contact information so you can receive all of the latest updates. For any detailed inquiries, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or Katy Barker at klpeter3@uncg.edu.

I hope to cross paths with you soon!

KINSLEY FRASER '16 (Business Administration), '19 MBA
2024-25 Bryan School Alumni Association Board President
BSAAboard@gmail.com

"Unfortunately, I wasn't able to land a sports marketing job right out of college, but I did land an internship," she said. That internship turned into a full-time job at an advertising agency, and her experiences since – including a stint at Lowe's Companies, Inc. – have exposed her to unique industries aside from sports, like retail and technology. Her journey also introduced her to web production and strategy, which plays a large role in her current job with Dropbox.

Reflecting on her time at the Bryan School, Allen-Jones says she wouldn't change a thing. "I will never forget the research project I led for a real-world small business start-up and the support, guidance, and knowledge my professors passed down to me as I worked to build a strategic business plan to present to the president and founder of the business," she said.

For Allen-Jones, that culture of care still stands out. "I loved that I was able to specialize and focus my degree on an area of study that meant something to me," she said. "But the welcoming professors and the variety of classes offered helped, too! I met some of the best people and started an amazing network through the Bryan School. While a large college, the programs offered, professors, and classmates created a community and safe space to freely learn and feel comfortable."