

FALL 2025

# BRYAN

BUSINESS REPORT

## From Research to Real Change

How one Bryan School professor is reshaping  
how we think about trauma, resilience, and  
leadership in the workplace.

p. 6



UNC  
GREENSBORO  
Bryan School of  
Business and Economics

## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

**DR. JOY BHADURY**  
Dean and Professor



**W**elcome to the latest Bryan Business Report, a reflection of the extraordinary progress and accomplishments we have made over the past year. This year marks a personal milestone for me as well as I officially step into the role of Dean of the Bryan School of Business and Economics. It is both a privilege and a responsibility that I embrace with gratitude and optimism for what lies ahead.

Our momentum continues to build. Earlier this year, we earned reaccreditation with flying colors from AACSB International — the hallmark of excellence in business education achieved by fewer than 6% of business schools worldwide. This recognition affirms the dedication of our faculty, staff, and students in advancing the Bryan School's mission and values.

Excellence at the Bryan School is never confined to the classroom. This year, we strengthened our impact in the community by offering resources, such as artificial intelligence workshops for business leaders and a workshop on networking strategies for young professionals in the digital era. Among other similar Bryan School initiatives, these opportunities equip organizations with tools to navigate a rapidly changing business landscape. They also instantiate our dual commitment: preparing students for success while contributing meaningfully to the economic and social vitality of our region.

Our faculty continue to excel as teacher-scholars, ensuring that our students are exposed to the latest ideas, innovations, and practices shaping business today. They bring their research, their real-world expertise, and their passion into the classroom, making student success not just an aspiration but a lived reality.

But no letter can capture the true energy and drive of the Bryan School as well as the stories that follow in this report. Whether it is through groundbreaking student projects, alumni achievements, or faculty innovations, excellence here comes in many forms. What unites them all is our belief that anyone can belong at Bryan and that every success story adds to the collective impact of our school.

As you read this year's Bryan Business Report, I hope you feel the same sense of pride and excitement that I do. Our mission remains clear: to develop principled leaders and exceptional problem solvers who embody excellence, both inside and outside the classroom. Thank you for being part of our community and for helping us advance that mission.

Happy reading,

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# *A Call From* **HOME**

FROM FORMER FACULTY MEMBER  
TO DEAN, DR. JOY BHADURY  
RETURNS TO GUIDE THE  
BRYAN SCHOOL INTO ITS  
NEXT CHAPTER.

*“It was a call from home.  
When home calls, it’s an  
honor and privilege, and  
it’s your duty to answer  
that call.”*

**DR. JOY BHADURY**  
Dean and Professor



For Dr. Joy Bhadury, returning to UNC Greensboro as the dean of the Bryan School of Business and Economics felt like coming home. Bhadury stepped into the role officially in April 2025 after serving as interim dean for nearly nine months, but his history with the Bryan School goes back nearly 18 years.

Coming from California's Bay Area, Bhadury began his Bryan School journey as the associate dean for graduate programs and research in 2007. When he applied for the job, he had a competitive offer closer to home, but UNCG changed his mind.

"I'm big on culture and sincerely believe in the adage that culture eats strategy for breakfast," Bhadury says. "It was evident to me right away that a culture of care existed here."

After the visit, Bhadury said he called his wife from the airport to tell her he had "witnessed something special" in the Bryan School.

## No Student Left Behind

Bhadury remained at the Bryan School for nine years until moving north to serve as dean of the School of Business and Management at SUNY Brockport for two years, followed by a five-year term as the dean of the Davis College of Business at Radford University.

No matter where his higher education career has taken him, Bhadury has been driven by a "no student left behind" philosophy that's derived from his belief that the primary purpose of a higher education institution is the education of its students.

"However, good education cannot be delivered by faculty who are unprepared in their disciplines. That's why faculty research and professional development matter since they are essential to the delivery of world-class education," Bhadury says.

The Bryan School's culture of care for its students, faculty, and staff drew Bhadury in years ago, and it's what brought him back in 2023 – this time as a professor in the Department of Information Systems and Supply Chain Management. His goal was to spend the "final quarter" of his career in the place he's always called home.

When Dr. McRae C. Banks announced his retirement as the dean of the Bryan School in 2024, then-Provost Storrs asked Bhadury to step in as interim dean while a national search was conducted. The school was in the middle of its lengthy AACSB Accreditation maintenance process and needed a leader who had previously been through the process.

"It was a call from home. When home calls, it's an honor and privilege, and it's your duty to answer that call," he says.

## Fulfilling the Duty

Throwing his hat in the ring for the full-time dean position wasn't initially in the cards, but Bhadury's call of duty to the Bryan School grew louder as he navigated his time as interim dean.

While Bhadury noticed that some aspects of the Bryan School had evolved since 2007, the culture of care he fell in love with was stronger than ever. He credits initiatives like the Bryan Blueprint Series, a required four-credit professional development curriculum, and Bryan Gold, an interactive career readiness challenge, for that cultural improvement.

However, Bhadury faced no shortage of challenges that also motivated him to pursue the permanent dean role, the most pressing being a nationwide trend – fewer students are seeking a college degree. This challenge, Bhadury explains, is a result of societal factors like volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, better known in the business world as VUCA.

"There's a sense of quiet pride inside the world of higher education. We don't wave our flag as much as we should. We know what we do is important, but I think we struggle to tell our own story and to share it widely with society to explain why we're worthwhile," he says.

Since earning the official title of dean, he's made it his mission to help the Bryan School thrive in the VUCA world. According to Bhadury, step one in that process is giving faculty and staff the freedom for self-actualization and growth in areas like research and professional development.

Step two, he says, is to build on our current efforts on employer relationships to make the Bryan School more regionally prominent within the business community. From pounding the pavement and meeting with Triad business leaders to supporting faculty-led AI initiatives in the community, Bhadury is working to wave the Bryan School flag.

"Disseminating the word will take time, but we have world-class caliber in our faculty and staff in the Bryan School, and it's my dream to spread that word far and wide in the region," Bhadury says.

## The Head and the Heart

As a leader, Bhadury is known for his commitment to research and his reliance on data in decision making, yet his choice to return to the Bryan School was deeply personal.

"I'm a management scientist who believes in the head, not the heart," Bhadury says. "But when I look at my most influential life decisions, they've ultimately been made from the heart."

For Bhadury, serving as dean of the Bryan School isn't just about managing an institution. It's about taking care of his home and ensuring that it continues to be a place where students, faculty, and staff can reach their highest potential.

When home called, Bhadury didn't just listen – he came back to lead it forward. ■

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# Rewriting the NARRATIVE

## HOW A BRYAN SCHOOL PROFESSOR IS CHANGING THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT WORKPLACE TRAUMA

When people come to work, they bring with them their entire life experience. Sometimes, this includes psychological trauma that has occurred either on the job or in their personal lives.

In fact, 70% of adults have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime, and those in high-risk professions – including health care, law enforcement, and the like – can experience elevated physical or psychological danger, says Dr. Madelynn Stackhouse, associate professor of management in the Bryan School of Business and Economics. Despite this, trauma in the workplace isn't well studied by management researchers, Stackhouse says.

As an organizational psychologist with experience in corporate culture, Stackhouse sees value in considering how stress and trauma impact employee well-being and workplace functioning.

"It's a very real issue, and a lot of organizations are just not looking at it," she says. "This is something we need to address to make workplaces less toxic and more positive."

### TIPS TO BUILD SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE CULTURES

1. Normalize conversations about stress and trauma. Understand that trauma will happen, and people's reaction to it is natural.
2. Create systems to support employees by offering counseling, leadership training, cultural development, or even activities such as yoga or bringing dogs into the workplace for stress relief.
3. Expect a return on the investment. Employee assistance and organizational programs can foster trauma resilience and recovery and may return \$3-7 for every dollar spent, primarily through reduced absenteeism, turnover, and health care costs.

### Groundbreaking Findings

In research published in the *Academy of Management Annals*, widely considered the premier journal in management, Stackhouse conducted a comprehensive review of more than 1,517 research papers across health care, social sciences, and behavioral sciences that addressed trauma's impact on the workplace. Only 9% appeared in business and management journals. "This really speaks to just how little this topic exists in the business research conversation and, as a result, in leadership and management practice," she says.

Her interest in the topic was sparked after hearing family members and co-workers discuss varying degrees of workplace abuse. But trauma on the job can take other forms too. For instance, medical or law enforcement personnel may witness chronic occurrences of violence, injuries, or death. Other employees may experience sudden critical events, such as mass shootings, industrial accidents, or widespread layoffs. Still others may have personal difficulties at home, such as domestic abuse, health problems, or financial challenges that impact their work.

Now working with Ph.D. student Emily Belew to interview people about their personal experiences, Stackhouse is finding poignant examples.

One hospital nurse cared for a child who ultimately died from stab wounds inflicted by his mother. But she didn't receive a lot of support from her employer. "You can't let on that anything's wrong," she says. "And so, you carry like this burden ... holding it all in until probably a later time when you can either talk to a coworker or on break, or even after shift."

Another nurse recalled a shooting with mass casualties. "That one stayed with me and really affected me," the nurse says. While the organization initially encouraged staff to talk about the situation and seek help, the help did not last. "I do feel like there could have been more resources offered. They kept adding to our responsibilities and did not work with us on scheduling or anything."

One doctor Stackhouse and Belew interviewed quit the profession before age 40. Two nurses are looking for new jobs; others are considering leaving; and many are experiencing anxiety, insomnia, depression, burnout, other health issues.



## The Way Forward

Stackhouse says that how trauma is processed matters a great deal, and asking employees to “deal with traumatic events and move on” is not an effective strategy. If poorly managed, trauma can lead to career difficulties and psychological derailment. But with adequate workplace support and some proven effective strategies (*see sidebar*), recovering from trauma can spur long-term resilience and growth. For example, Stackhouse’s review found that CEOs who rebound from traumatic experiences tend to make better decisions. And employees who effectively manage stress after a layoff might respond better when faced with future cuts.

“The main thing is just thinking of people as human beings and not just human resources that we need to use for whatever we can,” she says. “Businesses traditionally focus on the bottom line, and while that may seem to be a good, short-term strategy, in the long-term, it really is not.”

Stackhouse hopes to eventually work with local health care organizations as they begin to address psychological trauma. She also strives to share these learnings with her students in organizational behavior, organizational psychology, cross-cultural management, and human resource management classes.

“At the end of the day, we’re really talking about people’s lives and how organizations can help people maintain their well-being during these stressful times,” she says. “My hope is that by teaching business people to think more this way, we can ultimately have positive effects on people as well as the bottom line.” ■

**DR. MADELYNN  
STACKHOUSE**  
Associate Professor



**Think of people as human beings and not just human resources that we need to use for whatever we can.**

**DR. MADELYNN STACKHOUSE**  
Associate Professor

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# POWERING PROGRESS

## BRYAN SCHOOL AND VOLVO TEAM UP TO TRAIN PROCUREMENT LEADERS

Behind every Volvo or Mack truck headed down the highway is a staggering supply chain: nearly \$6 billion spent annually, 50,000 parts, and 3,600 suppliers. After payroll, it's the company's biggest expense – and the most mission-critical.

**LUKE MCGALLIARD '03**  
Senior Talent  
Acquisition Partner,  
Volvo Group

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## NEW PATHS IN PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY CHAIN

The Bryan School's new degree offerings in strategic procurement and supply chain management include:

- An **undergraduate concentration** within the major of information systems and supply chain management.
- A **graduate-level concentration** within the information technology and management master's degree program.
- A **graduate certificate** intended for professionals who want to enhance their skills through online study.



inding professionals who can manage procurement complexity isn't just helpful – it's essential. That's why Volvo Group Purchasing North America has teamed with the Bryan School of Business and Economics to shape the next generation of strategic procurement leaders.

Thanks to the partnership, the school offers two new robust concentrations and one graduate certificate within the Department of Information Systems and Supply Chain Management. The programs are intended to better train students for the evolving field of purchasing, also known as procurement.

"The need for this type of expertise has really exploded in the marketplace," says Sam Chinnis, a lecturer in information systems and supply chain management. "As operations and supply chain become more globally complex, procurement becomes more of a strategic position. It goes far beyond a buyer functionality. Together, Volvo Group Purchasing and the Bryan School have been very proactive in addressing this demand."

Discussions began in March 2024 when the Volvo Group's chief procurement officer visited the company's North American site from its global headquarters in Sweden. Recognizing a growing need for local professionals who could adapt to complex supply chain issues and drive results, she challenged the company's Greensboro talent acquisition team: Could they develop a strategic purchasing program with a local university?

Luke McGalliard '03, a senior leader in talent acquisition for Volvo Group Purchasing North America, immediately thought of the Bryan School. A 2003 Bryan School graduate, McGalliard knew of Volvo and UNCG's well-established partnership. The two entities have long worked together to develop students through career fairs, alumni networking opportunities, and discussion panels. Today, Volvo is one of the leading employers of Bryan School graduates, and about 300 of its employees are UNCG alumni.

While the Bryan School already offered training in purchasing, there was an opportunity to increase the program's strategic focus. Companies now need supply chain professionals who understand the role procurement plays in a business' goals. Graduates should know how to manage supplier relations, negotiate complex contracts, and work with ever-changing international trade regulations. Success requires the ability to network, collaborate with others, manage projects, understand the impact of AI, and adapt to industry transformation.

The newly designed programs will be a win-win for students as well as area companies, McGalliard says.

"This allows employers to build a bench for these early career professionals upon graduation," he says. "At the same time, we have the chance to open students' eyes to existing opportunities and the need companies have for this talent." Likewise, the online certificate provides a way for those already in the profession to bolster their knowledge and potentially grow their careers.

By focusing on procurement, the new curriculum offerings also differentiate the Bryan School's supply chain program from other universities in the region, Chinnis adds. He believes the new focus will better prepare students for jobs, not only at Volvo but also at other manufacturing firms that seek talent to thrive in a global marketplace.

"I'm hoping it's going to help be a better fit for some of these jobs that are out there," Chinnis says. "It should give these students an edge interviewing and landing these jobs that they wouldn't have otherwise had." ■



# Teaching Beyond *the* Textbook

## DR. SARA MACSWEEN'S COMMITMENT TO REAL-WORLD IMPACT AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality and Tourism (MEHT) Senior Lecturer Dr. Sara MacSween recalls the exact moment she fell in love with teaching.

The moment came during her first lecture as an adjunct at UNC Greensboro's Bryan School of Business and Economics in Fall 2014. While preparing for her Consumer Behavior course, she noticed the textbook slides fell a little flat.

"I added my own flair to the slides, and the students laughed. When I saw they appreciated my use of humor to explain the concepts we were covering that day and they were enjoying it, I was hooked," MacSween says.

And so began MacSween's Bryan School journey of "adding her own flair," a path that took her from part-time adjunct to award-winning, full-time professional track senior lecturer.

### The Art of Keeping It Real

Students who register for one of MacSween's courses aren't signing up for the textbook version of a classroom experience. From creating marketing plans for actual businesses to learning dining etiquette, MacSween immerses her students into the real world of marketing and business through experiential learning.

"When I create my assignments, I try to replicate what I had to figure out on my own, so students have the opportunity to learn all the skills they're going to need in the workplace," MacSween says.

Right now, she teaches Principles of Marketing, Professional Selling, Consumer Behavior, and Advanced Marketing Management. Each course has standard learning objectives, but MacSween teaches in a style that is all her own, striving to instill lessons that go beyond the subject matter.

Students in her Principles of Marketing class don't just learn how to develop marketing content for a company they're passionate about, they learn how to turn their interests into results. Those who take Professional Selling don't just learn how to deliver a sales pitch without verbal fillers such as "like" and "um," they learn how to communicate effectively.

"Early in the semester, my Professional Selling students are quiet, but by the end, I can't get them to stop talking. They build confidence and relationships," MacSween says.

DR. SARA MACSWEEN  
Senior Lecturer



## Doing Meaningful Work

If Principles of Marketing and Professional Selling open students up to MacSween's hands-on teaching style, Advanced Marketing Management pulls them in. The capstone course requires students to create marketing plans for real businesses, and the project has delivered results. In fact, marketing plans developed by students in Advanced Marketing Management have won awards through the Small Business Institute®, proving that they aren't just learning how to make a marketing plan, but they're learning how to do meaningful work.

For MacSween, doing meaningful work sits high on her list of priorities, and she's good at it.

In the past 11 years, MacSween has won the Bryan School Teaching Excellence Award twice, the Eloise McCain Hassell Teaching Excellence Award, the Sue W. Cole Professional Track Distinguished Faculty Endowment, and the Anna Marie Gove Award for Teaching Excellence. Along the way, she even earned a doctorate in Business Administration from the University of Liverpool in 2024.

The awards are a bonus to MacSween's career. The students are her "why" at the heart of it all. They're why she gives thoughtful feedback on assignments, advises two Bryan School student organizations, and never hesitates to help her students, even if it's with choosing a job interview outfit.

"I'm happy to help with those things because sometimes students don't have someone within their family to ask. It's important that they get that information from someone," she says.

## Creating Safe Spaces

MacSween's students take a wealth of real-world knowledge with them when they leave the classroom, but they also remember the extra mile she ran for them. Sometimes, it truly is the little things that stick – just ask Lynette Jimenez '24.

"I'll never forget how she always talked to us like we were her friends, but she still held us accountable for our work and our actions," Jimenez says. "I think that's why so many students feel comfortable in her class. I know I did."

That balance of approachability and expectation created a classroom culture where students felt both supported and empowered. For Jimenez, one moment in particular captured that spirit.

"We had this inside joke in my class that turned into a catchphrase," she says. "When the semester would get tough, she'd always say 'we're all going to make it, guys.' It's something I still say now."

Keeping it real and keeping her students confident that they are, in fact, going to make it – that's the name of Sara MacSween's game.

She's made quite a mark over the past 11 years, and MacSween doesn't have plans to stop teaching anytime soon. You'll find her at home in the Bryan School, growing, learning, and doing meaningful work with her own flair.

"I think it's important that we never stop learning and trying new things. Exposing ourselves to new ideas and new places gives us a better idea of ourselves and the world around us," she says. "That's why I love teaching. It's my passion." ■

*"I think it's important that we never stop learning and trying new things."*

**DR. SARA MACSWEEN**

Senior Lecturer



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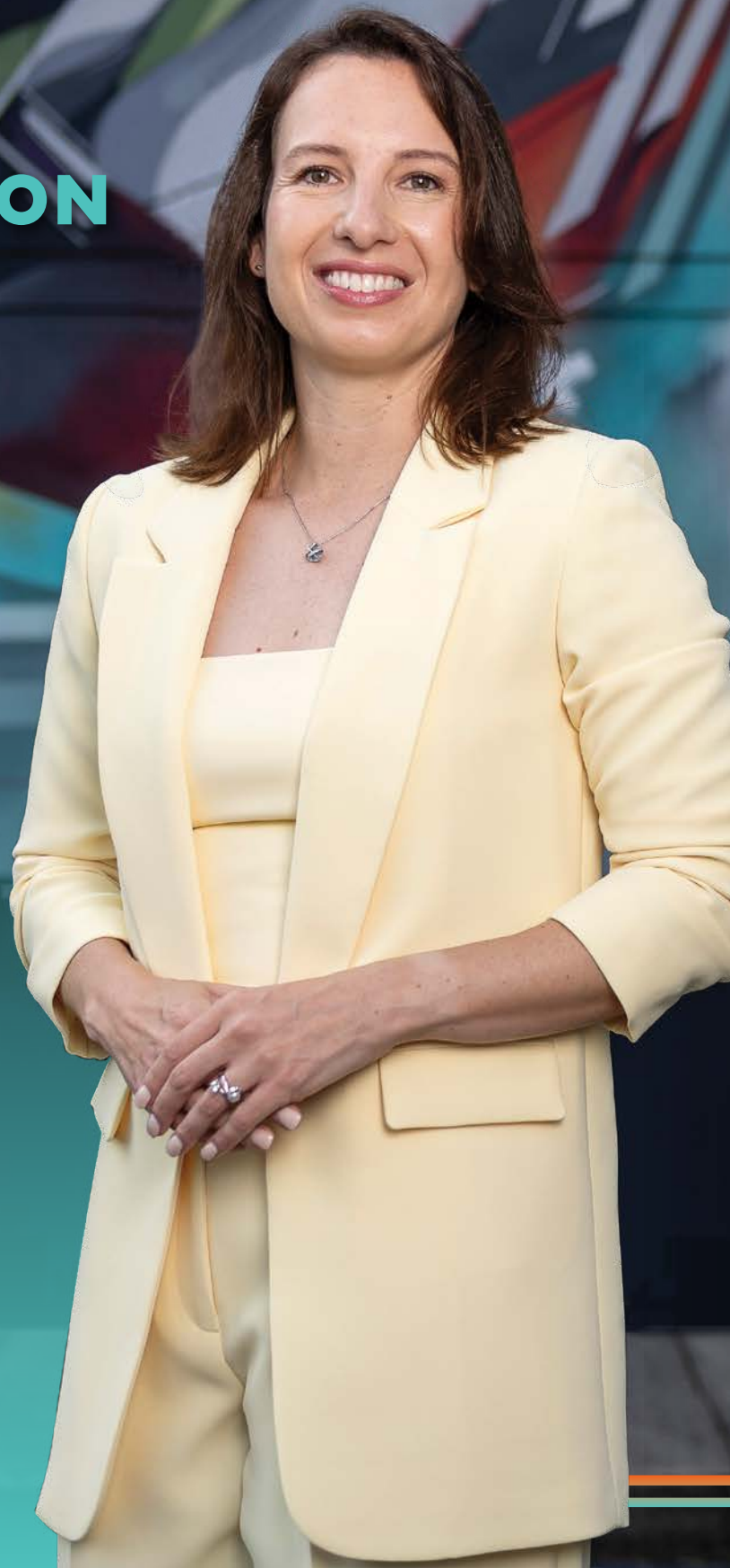
**BRYAN SCHOOL PROFESSOR  
TURNS CURIOSITY INTO CAPABILITY**

“

One of the pillars of our strategic plan at the Bryan School is to not only disseminate knowledge with our students but also to share our expertise with businesses in our community.”

**DR. MARKETA RICKLEY**  
Assistant Professor

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Imagine getting a sneak peek into how company leadership will react to your presentation, so you can perfect your slide deck before walking into the boardroom. Or having a chance to practice a sales call with a world-class expert before making your pitch to a client. Generative AI makes these concepts possible, and Dr. Marketa Rickley wants to ensure area businesses take full advantage of the technology. She has developed a practical, hands-on workshop to help business leaders apply generative AI, and the class is taking off.

"Everyone is talking about AI," says Rickley, an assistant professor of management in the Bryan School of Business and Economics. "But do business and industry leaders in our community have the necessary tools to get started? There's often a gap between reading about AI and being able to implement it."

## Closing the Gap with Hands-On Learning

In fact, a recent report from McKinsey & Company confirms that while 78% of companies are using AI in at least one of their business functions, applying it across multiple functions or integrating it fully is much less common. This is especially true in smaller companies.

Rickley hopes to improve this statistic through hour-long workshops she designed for the business community. The online classes showcase 10 diverse case studies for how people can use AI in their daily work, including to:

- Draft emails, employee surveys, or job descriptions
- Prepare for meetings
- Generate sales scripts
- Develop employee training modules
- Write ad copy, social media posts, and podcasts
- Generate new ideas or approaches
- Suggest improvements to projects in development

"There are a lot of things we do every day that can be done much more efficiently," Rickley says. "My goal is to inspire companies about the possibilities generative AI offers, so they can then customize this tool for their specific needs. Once I show a few things people can try, it seems the Band-Aid is ripped off, and there's no more trepidation."

“

Everyone is talking about AI. ”

**DR. MARKETA RICKLEY**

Assistant Professor

## A Breakthrough for Business Leaders

That was exactly the case when Rickley presented her workshop to the 25-member leadership team of Skyla Credit Union, a \$1.7 billion financial institution with 20 branches across North Carolina and California.

The company had seen other AI presentations previously, but they focused more on specialized technology than on practical applications, says Ray Crouse, the president of Skyla Financial Solutions and a member of the Bryan School Advisory Board.

"Everyone just saw AI as a mystery, and people were not really embracing it or trying to use it," Crouse says. But Rickley's session helped to convey useful, real-world applications. And with hands-on access to the prompts, attendees worked right alongside the instructor, realizing just how intuitive the tool could be.

"Our leadership team is getting more and more comfortable with AI now, and we've seen an uptick in this group using ChatGPT and CoPilot," Crouse says. "By adjusting her presentation to include exercises that were relevant to our industry, she helped erase a lot of fears."

Rickley has since offered the workshop to a wide variety of companies across the banking, construction, and agricultural industries, and recently, she was invited to present to a national conference of credit unions.

The sessions have the added benefit of offering her direct insight into what business leaders need from AI, challenges with its use, and awareness of how it can create value, Rickley says. This helps inform her strategic management curricula in the undergraduate and MBA programs at the Bryan School, where she received the 2022 Teaching Excellence Award. "I take these learnings right back to my classroom," she says. "It's a wonderful symbiosis."

## Linking Industry and Academia

In addition to her work with generative AI, Rickley is also studying predictive AI, particularly how machine learning can help predict leader emergence in teams. Her work has been published in scholarly publications, including the *Journal of Management* and the *Global Strategy Journal*, and she has been recognized by the Academy of Management with several research awards, including an International Management Division Best Paper Award and the Emerald Best International Dissertation Award.

"One of the pillars of our strategic plan at the Bryan School is to not only disseminate knowledge with our students but also to share our expertise with businesses in our community," Rickley says. "That inspired me to consider how we could help lower the barriers to AI use in our region, and it ended up being quite effective." ■



# Taking Her Life Back

HOW RUHANI AMIN '25 M.S. TURNED SETBACKS INTO COMEBACKS

RUHANI AMIN '25  
M.S. in IT and Management



Ruhani Amin '25 M.S. spent her adolescent years living in the world of higher education. The daughter of two university faculty members, she recalls childhood days spent roaming the halls of Montana State University, doodling on whiteboards while her parents worked nearby.

Filled with drive and ambition, it came as no surprise when she set out on her own higher education journey, she found a spot on the pre-med route at Montana State. After graduating with a degree in microbiology, she was accepted into medical school at the University of Washington.

For Amin, the pieces were falling into place just how she imagined, and the path forward was crystal clear – until it wasn't.

## A Dream Deferred

Raised in a Muslim family, Amin married at age 24, the same year she began medical school, and was immediately faced with a painful ultimatum from her then-husband.

Amin was told she could either have a career, or she could have a family. She wouldn't be supported in having both.

She chose a family.

Amin gave birth to three children and followed her now-ex-husband's medical career from Seattle to Atlanta to Greensboro. With each move, the obstacles grew, but she persevered for herself and her children.

"The whole time I was busy taking care of the kids, moving and unpacking," Amin said. "But I never lost sight of my dream for higher education, for career ambitions."

In 2020, one door slammed shut for Amin when her husband abruptly left the marriage and responsibilities. But, as doors do, another one opened wide.

"I immediately thought back to my childhood when higher education was of high value, and I saw an opportunity to resurrect my dreams again."

## Finding Strength in the Struggle

Amin got to work finding a job to support herself and her family. Though she hadn't been allowed to work full-time while married, she managed a small business selling custom bench cushions and taught herself digital marketing, website development, and branding.

With a plethora of digital marketing skills in her pocket, she landed a job working for the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, a nonprofit that leads domestic violence prevention across the state.

Amin then began her search for a school that offered a flexible online program where she could pursue her passion for data analytics. She set her sights on UNC Greensboro's Bryan School of Business and Economics.

"I learned the power of using data insights to drive business decisions through my tiny e-commerce shop, but I knew there was greater potential there," Amin says.

Amin took a course to test the waters and found the asynchronous online course format manageable with her already hectic schedule. When the time came for her to officially decide on a graduate program, the online Master of Science in Information Technology and Management was the obvious choice.

From 2020 to 2025, Amin earned her degree one course at a time, became a Bryan School Graduate Ambassador, and even developed friendships with classmates like Lee Clark. Clark worked with Amin on several class projects during a tumultuous time in her divorce and recognized her resilience immediately.

"She was always 100% present and a servant leader," Clark says. "By the way she showed up for her teammates, you'd never know she was experiencing so much at home."

## "I never lost sight of my dream for higher education, for career ambitions."

**RUHANI AMIN '25**  
M.S. in IT and Management



## Rebuilding, Stronger

Balancing school, single motherhood, and full-time work wasn't part of the original plan for Amin, but it became the path to something greater. In April 2025, she started an internship with Guilford County's Information Technology Department, with a specific focus on Data Management and Integration Services.

She continues working for the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, using her digital marketing and analytics expertise to support an organization devoted to social change. It's the kind of role that merges her passion for impact with her training and proves that even a path derailed can be rebuilt stronger.

"My story of overcoming abuse and adversity to achieve my academic and professional goals is not an isolated one," she says. "We all interact with survivors of abuse in our daily lives, whether we're aware of it or not. They live among us as neighbors, colleagues, friends, and relatives."

Amin hopes that by sharing her journey, others might find the courage to take their first step toward something new, and that those around them will offer kindness.

"When we can listen without judgment and offer support in ways that may be small but consistent, we can work toward a world where anyone can overcome their circumstances and improve life for themselves and their families."

For Amin, the future is no longer a deferred dream – it's a result of her perseverance and finally reclaiming her life. ■

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# A Gift That Fits

THE BODFORD FAMILY'S SUPPORT OF  
THE *SUIT UP* PROGRAM EMPOWERS THE NEXT  
GENERATION OF BUSINESS LEADERS.

*“It’s a way to give back and help others  
achieve their goals and dreams by giving  
them a little more confidence to do so.”*

**JASON BODFORD**  
President, EPES Logistics

Jason Bodford grew up hearing about the importance of philanthropy.

His dad, Al Bodford, paid his way through college by working at a drug store's lunch counter. And when he needed a suit for his first job interview, the drug store owner bought it for him.

This small act of goodwill paved the way for Bodford's own successful career, first as an accountant for a trucking firm and eventually as the owner of EPES Transport and EPES Logistics, two thriving transportation firms based in the Triad.

So it's especially fitting that, today, Jason and his family members support the Suit Up program – a partnership between JCPenney and the Bryan School of Business and Economics. The family's gift helps cover the cost of professional attire for eligible students at the Bryan School.

"Based on my father's experience, Suit Up really resonated with us," says Jason Bodford, president of EPES Logistics. "It's a way to give back and help others achieve their goals and dreams by giving them a little more confidence to do so."

## Making a Difference

Bodford recently had the opportunity to meet Kevin Montes Mendoza '25, who received two suits from the program, which he credits with helping boost his business future. He wore his new business attire to a career fair, where he had more than 20 interviews. "My suit was with me at every single one, and I was able to walk out of there with five internship offers," he says.

The following year, Mendoza applied again and received a second suit that he wore when inducted as president of UNCG's chapter of the Association of Latino Professionals for America (ALPFA). His work in this student organization has helped him develop leadership skills, build his network, and attend national career-related events.

"Both times I received a Suit Up suit, it played a big part in what I was doing at the time," Mendoza says. "Coming into college, I didn't have any business clothes, so when it would be time for networking events, I would throw on whatever I could find. Being able to buy professional clothing helped my confidence and improved how people perceive me."

Mendoza, who graduated in May with a degree in finance and economics, has landed a full-time job with Capital One in McLean, Virginia.

"Kevin is just an excellent example of what we hope to achieve through supporting the Suit Up program," Bodford says. "When we met, he shared with me that he felt like he could measure up, even to Ivy Leaguers, and compete for those jobs."

## Paying It Forward

It's just the kind of kickstart that impacted Bodford's dad all those years ago.

After gaining experience in accounting jobs, Al Bodford took a huge financial risk to buy EPES Transport, which at the time was breaking even or perhaps even losing money. He built it from a company with 75 trucks to one that had more than 1,500 when he sold it about five years ago. In the 1990s, the family also created Epes Logistics, an award-winning company that delivers cargo throughout North America for clients ranging from small mom-and-pop companies to Fortune 100 corporations.

Greensboro has long been home to the family. While Bodford himself didn't attend UNCG, he sees the university's impact on so many students throughout Greensboro and the state. A significant number of Epes employees have furthered their education at the university as well.

But Bodford knows that state and federal funding can't provide for all the needs of the university or its students, and that's where philanthropy comes in. He hopes this gift and others from the Bodford Family Foundation encourage people to consider similar donations to the Bryan School and its programs.

"You often hear the term force multiplier, and that's certainly something we look for," he says. "Donating one dollar doesn't just have to mean one dollar if it's donated in the right place to the right people with the right plans. The more lives it can touch the better. If financial donations can lead to more Kevins having more successful foundations in life, that's a wonderful return on investment." ■

## *Dressing for Success*

Every year, generous Bryan School donors provide sponsorships to cover the cost of a full professional outfit (\$250 value). This enables students to dress for success in professional situations such as job interviews and career fairs. JCPenney also provides a discount day to help offset costs for students.

### READ ONLINE

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# From Classroom TO COMMUNITY IMPACT

## ALICE JONES '24 AND GREENSBORO CEREBRAL PALSY ASSOCIATION'S TRANSFORMATION

Alice Jones '24 arrived at the small nonprofit agency just in time.

Growing Connections for Pediatric Achievements, formerly known as the Greensboro Cerebral Palsy Association (GCPA), was in the midst of a name change, website overhaul, and full rebranding. At the same time, the organization was preparing to celebrate its 75th anniversary and hold its first fundraising gala.

As the only administrative employee, the busy executive director was already stretched thin, so the organization needed a strong marketer to bring the plans to life.

Jones, who earned her undergraduate degree from the Bryan School of Business and Economics in May 2024, took that role as the organization's paid intern.

"Alice was tremendous in helping us navigate all this," says Ma'Kayla Jefcoat, executive director of GCPA, who is also a UNCG alumna. "From day one, she was very professional and wanted to go the extra mile to partner with us. She has been instrumental in helping us tell our story."

Jones was introduced to the organization through her professor, Dr. Sara MacSween, a senior lecturer in Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality and Tourism at the Bryan School. MacSween, who serves on the GCPA Board, knew the agency could benefit from a branding refresh and assigned a group of students to develop a marketing plan as a senior capstone project.

In partnership with GCPA's executive director and board, the student group surveyed stakeholders, conducted research, and identified what differentiated the agency. Ultimately, they recommended a name change to more accurately reflect the wide range of clients served.

While the former name highlighted cerebral palsy, the organization provides therapeutic early intervention for children with all types of special needs and developmental delays, from birth to age 3. It's critical that parents quickly understand the wide range of services offered, so they can enroll children who may benefit early, Jefcoat says.

"We wanted to honor our 75-year history," Jefcoat adds. "So remaining GCPA helps to represent that history, but now it has a new meaning. The students really got the ball rolling for us. None of us had experience with rebranding and what that meant. But working with the Bryan School and all those lovely students was amazing."

After the plan was developed, it became clear the agency needed on-the-ground support to implement all the changes. "As a nonprofit, you don't have all the resources in the world, and all our funds are devoted to what we do in programming," Jefcoat says.

Jones stepped up, learning quickly and working 10-15 hours a week to make it all happen. Her work included helping to develop a visual representation of the brand, redesign the website, plan events, and assist with social media, email marketing, and even a billboard.

Now pursuing an MBA at the Bryan School, Jones says the internship also showed her the importance of having a consistent brand voice in an organization. As a result, she helped develop a list of marketing dos and don'ts, which the GCPA team can rely on after she leaves.

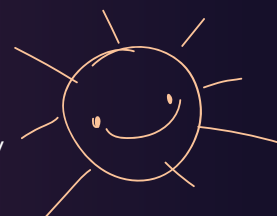
"It's one thing to study marketing in the classroom, but it's another to apply the skills I have learned to support an organization that serves children and families in such an important way," Jones says. "Seeing my work make a real difference at GCPA has been incredibly meaningful."

Her career goal is to lead a marketing team at a company or organization, and she believes this internship has prepared her well for this possibility while also helping her make an impact.

"Gaining experience while contributing to a mission I deeply believe in has been so rewarding," she adds. "I'm proud to have played a role in helping GCPA share its story." ■

### READ ONLINE

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## ABOUT GCPA: WHY EARLY INTERVENTION MATTERS

- Eighty percent of a child's brain develops by age 3.
- GCPA targets that timeframe, providing therapeutic childcare for infants and toddlers with developmental differences and special needs.
- Trained staff and therapists work six hours a day with children in four classrooms at Gateway Education Center. A summer program is also offered.
- Annually, the program serves about 50 children with autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and other special needs.

“  
Seeing my work make a real difference  
at GCPA has been incredibly meaningful.”

ALICE JONES '24  
MBA Candidate



The background of the entire page is a photograph of a vast agricultural field with rows of green crops stretching towards the horizon. Overlaid on this image is a semi-transparent blue digital grid, resembling a wireframe or data visualization, which adds a technological or 'digital agriculture' feel to the scene.

**MBA CAPSTONE PROJECT:**

# ***TURNING INSIGHT INTO IMPACT***

**MIND OVER MATTER: MBA STUDENTS HELP  
SYNGENTA RETHINK KNOWLEDGE SHARING.**

**H**ours of valuable work time can be lost when employees have to hunt for documents, search for emails, or track down budget information. When you multiply all this downtime by a worker's hourly wage, the value of an effective knowledge management system (KMS) becomes quite clear.

But finding the best system – and then getting staff to use it – can be challenging for many companies.

Syngenta recently asked graduate students at the Bryan School of Business and Economics to help tackle this issue at the company's North American operations division in Greensboro. Through the school's capstone project, four MBA students worked with company leaders to identify the best system and then create a plan to put it into practice.

"We have Teams, SharePoint, OneDrive, and Zoom, and we use it all," says Jackie Bontempo, the transformation and change manager for Syngenta's production and supply department in Greensboro. "The students were asked to research a number of possible knowledge management systems, look at what we do at Syngenta, and determine the best fit for us."

Over the course of the semester-long project, Sridevi Kesavarapu, Hugh Le, Evan Newland, and Hannah Shakil visited the agribusiness company's campus in Greensboro, interviewed staff and leaders, and researched best practices. They found that, at Syngenta, knowledge management is vital to protect the company's science, foster innovation, and ensure compliance. It also smooths the effective transfer of information among and between teams.

"We have people that have been with our company for 45 years, and when they retire, that knowledge walking out the door is so hard to capture," Bontempo says. "Also, when we hire new staff, we want to get them on board effectively and help them learn their roles."

But without strong support for any one KMS, information can become fragmented or duplicated, documents can be hard to find, and email becomes a main source of sharing information. Armed with case studies, the students presented to company leaders how effective knowledge management can improve productivity, streamline decision making, and reduce operational costs (see sidebar).

Students then evaluated five possible systems and determined that SharePoint, which Syngenta already had, offered the most capabilities yet was being underutilized. That's when their efforts took on a new focus.

“**People will only use something if it's making their lives better... if they see value in it.**”

Syngenta employees shared these thoughts about the need for an effective knowledge management system during interviews with the capstone project team.

"Our project then became about persuading leaders and employees to buy into the system they already had," Newland says. He and the other team members recommended ways to communicate and optimize SharePoint; suggested incentives, recognitions, and educational programs to boost its use, and offered timelines to implement and manage the change.

Syngenta leaders were impressed. "It was obvious that they were prepared and went that extra mile," Bontempo says. "They took this very seriously and were committed to this project." Their efforts led to strong actionable results.

"All of their research and digging confirmed that, at the end of the day, our success would come from having leadership support and buy-in for one system and then effectively managing change around that," he says. "I think their work will make a huge difference."

April Miller '19 MBA served as an executive mentor to the team. She believes the capstone project is a unique offering of the Bryan School – one that provides students with valuable, real-world experience while helping area companies and organizations solve problems. She saw her mentees develop tremendously in their writing, presentation, and critical thinking skills.

"The main thing I want the students to get out of this course is that they can solve any problem with the right tools and resources," she says. "These students are now well-equipped to be excellent problem solvers, and that is what the Bryan School promises them." ■

## THE CASE FOR A KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Students' research showed that an effective knowledge management system (KMS) can improve productivity and efficiency. For instance:

- Siemens reported a 20% reduction in project timelines after implementing a KMS.
- Other industry research shows knowledge management systems can boost productivity by up to 40%.
- Deloitte reported a 15% boost in performance through improved collaboration and innovation.
- Overall, implementing a KMS can reduce the time employees spend searching for information by as much as 50%, according to a 2023 report by Bloomfire.

### READ ONLINE

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# LEADING WITH heart & hustle

HOW TOMEKA WILLIAMS '07  
ROSE TO LEAD GLOBAL BRANDS  
WHILE STAYING GROUNDED IN  
PURPOSE AND COMMUNITY.

*"I've always been drawn  
to impact and service,  
and I love  
making a  
difference."*

**TOMEKA WILLIAMS '07**  
Vice President of Global  
Brand Design, P&G



The lessons Tomeka Williams '07 learned at the Bryan School of Business and Economics have shaped her as a senior leader at one of the most influential companies in the world. Today, as vice president of global brand design for Procter & Gamble (P&G), she focuses on creating value for her family, her team members, and the community around her.

"I get energy from making things better for people, for brands, and for communities," Williams says. "I've always been drawn to impact and service, and I love making a difference."

And that's just what she's done.

After receiving her business administration degree from the Bryan School, Williams went to work in beauty and product sales for P&G. Over the last 18 years, she has grown in her career to become vice president for North America hair care sales, leading 125 people and overseeing sales strategy and implementation for a multi-billion-dollar product line including Pantene, Head & Shoulders, and Mielle. This year, Williams transitioned into a new role, leading new brand creation for P&G's beauty portfolio.

Having relocated five times with P&G, she now lives in Cincinnati with her husband and three children while staying connected with her alma mater. She was recently appointed to the Bryan School's Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality and Tourism (MEHT) Advisory Board, bringing her journey full circle.

"It's powerful to return to the place that shaped me," she says. "UNC Greensboro didn't just teach me business – it taught me how to lead with heart and hustle. That's what I carry into every boardroom I walk into."

## A Foundation for Growth

From the time Williams enrolled at UNCG, she immersed herself in the school's offerings, balancing 18 credit hours with multiple leadership roles, including serving as a resident assistant, a member of the Student Government Association, and a leader in the Black Business Students Association. She also worked in the Bryan School's Department of Economics and participated in Alternative Spring Break, volunteering with organizations in Washington, D.C., that supported people experiencing homelessness and children who were underserved.

"It wasn't a vacation, but it was transformational," she says. "That experience grounded me in empathy and reminded me why leadership isn't just about success – it's about service."

She recalls benefiting from the diversity of the campus.

"I got an opportunity to meet people from other cultures and international students while also discovering cohorts on the campus where I felt safe and seen," she says. "I felt very much at home at UNCG."

Her work in the classroom confirmed her interest in business strategy and leading teams. During a marketing course, Williams and her classmates gained valuable experience through an internship at a local Chevrolet dealership. Her accounting professor illustrated points through real-life examples. "She taught us how to apply concepts in

both the corporate setting and in our own lives as college students,” Williams says. “Having limited financial literacy at the time, that really resonated with me. Now I use these skills in business every day and teach them to my own kids.”

These lessons – along with multiple summer internships that Williams secured through the national nonprofit INROADS – gave her early insight into corporate America and the confidence to thrive in it.

## Purpose in Action

Along the way, Williams has kept service at the forefront.

Back in her home community of Northampton County, she provides scholarships to select high school seniors every year. She calls them TAP scholarships, with TAP standing for “Turn and Pull.”

While at P&G, she worked with the company’s scientists to support STEM programming for thousands of minority girls. She also co-founded The Community Cohesion Project – a partnership between her company, Walmart, the Northwest Arkansas Council, and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art – to improve understanding of cultural differences while encouraging and celebrating diversity.

Beyond her corporate work, Williams created Justbe City, a children’s book series that celebrates authenticity and inclusion. Her own children served as her co-designers and editors for the series, which has been shared in homes, classrooms, and military bases globally.

“Being able to do what I love in my career while inspiring children with stories that reflect them is a dream come true,” she says.

Looking back, Williams has some advice for those just starting out or working to further their career. Learn how to learn. Prioritize wellness. And remember: “Other people’s fears aren’t yours to carry. Define your own vision and find the way to make it real.” ■

## WHERE EXCELLENCE MEETS IMPACT

Throughout her career, Tomeka Williams has received honors and accolades, including:

- The 2023 Women’s Wear Daily Category Builder of the Year team award
- The 2020 Drug Store News Rising Star Award, which honors top female leaders in the industry
- Speaking engagements at CES, NextUp, Essence Festival, Culture Con, Sistas in Sales, and CurlFest

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“

I got an opportunity to meet people from other cultures and international students while also discovering cohorts on the campus where I felt safe and seen. ”

TOMEKA WILLIAMS '07





## feature story

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BERT VANDERVEEN  
WRITTEN BY DAWN MARTIN

# THERE'S POWER IN PINK

That's the message behind a student-led fashion show that will hit the runway for the 10th time this fall at UNC Greensboro.

Put on by the student-led THREADS organization, the annual Pink Power fashion show highlights the work of dozens of student designers, most of whom are studying in the Bryan School's Department of Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies. The popular event also has a second purpose: to raise awareness about breast cancer and funding for survivor support.

"It's a great opportunity for students to show their work and have it seen by others, which is critically important for designers," says Dr. Nancy Nelson Hodges, professor and head of the department. "But it's so much more than that. The other vital piece of Pink Power is that they're doing it for the greater good."

Alycia Hill '16 was president of THREADS when the first Pink Power Fashion Show was held in October 2015. After taking one year off stage for the pandemic, the event will soon mark a decade of making a difference. During this time, the student organization has grown to between 70 and 90 members, but its fall show has stayed true to its roots.

"Students can create any design they want - it just has to be pink," says Jose Micheo, who served as president of THREADS for the past two years. "It's amazing how you can give the same theme to everyone and explain it the same way, and each individual comes up with something unique. The level of interpretation is so widespread."

Designs have included princess dresses, a take on a Spartan warrior, cat suits, business attire, men's wear, quilted vests, a clown outfit, corsets, tutus with long trains, and even a look inspired by the anatomy of a mammary gland.

With the help of club advisors Dr. Trish Kemerly and Dr. Haeun (Grace) Bang, Micheo worked on the most recent shows with Grace McTigue, who served as co-president last year, and Senia Villatoro, the vice president of design for the club. Other officers instrumental in the event included Maraya Byrd, Anna Dambakelis, D'Alessandro Flores-Hernandez, Brianna Freese, Fatima García, Kamron Ray, and Kelsye Watson.

Micheo says the CARS program has taught them not only design but also the "business of clothing," and Pink Power gives students a unique opportunity to practice all these skills. As one of two fashion shows the club hosts each year, it helps students build competencies in leadership, time management, project management, and event planning. Students arrange for event photography, host model calls, and emcee the show, which typically draws more than 300 people.

"Having a level of production that matches the amount of effort put in by all the individuals is important," Micheo says. "We want everyone's work to be shown in the best way possible."





## STYLE IN EVERY STITCH

Students' work for the Pink Power fashion show can be submitted in three categories:

- **Unconventional** – which asks designers to use nontextile items, such as feathers, coffee filters, or trash bags
- **Upcycling** – which has designers alter or embellish thrifted or preexisting clothing
- **Design** – which asks designers to alter their own patterns or to drape designs on a dress form, cutting out all materials and constructing them entirely from scratch





*“The fact that the students identified and got behind this cause, and that it’s continued for this long, is really remarkable.”*

**DR. NANCY NELSON HODGES**

Department Head, Burlington Industries Professor

Together, the students and participants strive to bring awareness and financial support to a good cause. Initially, Pink Power raised funds for the Mammography Scholarship Fund at Cone Health. In later years, it has supported Living Beyond Breast Cancer, which provides information and support to survivors and their caregivers. Last year, THREADS raised \$2,000 for the nonprofit.

“The fact that the students identified and got behind this cause, and that it’s continued for this long, is really remarkable,” Hodges says. “It speaks to their interest in the community at large and their

desire to connect to something bigger than themselves.” Students say their work with Pink Power has been a highlight of their time at the Bryan School.

“It’s kind of a glamorous flashy way to do something very cool for others,” Micheo says. “Either way, we want to make clothes, so having it serve a greater purpose is fantastic.” ■

**READ ONLINE**

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# Excellence in Research

At the Bryan School of Business and Economics, faculty exemplify true versatility. As dedicated educators, they foster collaborative research experiences with students while simultaneously demonstrating thought leadership and producing high-impact scholarship of their own. Their deep commitment to both teaching and research serves as a powerful complement to the Bryan School's innovative, hands-on curriculum. While we take great pride in the culture of care and mentorship that defines the student-faculty relationship, it's equally important to spotlight the meaningful and influential research our faculty contribute to the broader academic and business communities.

## 2024/2025 RESEARCH BY THE NUMBERS

**120**

unique peer-reviewed journal articles  
published or accepted — with

**25**

of them appearing in top  
journals in the discipline

Editorial positions at

**30**

of the world's  
leading journals

**124**

conference presentations  
and proceedings

Eight Bryan School faculty members—  
five current and three retired—  
were ranked among the

**TOP 2%**

most-cited researchers  
worldwide in the 2024 Stanford-Elsevier list

**17**

grants and contracts  
valued at

**\$629,000**



# THE FUTURE OF RESPONSIBLE FASHION

From a young age, Dr. Haeun (Grace) Bang loved fashion. While pursuing her interest in college and later as an assistant professor, she learned about another aspect of the field: how clothing and textile waste can harm the environment. This revelation helped her to see her creative outlet in a whole new way.

"Now I believe sustainability is no longer just a design trend," says Bang, an assistant professor of Consumer, Apparel, and Retail Studies in the Bryan School of Business and Economics. "It is a strategic responsibility."

With that inspiration, she created a unique garment design out of natural fibers that was recently recognized with one of the highest honors in her field: the Sandra Hutton Award for Excellence in Fiber Arts. Bang received the prize at the International Textile and Apparel Association's (ITAA) annual conference in November 2024.

Her hand-knitted garment called "Entangled Echoes" highlights the issue of waste in the world's oceans. Using tangled fiber scraps, the garment mimics the look of fish netting and layered ocean waste through its silhouette, colors, and texture. "It is both a wearable artwork and a commentary on sustainability in fashion," Bang says.

She created the sustainable design after watching a documentary on oceanic waste and its effect on marine life. One scene showed a necropsy on a baby whale, which had ingested a cup lid, pieces of fishing net, and tangled fishing lines. The sight had a profound effect on her.

"It pushed me to think more critically about the long-term impact of textile waste and how design could be used to raise awareness," Bang says. She hopes her project helps people reconsider their fashion choices and the associated impact on the environment.

"My goal is to spark dialogue about responsible consumption and to inspire designers, educators, and consumers alike to choose materials and methods that honor a garment's entire lifecycle."

She also strives to make these lessons relevant in her classroom, incorporating sustainability as a key requirement in student projects. Two of her undergraduate students, Gina Pham and Thre Sar, had designs selected for submission at the ITAA conference as well.

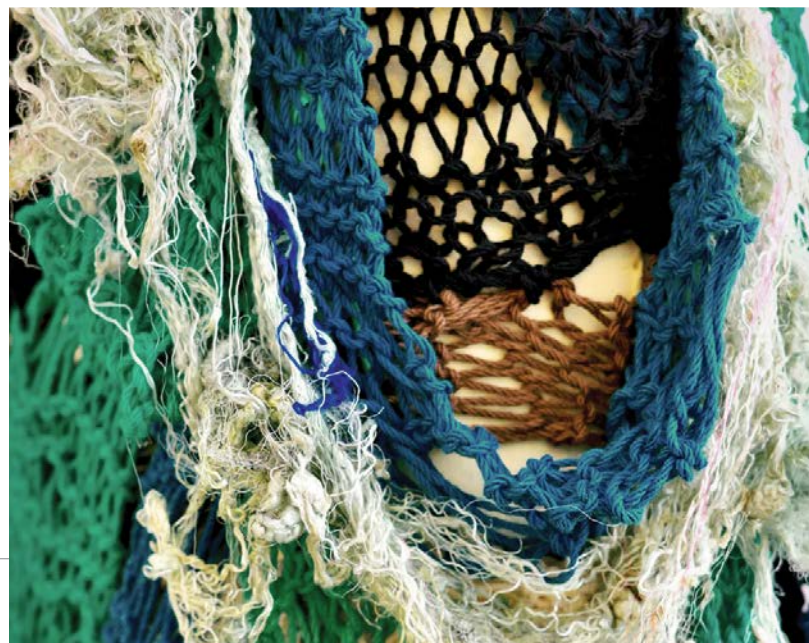
"Fashion is not just about aesthetics," Bang says. "It is also a powerful medium for activism, innovation, and social change. I want to empower my students not only to become better designers, but also to become thoughtful stewards of the future."

## READ ONLINE

[go.uncg.edu/bbr\\_responsible\\_fashion](https://go.uncg.edu/bbr_responsible_fashion)



**DR. HAEUN (GRACE) BANG**  
Assistant Professor





# INDEPENDENCE, IDENTITY, AND THE HIDDEN COSTS OF GOING GIG

Leaving a traditional 9-to-5 job to go freelance may sound ideal – no boss, flexible hours, your choice of assignments, and the ability to work from anywhere.

But working for yourself has pros and cons, and understanding that makes a significant difference in workers' satisfaction, according to Dr. Brianna Caza, a management professor at the Bryan School of Business and Economics.

Caza's research on the gig economy has been published in top-tier journals such as Harvard Business Review, Administrative Science Quarterly, and the Academy of Management Review.

On the upside, Caza has found that professional gig workers enjoy increased autonomy about when, where, and how they work, as well as what jobs to take.

They can also be more efficient with fewer workplace interruptions.

But tradeoffs can include:

- A harder-to-define professional identity
- Unpredictability in career trajectory, job security, and income stream
- Difficulty staying organized or focused, especially when balancing tasks, such as marketing or billing, that would otherwise be handled by employers
- Social challenges and professional loneliness

"You may save time commuting and not have to hassle with parking and other logistics, but you may also come to miss the serendipitous interactions of working in an organization," Caza says. "Those conversations at the watercooler or hallway interactions can be much more impactful than we realize." For that reason, it's important for gig workers to seek opportunities to participate in camaraderie, socialization, and feedback.

While business schools typically train people to work in organizations, Caza knows some students may choose to work as independent contractors or freelancers from the start. "Therefore, I try to help my students think about the challenges they may face when they are operating without an organizational safety net, which include thinking strategically about how they author their careers and identities."

Overall, satisfaction with the gig economy is highly individualized and depends on factors including a person's stage of life, other career options, and relational networks. "I see people who are really happy doing independent work and others who are less happy," Caza says. "It's just good to know there are tradeoffs."

## READ ONLINE

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**DR. BRIANNA CAZA**  
Professor



# EXPOSING THE ICEBERG OF CORPORATE FRAUD

Corporate fraud has been compared to an iceberg, with significant violations going undetected beneath the surface. Finding these accounting discrepancies, whether due to mistakes or deception, is what drives Dr. Randy Elder, an expert in auditing at the Bryan School of Business and Economics.

His research – along with that of his colleagues at the Bryan School – has helped to shape professional practice standards in auditing, which ultimately protects investors and the public.

“The flagship area of my research has been practical approaches to making audits more effective,” says Elder, head of the Bryan School’s Department of Accounting and Finance.

Elder has chaired two groups summarizing research that could be used by the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board when developing new standards for audits of public companies and broker-dealers. The organization cited Elder’s research when issuing new standards for audit confirmations, a practice of requesting information from banks or customers to verify the accuracy of the audited company’s financial data. The board also cited research from Elder’s colleague Dr. Ayalew Lulseged, professor of accounting and finance, when requiring firms to disclose all audit participants.

As a former auditor himself, Elder has seen incidents of fraud a handful of times in his career, including one case where he had to review evidence at an FBI office. He brings that experience into his classroom, piquing students’ interest in such topics as false checks, skimming of cash receipts, and the issuance of false invoices. In one real-life exercise, students use actual data and evidence to uncover who is stealing cash from a small drugstore chain. This example came from his work for the last nine years as an editor of the journal *Issues in Accounting Education*.

“I would like to think that my students have a greater appreciation for some of the issues that they could see as a new staff auditor,” Elder says. “Maybe they’ll recognize a problem because they’ve been exposed to it in my class.”

The author of a leading textbook on principles of auditing, Elder has also given presentations on how to prevent fraud in small businesses. “An auditor should always ask why,” he says. “Hopefully, I convey that to my students, so they have the healthy skepticism they need.”

## READ ONLINE

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**DR. RANDY ELDER**  
Department Head,  
Forvis Mazars Professor

# READING BETWEEN THE LINES OF U.S. MONETARY POLICY

It's no coincidence that Dr. Timothy Moreland studies U.S. monetary policy and its impact on the economy.

As an undergraduate majoring in economics in 2008–09, he had a front-row seat to the second-worst financial crisis in U.S. history. He remembers his professors sharing real-time examples of how monetary policy – particularly the setting of federal interest rates – contributed not only to the depth of the recession but also to its ultimate conclusion.

"I began thinking about the consequences, both positive and negative, for what the Federal Reserve does," Moreland recalls. "Obviously, the 2008 recession was a horrible event for our country, but as a student, it was probably one of the best ways to learn economics."

Today, Moreland carries those lessons into his own classroom. As an assistant professor in the Bryan School of Business and Economics, he teaches money and banking courses to undergraduates and advises Ph.D. students in macroeconomics. His latest research, published in 2024 in the top-tier journal *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, examines how U.S. monetary policy affects companies' willingness to invest, especially considering how certain or uncertain these firms feel about the future.

For instance, Moreland has found it's not only the monetary policies themselves that impact the U.S. and global economies. The type of language officials use when talking about the economy matters too because it impacts firm and investor certainty (or uncertainty) about the future. All this has a practical application for business people and individuals, especially in the current environment.

"So if you're trying to follow what the Federal Reserve is doing and make educated decisions about investments, my research suggests that you may want to read between the lines," Moreland says. "It's not just about reading the headlines and evaluating questions, like what is this monetary policy, what are the tariff rates, or what is this tax bill going to look like. It's also about how stable you think this policy will be or how confident you are that the new tariff rates will be the same a month from now. It's important to think more about the stability of the policy and not get caught up in the current headline."

Moreland, who has presented at conferences nationwide, hopes his findings will resonate with Federal Reserve staff as well as students, companies, and individual investors.

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**DR. TIMOTHY MORELAND**  
Assistant Professor





# THE SECRET PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND ADS THAT WORK

When it comes to developing effective advertising, a little science goes a long way.

That's the message Dr. Veronika Ponomarenko hopes to convey through her research into consumer perceptions of brand imagery.

"Every design choice sends a message, consciously or not," says Ponomarenko, an assistant professor of marketing at the Bryan School of Business and Economics. "The goal is to teach future marketers to design with both strategy and consumer psychology in mind."

Her latest study, conducted with three co-authors, is showcased in the June issue of International Journal of Research in Marketing. Brand elements – including logo shape, color, slogans, or even a product name – work together to convey human-like traits, such as being exciting, competent, masculine, or feminine, Ponomarenko says. For instance, when consumers see a pink logo, they usually perceive the associated brand as feminine.

"Our research reveals an important but subtle implicit association: people tend to link visual simplicity with masculinity and visual complexity with femininity, often without being consciously aware of it," she says.

Ads become more effective when their visual aesthetics match how a brand wants to be perceived, the research shows. This means that simple design tends to work better for "masculine" brands such as McDonald's, Canon, or BMW, while more complex creative is better for "feminine" brands like Dove, Lindt, or Chanel.

"It's a subtle design tweak, but one that can make a real difference in outcomes like clicks, attitudes, and purchase intentions," Ponomarenko says. "This happens because the ad 'feels right' and is easier for people to mentally process."

One caveat is that people who think more analytically are less affected by whether the ad's visuals match the brand's perceived identity. "This shows that design effects are not one size fits all," she says.

Overall, the research breaks new ground because this type of implicit bias has not been widely explored previously, Ponomarenko says.

It's a lesson she takes directly into her classroom.

"Students often find it eye-opening," she says. "It sparks lively discussions about implicit associations and how they subtly influence consumer perceptions."

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**DR. VERONIKA  
PONOMARENKO**  
Assistant Professor

# THE FUTURE OF DIABETES CARE IS AI-DRIVEN

As a significant chronic condition with no cure, diabetes often results in severe complications and even leads to nearly 7 million deaths per year. But patients who work with their health care providers to successfully manage the condition can live longer with a better quality of life.

That's where health and lifestyle apps can make a real impact. But with thousands already on the market, what will make another one stand out?

Two faculty members at the Bryan School of Business and Economics are considering that question. Dr. Hamid R. Nemat, professor, and Dr. Motahareh Bahar Pourbehzadi, assistant professor, in information systems and supply chain management partnered to develop an app called SMART Diabetes, which they believe offers a distinct difference.

"The most important factor in our SMART Diabetes app is the way it uses artificial intelligence (AI) to motivate patients to stay current and follow up with their health recommendations," Nemat says.

By monitoring a user's diet, medication, and activity goals, SMART Diabetes offers personalized "nudges" for lifestyle changes to improve symptoms. These nudges are based not only on the user's own health data but also their own beliefs and cognitive processes. For instance, one user may know that organic food is healthy, but that it's expensive – so for that particular individual, cost may be a hindrance to healthy eating. The app then crafts individualized messaging targeting that concern.

Other unique offerings include:

- Health recommendations made from both general medical knowledge and the patient's health data in two forms: their electronic health record and real-time wearables, such as Apple Watches or FitBits.
- Customizable video recommendations that appear as if they're coming from users' preferred coaches, such as a physician, their mother, or even themselves.
- A new approach called agentic AI. This allows computerized "agents" to develop expertise in specific areas of a patient's health and then interact with each other. For instance, the app's healthy eating agent collaborates with a sleep agent and an exercise agent. These "conversations" help AI learn, avoid mistakes, and facilitate better outcomes.
- A shared platform that both patients and medical providers can access.

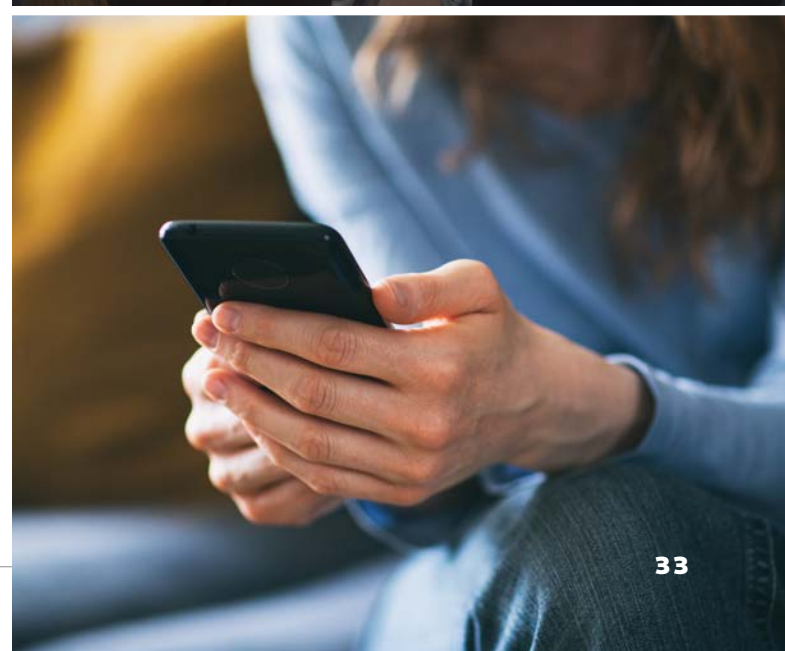
Now in development, the app could be tested on patients by year's end and eventually adapted to other health conditions, Pourbehzadi says. "To our knowledge, no such app exists, so we're working really hard to be the first ones to put it out there."

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**DR. MOTAHAREH  
BAHAR  
POURBEHZADI**  
Assistant Professor







“

We share one thing. We are alums of the Bryan School, and in many ways, it has shaped our personal and professional accomplishments. It is a no-brainer to continue being involved in helping the Bryan School be a powerhouse of innovation and excellence. ”

OTTO ANGULO '06 MBA



## A MESSAGE TO OUR BRYAN SCHOOL ALUMNI

I hope this message finds you well. It is a genuine honor to serve as the president of the Bryan School Alumni Association Board, continue the legacy of former board members, and give back to the Bryan School for helping to shape me into who I am and where I am in my career. Our shared experience at the Bryan School has equipped us with the knowledge and skills to thrive, but it's the strong, enduring community we've built that truly sets us apart.

As we look toward the future, I am excited about the many ways we can strengthen this network. The Alumni Association is more than just a group of graduates; it's a living testament to the Bryan School's legacy. Our purpose is to connect, inspire, and empower one another, from recent graduates finding their first career steps to seasoned professionals eager to share their wisdom. By joining forces, we can support the next generation of business leaders and ensure the Bryan School remains a powerhouse of innovation and excellence.

I encourage you to get involved. Whether it's by contributing to our annual scholarship fund or attending one of our events, your participation makes a tangible difference. We look forward to seeing you at events like Homecoming, Spartan Spot, and other Bryan School and Bryan School Alumni Association gatherings.

Please visit our website [bryan.uncg.edu/alumni](http://bryan.uncg.edu/alumni) to learn more about upcoming opportunities to connect and participate. I look forward to seeing the incredible things we will accomplish together.

**OTTO ANGULO '06 MBA**  
2025-26 Bryan School Alumni Association Board President  
[BSAAboard@gmail.com](mailto:BSAAboard@gmail.com)



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# Thank you

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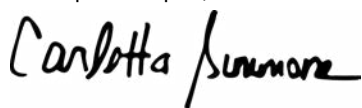
As I reflect on the past academic year, I am reminded daily of the incredible generosity and financial commitment of our alumni, friends, and partners. Your philanthropic support continues to transform the lives of our students and strengthen the future of the Joseph M. Bryan School of Business and Economics.

Your collective giving has opened doors that would not exist without you. During the 2024–25 academic year, your generosity enabled 313 deserving students to pursue their dreams through more than \$809,000 in scholarship support across 141 awards – opportunities made possible because of you. Your contributions also advanced faculty research and teaching, enriched academic programs and experiences, and ensured that Bryan School graduates are prepared to lead in an ever-changing world. Every donor and every dollar make a difference, and I am deeply grateful for your role in our shared success.

As the Bryan School continues to evolve and our needs grow, meeting them will require all of us working together. Engagement, through philanthropy, mentorship, or advocacy, helps position the Bryan School as a leader among our peers, and we are grateful for your unwavering commitment. If you'd like to learn more about how you can enhance the Bryan School through a financial gift, a planned commitment, or other giving opportunities, please contact me. Together, we can align your passions and priorities with our most pressing needs and greatest opportunities.

On behalf of the Bryan School's students, faculty, staff, and leadership, thank you for your commitment and belief in the power of education. Together, we are shaping a stronger future for business education and the leaders of tomorrow.

With Spartan Spirit,



**CARLETTA SIMMONS**  
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