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VIRGINIA TECH Business

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An unusual Ph.D. program
in the nation's capital equips
executives with elite research skills

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In this magazine, alumni, with some exceptions, are identified by degree and the year it was received.

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ABOUT

Virginia Tech's nationally ranked Pamplin College of Business offers degree programs in accounting and information systems, business information technology, economics, finance, hospitality and tourism management, management, marketing, and real estate. Pamplin emphasizes technology and analysis that improve business, entrepreneurship that leads to innovation and innovative companies, international opportunities for learning and research, and an inclusive, collaborative community. It is named in honor of two alumni: the late Robert B. Pamplin, retired chairman of Georgia-Pacific, and businessman, author, and philanthropist Robert B. Pamplin Jr.

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By the numbers: national rankings



Pamplin's accounting programs maintained top 25 national rankings, according to the Public Accounting Report.

The undergraduate program stayed at No. 22, while the master's and Ph.D. programs both moved up slightly to No. 21, according to the report's August 2017 newsletter, which discussed the findings of its annual survey of accounting professors.

Pamplin also moved up in comparisons among "large" schools (those with 24-plus full-time faculty): No. 13 for undergraduate

programs and No. 12 for master's.

Regionally (Northeast/Mid-Atlantic), the undergraduate program was No. 4 and the master's program No. 2.

Accounting graduates, who include Lynne Doughtie, KPMG's first female chief executive, are among the university's most successful and supportive alumni.

The Public Accounting Report is an independent newsletter of the accounting profession. ■

Pamplin data and analytics program joins KPMG master of accounting

Pamplin has joined the KPMG Master of Accounting with Data and Analytics Program, a one-of-a-kind initiative that audit, tax, and advisory firm KPMG LLP developed to prepare accounting students for the digital marketplace.

Pamplin's inclusion is part of an expansion of the program that increases the number of participating schools from two to nine and increases the number of students to 135 who will receive full tuition, other support, and KPMG job offers upon graduation, as well as the addition of a tax component at one of the new schools in the program.

"Our partnership with KPMG to offer a master's in accounting with data and analytics will add a significant, new accounting focus to Virginia Tech's range of offerings in data and analytics," said Pamplin Dean Robert Sumichrast. "This helps ensure our master's programs continue to remain on the cutting edge of knowledge development, providing our students the practical skills necessary to succeed in accounting and business." ■



▶ AN ACCOUNTING STUDENT asks a question during a presentation on the impact of taxes on business transactions.

SHELBY LUM

Real estate program moves to Pamplin

To support its continued growth, the Virginia Tech Program in Real Estate has become an academic unit in the Pamplin College of Business in collaboration with the Myers-Lawson School of Construction.

The program will be housed in the Intelligent Infrastructure and Construction Complex, and students will earn a bachelor of science in real estate or a real-estate minor through the Pamplin College.

Real estate, said program director Kevin Boyle, “encompasses the vision for a project, getting the entitlements or permitting to do a project, securing financing, hiring and managing design and construction, leasing and selling properties, and managing portfolios of real-estate assets.”

Sectors include commercial, retail, multifamily, single family; building uses include hotels, distribution centers, government buildings, and other real-estate assets. ■



▶ THE PROGRAM prepares students for success in the real-estate industry.

Entrepreneurship center plans aggressive growth

The Apex Systems Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Virginia Tech (Apex CIE) plans to grow rapidly over the next three years to serve more students and achieve a national ranking.

In 2016-17, the center served more than 900 Virginia Tech students through entrepreneurship courses and experiential-learning programs and had a hand in launching more than 80 student-led ventures.

The center “enables Virginia Tech students to put their passion, purpose, and ideas into action,” said executive director Derick Maggard.

Administratively housed in the Pamplin College of Business, Apex CIE offers programs and resources that are open to all students on campus. Its programs enroll students from each of the seven colleges. ■



▶ STUDENTS FROM THE APEX CIE join Virginia Tech alumni for a reception in New York.



ROBERT SUMICHRAST ◀

DEAN'S MESSAGE

Virginia Tech is undergoing the most rapid change since the 1960s, and Pamplin is helping to lead that change.

Pamplin's academic programs are experiencing creative destruction. During just the past two years, we have eliminated four degree programs and created three others. We have also moved Virginia Tech's real-estate degree into the college, where it will benefit from the resources and focus of the business school while retaining its inter-college instruction. I want to welcome the program director, Kevin Boyle, and his staff, as well as the real-estate students to Pamplin.

The creation of new programs that align better with the needs of our economy and the interests of our students will continue the growth we are experiencing. This fall, Pamplin will enroll over 5,000 students.

As a part of Virginia Tech, Pamplin has strong programs that give our students practice using analytics and data to make quality business decisions. We are enhancing programs that teach students to develop and manage technology and security, including cyber security.

As we finalize plans to replace Pamplin Hall, we are moving toward becoming the first business school to include an immersive environment to help students experience and respond to a range of simulated disasters, whether they are natural or man-made.

Our constantly developing programs help to set Pamplin apart from other business schools and bring opportunity to our alumni. ■

ROBERT

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Twitter @Sumichrast

▶ SEE MORE ABOUT THESE STORIES AT: WWW.MAGAZINE.PAMPLIN.VT.EDU

Not your typical students, not your usual Ph.D.

Ph.D. program gives executives elite research skills

One student in this novel graduate program flies in for weekly classes from Denver, Colorado; two others commute from Houston, Texas, and Miami, Florida.

Their classmates include corporate executives, government professionals, a former CIA intelligence officer, and a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries. They hold graduate degrees in such fields as engineering, math, law, and linguistics, in addition to business.

They aren't your typical Ph.D. students. And what they've chosen to pursue, at Virginia Tech's Northern Virginia Center in metro Washington, D.C., is not your typical Ph.D. program.

"This program is unlike any doctoral program in business," says Sarah Tuskey,

chair of Miami Dade College's business department. Tuskey extensively researched executive doctoral programs before signing up for Virginia Tech's Ph.D. (executive business research concentration) when it was launched by the Pamplin College of Business a year ago. "I knew I wanted to be a part of what was being built here."

Richard Essig sought top-notch training — "I wanted to learn the same skills that every doctoral student at an AACSB-accredited school would receive who intends to publish in elite journals" — while keeping his day job as vice president of corporate strategy and development at Nolan Financial. AACSB International is the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

“I wanted to learn the same skills that every doctoral student at an AACSB-accredited school would receive.”

Essig, who has an MBA from Duke University, is also an adjunct faculty member at West Chester University and an executive mentor for business students at the University of Delaware. He found in Virginia Tech’s program both rigor and flexibility. “There was no question in my mind that this program was the perfect fit for me.”

Hari Ravella, a former worldwide leader for market adoption at IBM Watson Health, spent almost a year in another doctoral program before realizing he would not be entirely happy with the outcome. Even though it meant starting over again, he made the switch to the Virginia Tech program when it was inaugurated.

Mark Mondry was an engineer at Westinghouse before becoming a patent attorney in Silicon Valley, but was captivated by teaching after a stint as an instructor at UC Berkeley. He wanted to hone his research skills to pursue an academic career, but family and professional obligations made full-time study unrealistic.

The Virginia Tech program gives him “the unique opportunity to grow” as a teacher and researcher, Mondry says.

“Our executive Ph.D. is unusual,” says program director Dipankar Chakravarti.

Research — original, publishable, peer-reviewed research — is the defining element of Ph.D.-level study, and this part-time program, Chakravarti says, has the same demands and expectations as full-time programs.

Indeed, it was the chance to do research on par with what a full-time student would

do that drew Ravella to the program. “The requirements are exactly the same as the full-time Ph.D.,” he says. “We are not evaluated any differently — no slack is cut — just because we are not full-time students.”

Mondry notes the heavy emphasis on training in the “research methods necessary for us to become scholars capable of contributing to the most prestigious business journals.”

Another distinction: part-time programs typically offer broad training across business disciplines, Chakravarti says, but “our approach is to have students focus on their chosen discipline and master the area while also reaching across disciplines to tackle research problems.”

Says Ravella: “We get the required depth via the content courses in the chosen concentration and very rigorous methods courses in both quantitative and behavioral tracks to pick up the necessary research skills and apply them in the research project.”

Class format is yet another way the program stands out: part-time students at the Northern Virginia Center are brought together for classes synchronously with full-time students on Virginia Tech’s main campus in Blacksburg by video conferencing. This real-time interaction makes for richer discussion for both groups, Chakravarti says.

Tuskey thinks this model is “unique.” Engaging executive students with tra-



▶ **FORMER ENGINEER** and patent attorney Mark Mondry sought higher-level research skills for a full-fledged academic career.

ditional Ph.D. students, she says, allows “a tremendous exchange that has the potential to advance research in new ways.”

Full-time student Daniel Villanova agrees. “The part-time students come from

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ▶

▶ **LEFT:** Finance professor Raman Kumar teaches the Quantitative Methods for Business Research and the Math/Stat Foundations summer intensive courses in the executive Ph.D. program.

industry backgrounds and have points-of-view that supplement the theory-centric structure of the courses,” says Villanova, who is seeking a Ph.D. in marketing. “We can end up discussing managerially-motivated research questions, adjusting possible research approaches for different theoretical angles that crop up during the class.”

Both groups of students “benefit in ways that might not be accessible if we had been in our own silos.”

Most of the program’s students have academic careers in mind — and rosy job prospects after graduation, given the continuing national shortage of faculty with business doctorates. A few are already teaching at colleges and universities and are interested in credentialing themselves for full-time positions.

The coursework has already taught Tuskey to “think differently, be more creative, and ask better questions,” she says. “Earning a Ph.D. in business will enable me to be a better researcher and a better instructor.”

As enticing as the final destination looks, however, there is no forgetting how



► FROM LEFT: Julian Thrash, Dwayne McGraw, Sarah Tuskey, and Mark Mondry enjoy a lively discussion.

grueling the doctoral journey is, especially when returning to school after years away — and a full day at the office.

Juggling work, school, and family commitments is a “herculean task,” says Ravela. “But we’re a very motivated bunch!”

Echoing the sentiments of several classmates, Tuskey says the first semester was particularly challenging. “Many of us have not been students for over a decade. We are learning new information, new ways of thinking, and new tools, all while learning to be a student again,” she says.

“Unsurprisingly, the biggest difficulty so far is finding the time to develop viable research ideas,” says Essig.

Chakravarti agrees. While professional experiences contribute greatly to class discussions, the students must also “translate those experiences into researchable

academic questions that would make high-quality doctoral research projects, papers, and dissertations,” he says.

Chakravarti was surprised by the number and caliber of the applicants and the depth of their motivation: “The students we accepted have held their own. They have embraced the challenge of learning difficult and unfamiliar material and are excited about doing high-quality academic research.”

His classmates, Mondry says, are some of the “sharpest, most motivated, and focused individuals” he has met. “Many are at the top of their fields, a time in their career when they could otherwise easily justify protecting any family, social, and leisure activity time. Rather, they have chosen this program and invited all the pressures — and productivity — that go with it.”

The program’s recruiting success suggests that there is a “robust demand for an academically rigorous, part-time Ph.D. in business,” Chakravarti says, from those aspiring to be faculty members as well as business schools that are potential employers of such graduates.

George Koo, a member of the second cohort, which started classes this fall, had been accepted to several doctoral programs.

Koo is CEO and chief investment officer of an investment advisory firm he founded after a long career at several notable Wall Street firms. He has a master’s in international relations from Harvard, an MBA from St. John’s University, gradu-



► LEFT: George Koo, a student in cohort 2, chats with Shahram Amini, a full-time Ph.D. student in finance. RIGHT: Regina Bumper, Akwasi Ampofo.



▶ GELILA SEHATU is a student in cohort 2.

ate business certificates from Harvard and NYU, and CPA and CFA designations.

“I wanted to pursue a Ph.D. because I enjoy learning and research,” Koo says. He often pondered the causes and effects of financial phenomena he observed and realized that he lacked the scientific research skills, including proficiency in high-level analytical tools, needed to support theories and create models.

“I did not want a program that was merely an extension of an MBA program that did not cover the skills necessary to do world-class research.”

Virginia Tech’s program is “a good fit for me,” Koo says, citing its quality, Virginia Tech’s status as a top-tier research institution, the faculty’s enthusiasm, and its support for students. The latter includes Joy Jackson, the program’s associate director, who brings years of experience in graduate and executive education from her work at the Brookings Institution and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Koo’s sentiments are shared by members of the inaugural class. Says Essig: “For business executives looking to acquire elite research skills, the executive Ph.D. program at Virginia Tech provides all the resources needed to accomplish this goal.”

Says Tuskey: “I have learned so much and have enjoyed it tremendously.” ■

—Soakhan Ho

For more information about Virginia Tech’s **Ph.D. in business** (executive business research concentration), please contact:

▶ Dipankar Chakravarti, dchakra1@vt.edu or Joy Jackson, jmjacks@vt.edu

Launching a startup

A new initiative that would meet a distinct need in the marketplace is exciting to think about, but getting it off the ground? It’s often the first challenge of an entrepreneurial venture.

Market research, both formal and informal, revealed that there was demand for a Ph.D. such as Virginia Tech’s concentration in executive business research, says marketing professor Dipankar Chakravarti. The research also confirmed the need to clearly differentiate and position the program on the emphasis on doing high-quality research.

Chakravarti, who was recruited in 2015 by Pamplin dean Robert Sumichrast to launch the executive Ph.D., is an award-winning teacher and internationally renowned researcher who was recognized for course innovation and creativity by Johns Hopkins University and in Forbes magazine. A veteran professor who has taught courses at levels from undergraduate to executive education at five business schools around the country, he has also served as a department head and a vice dean.

Chakravarti discovered early on that prospective students often had expectations that reflected the structure of traditional part-time programs. “Our key challenge here was to identify and cultivate those exceptional individuals with the motivation, background, and aptitude to take on the demands of a research-intensive Ph.D. program.”

This entailed many discussions with prospective students about expectations – theirs and the program’s.

Chakravarti worked closely with individual departments so that seminars could be aligned to allow full-time and part-time students to take classes together.

Synchronous coursework relies on information technology, which posed its own challenges: “we needed to assemble these resources for efficient program delivery.”

He and the faculty created and delivered a new set of research methodology seminars that now provide a common methodology core for all Pamplin Ph.D. programs. Also added were several new departmental doctoral seminars. ■ —Soakhan Ho



▶ PROGRAM DIRECTOR Dipankar Chakravarti says his success in recruiting exceptional students suggests a robust demand for such a Ph.D.

PART-TIME STUDIES IN NATION’S CAPITAL

In addition to the Ph.D. in business, Virginia Tech offers a range of other part-time graduate programs in business and technology in the Washington, D.C., area.

These include the MBA (Evening and Executive) and the M.S. in business administration (hospitality and tourism management concentration).

SEE BACK COVER FOR MORE INFORMATION ▶

Pamplin Advisory Council Reception

The Pamplin Advisory Council gathered for its annual meeting on campus on Sept. 21-22. BELOW: The crowd enjoys the reception that kicked off the event.

TOP: Left to right: Todd Headley, Robert Sumichrast, Juliann Headley.

BELOW: Left to right: Alana Thomas, Steven Parker, Chantal Ampah, Bruce Carver, Mark Catangui



PHOTOS: KESEY STONER



OLIVER MEREDITH

▶ AMONG THOSE ATTENDING the student group poster session in the Pamplin atrium just before the Pamplin Advisory Council meeting were (left to right) Mike Clarke, Mark Krivoruchka, Starlette Johnson, Kendley Davenport, and Brad Casper

LEFT TO RIGHT, FROM FRONT ROW:
 Jim Hatch, Laura Fields, Mary McVay
 Bruce Carver, Robert Sumichrast, Lisa Ellison
 Kendley Davenport, Bridget Ryan Berman, Karla Gill
 Shirley Edwards, Chris Xystros, Brad Casper
 Kevin Lane, Steve Parker, C.E. Andrews, Chris Shean



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Annual fall picnic

The school year got off to a festive start, despite wet and windy weather, with the annual Pamplin picnic for students, faculty, staff, and their families on the lawn of the Holtzman Alumni Center. ■



PHOTOS: CHRISTINA FRANUSICH

> SEE MORE AT: WWW.MAGAZINE.PAMPLIN.VT.EDU



Business Horizons fall career fair

A record 2,700 students seized the opportunity to meet and interact informally with representatives from more than 150 employers at the Business Horizons fall career fair.

“We had our earliest sell-out to date, with employer booths sold out in mid-July,” said Jennifer Carty, associate director of Pamplin career services. The event was followed by formal interviewing by more than 50 companies the next day. Pamplin’s majors are routinely among the 12 majors most sought after by recruiters visiting campus, according to the university’s Career Services office. ■

OLIVER MEREDITH

Virginia Tech vs. West Virginia game

Alumni cheer on the Hokies at the West Virginia-Virginia Tech game. ■



Bonnie Gilbert, Shirley Edwards, Demi Heider, Madi Edwards, Bob Edwards



Erik Wishneff, Jane Wishneff, Erin Parker, Preston Parker

PHOTOS: BONNIE GILBERT



BRITTANY LESTER

Apex CIE advisory board meeting

With the “best view in Washington” as a backdrop, advisory board members of the Apex Systems Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship gather for a group picture during their fall meeting at Top of the Town in Arlington, Virginia. ■

LEFT TO RIGHT: Kim Shanahan, John Emery, John Malone, Jonathan Ebinger, Win Sheridan Nelson Chu, John Kinzer, Trenor Williams, Jamie Marraccini, Chiny Driscoll, Doug Juanarena, Derick Maggard, Jonathon Perrelli, Brian Karlisch, Kristen Badgley, Doug Stewart, Rick Sullivan, Anthony Beverina, Paul Lombardi, Sonu Singh, Sean Collins, and Wayne Chiang

International student reception

Pamplin welcomed its students from other countries at a reception organized by its international programs office. The 173 international students, including 16 exchange students, represent 35 countries. “We now have Pamplin Global Mentors to assist incoming international students, and we have started Blacksburg Global Community Connections to connect the community and our international students,” said Jennifer Clevenger, director of global study abroad. ■



PHOTOS: OLIVER MEREDITH

SEE MORE AT: WWW.MAGAZINE.PAMPLIN.VT.EDU

Receptions for alumni and friends

National Capital Region



TOP: Yiling Xu, Jack Maher, Jordan DeDona, Elizabeth Mitchell, Shannon Zhao
BOTTOM: Parth Patel, Casey Do, Robert Sumichrast, Jessica Parker, Jennifer Carty

Hokies on Wall Street



TOP: Morgan Maguire, Alexander Lonstein, Joe Fletcher, Paige Sullivan, Ari Horowitz
BOTTOM: Matt Winston, Bridget Ryan Berman, Sherry Mohan



Charlotte, N.C.

Aislinn Smith, Andy Griesinger, Elizabeth Mitchell

AMY WEISHAAR

ALUMNI

MIXING BUSINESS AND MEDICINE

Transplant doctor taps Pamplin degree to drive surgical program to top ranks

Just over a year ago, Dr. Joe Scalea (BIT '02), a liver, kidney, and pancreas transplant surgeon, was tasked with expanding the University of Maryland Medical Center's pancreas transplant program in Baltimore as its new director. The program was far from meeting its potential, and Scalea sought not just to expand these life-changing surgeries but to partner with other medical specialists to build a multidisciplinary team for diabetes care.

Under Scalea's leadership, patient evaluations for potential pancreas transplants have grown seven-fold, and the pancreas transplant rate is up 116 percent.

He takes pride in noting that the program is now ranked No. 1 in the U.S., according to the United Network of Organ Sharing, for combined kidney-pancreas transplantation, a procedure performed when kidney failure results from severe diabetes. The medical center is among the top 5 centers nationally in volume for all forms of pancreas transplantation.

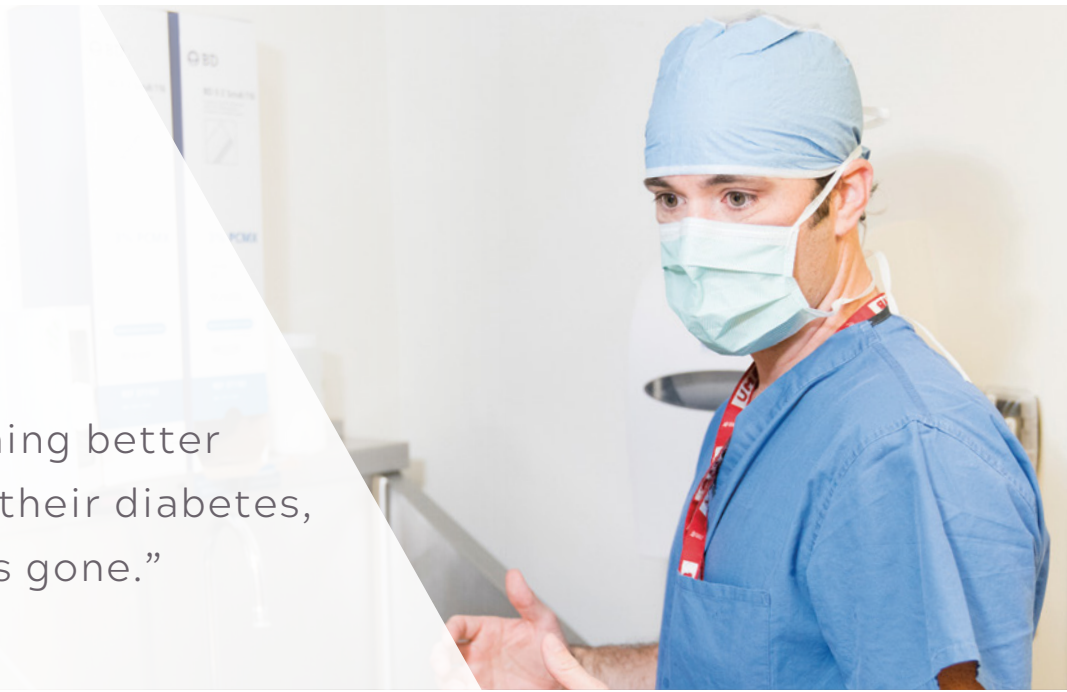
Combining medical and business acumen, Scalea has also helped develop medical devices, including one to cool donor organs and a novel system for moving them around the country, inventions for which provisional patents have been filed.

"Joe likes to live at the intersection of business and medicine — a place where he can effect real change beyond the walls of his own hospital," said his wife Meghan, who is also a Virginia Tech alum, with a 2003 degree in communications.



▶ DR. JOE SCALEA

PHOTOS: CHRISTOPHER LEWKOVICH, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND MEDICAL SYSTEM



“There is almost nothing better than telling patients their diabetes, as they’ve known it, is gone.”

► **SCALEA SAYS** his Virginia Tech education has helped him tackle some of the challenges he faced as director of pancreas transplantation.

Scalea himself finds it particularly fulfilling to be able to give sick people a second chance at life.

In the case of pancreas transplantation, Scalea’s patients are diabetic, and nearly always suffering from kidney failure and other complications, including neuropathy, retinopathy, gastroparesis, and severe glucose instability, he said. After surgery (often combined pancreas-and-kidney transplantation), they no longer require insulin or kidney dialysis and are able to lead a normal life.

“My job is very high energy, very high risk, and very high reward — there is almost nothing better than telling patients their diabetes, as they’ve known it, is gone. It’s such a privilege to get to do this for a living.”

Scalea earned his medical degree at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in 2007. He completed a post-doctoral fellowship in transplant biology at Harvard Medical School, an internship and residencies in general surgery at the University of Maryland Medical Center, and a fellowship in transplant surgery at the University of Wisconsin.

Scalea, who is also dually appointed as an assistant professor of immunology, also directs a translational immunology laboratory. His research grants include support from the American Surgical Association, the Greenwall Foundation, and the National Institutes of Health.

He has a long list of accolades, including the American Surgical Association’s Junior Investigator Award and the Shock Trauma Center’s Hero Award, and is a

member of the prestigious Alpha Omega Alpha honor society.

Medicine aside, Scalea is a musician and a painter and has written for *The Atlantic* magazine and *Readers Digest*.

Tracing his accomplishments with the hospital’s transplant program back to his Virginia Tech education, Scalea said, “All of this progress is a direct result of the skills I gained while a business information technology major at the Pamplin College of Business.”

A knowledge of calculus, macroeconomics, and supply chain management, for example, has helped him tackle a number of the challenges he faced in his role as director of pancreas transplantation.

Reflecting on the state of transplantation at his center and across the country,

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

“Building a network on strong relationships is another lifelong skill I learned at Pamplin.”

Scalea said “my numbers would suggest that several thousand patients should have been offered pancreas transplants over the last decade.” He added that “methods for tracking appropriate referrals, optimizing organ allocation from locations across the country, and unification of multidisciplinary transplant teams have been lacking.”

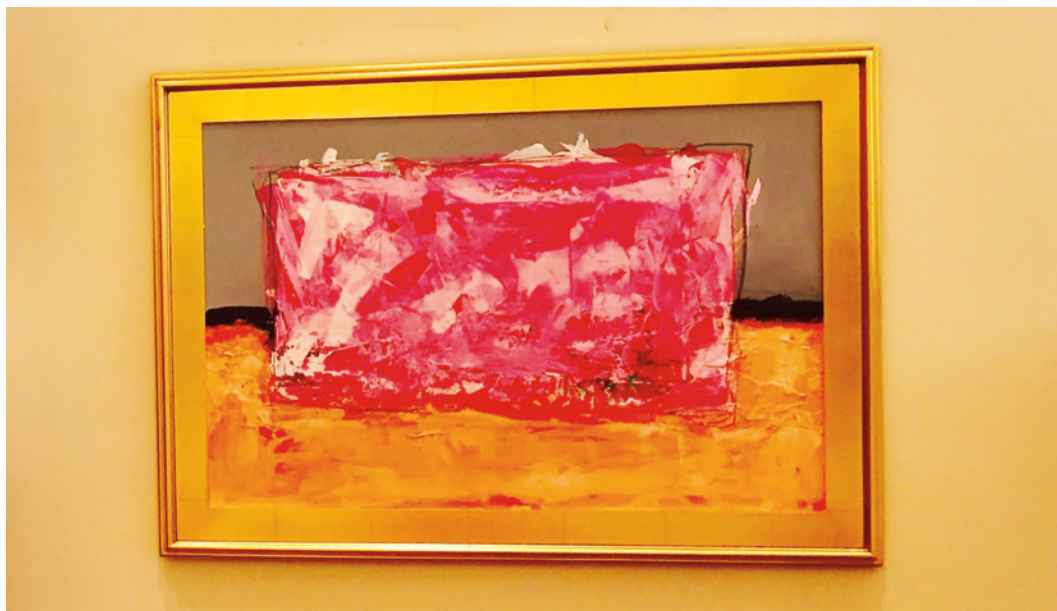
Studying all the factors leading to the relatively low numbers of transplants, Scalea drew on his business background to find solutions that would optimize the flow of the internal referral pattern and would lead to an increased number of transplants, enhancing access to care for sick patients.

He has also focused on how temperature and ergonomics affect the quality of an organ for transplantation, which led to the development of a patented cooling system able to preserve the organ for about an hour and a half while it is prepared for surgery.

Teamwork, said Scalea, also plays an integral role when identifying best candidates for pancreas transplantation. In a comprehensive, multidisciplinary effort, he reaches out to others in the medical profession — endocrinologists and nephrologists, for example — who are deeply involved in caring for patients with diabetes to draw on their knowledge and recommendations for surgery.

“Interpersonal interaction is important in any industry,” said Scalea, “and the medical profession is no exception. Building a network on strong relationships is another lifelong skill I learned at Pamplin.”

As busy as Scalea is, he also seeks to give back to his alma mater in an active, meaningful way. In 2012, he initiated con-



COURTESY OF JOE SCALEA

► MEDICINE AND THE ARTS is another strong combination for Joe Scalea, who enjoys painting. His subjects have included abstract, interpretive representations of organ donations and a rendering of the pig he studied in Harvard’s laboratory. Scalea has shown his artwork in local galleries, including the Foundry in Washington, D.C., and on the walls of the Baltimore City Hall. “Painting is a great way to decompress after the kids go to bed,” Scalea said.

tact with Virginia Tech to find a way to talk to students interested in medical careers. Since then, he has been a guest lecturer in Careers and Medicine, a fall course in the Honors College open to Virginia Tech students in any major.

“We are very fortunate to have a surgeon as passionate and caring as Joe who takes the time to come to Blacksburg to

share his professional experience and insights with students,” said Carol Robinson, director of health professions advising at Virginia Tech. “When Joe is here, he devotes his attention entirely to them. He is a great role model and motivator.”

Robinson said it is common for students to cite Scalea in their final papers.

“Joseph Scalea’s presentation stood out



▶ **SEEKING TO GIVE BACK** to Virginia Tech, Scalea regularly speaks to students about medical careers as a guest lecturer on campus.

most to me. Not only is his profession impressive and interesting, but he is the kind of person that I hope to be...Overall, I was thoroughly inspired leaving class that day,” one student wrote.

Another student said, “Dr. Scalea’s presentation was motivating and inspiring. He was in our shoes at one point, as a Virginia Tech undergraduate student. He worked

hard, went to medical school, got his medical degree...and now he is living his dream. He has the ability to transplant organs that add years to a patient’s life...Dr. Scalea illustrated what it means to make a difference and pursue a passion to help others.”

Scalea has credited Pamplin retired professor J.F. Robinson with being an inspiration for him.

“Dr. Robinson encouraged education beyond the classroom,” Scalea said, “and I left Virginia Tech with a real passion for learning that has greatly influenced my life and career.” ■ —Barbara Micale and Sookhan Ho

Building a new business analytics tool for decision making



JESSAMINE KANE-WISELEY

An investor evaluates a proposal. She considers the proposed budget, the potential earnings, the time needed for return on her investment. Decision models use these numerical inputs to evaluate the probability of success for the proposal, guiding the investor's decision. However, in reality there is more influencing her decision than the numbers alone.

"Decision science models must incorporate qualitative factors such as interpersonal communication influences, including explicit and implicit efforts to persuade," says Michelle Seref, assistant professor of business information technology.

Seref has a Ph.D. in operations management and a master's degree in industrial and systems engineering, but she also acquired an additional master's degree in

rhetoric. "Rhetorical theory has a rich history in political science and communication studies, but I believe it has very relevant applications to business problems."

Seref is developing a new method called "rhetoric mining," which she says can be used to quantify more complicated language expressions of persuasion. "Many text mining techniques use frequency analysis of simple word lists or basic language components," she says. Text mining is used in business research to analyze patterns in language as a component of decision models. Seref's new method advances text mining techniques by capturing more sophisticated language phrases identified as rhetorical moves.

"Rhetoric is the intentional, strategic

use of language for the purpose of persuading an audience to accept a particular idea or take a particular action," says Seref. She explains that rhetoric mining involves taking a small sample of an available text resource and examining it for different kinds of rhetorical moves. These moves involve using trust, logic, emotion, storytelling, ideological references, or metaphors as persuasion tools.

The method then uses a sequence alignment algorithm that can quickly identify equivalent phrases. "This research is an interdisciplinary approach, including theories and methods from rhetoric, digital humanities, machine learning, data mining, text mining, and computational biology," she says.

“Rhetorical theory has a rich history in political science and communication studies, but I believe it has very relevant applications to business problems.”

Seref elaborates on the investment decision example: “The proposal may include background statements on the project engineers’ experience (an ‘ethos’ move) or present stories of successful experiments (a ‘narrative’ move). Identifying specific phrases as intentional language choices for the purpose of persuading the investor allows us to incorporate an important qualitative factor into decision analytics models.”

Seref is using her rhetoric mining method to study the influence of persuasive language on crowd-funding decisions, product-purchase decisions, investment decisions, and other business applications. “I am very excited to be working with several colleagues in Pamplin on a variety of business data,” says Seref. “I believe our research team is producing high-quality work with innovative methods and new insights to decision analytics.”

In addition to her rhetoric mining research, Seref is also working with other researchers on a new context component network model to visualize the connection of language phases indicating context patterns. This research enhances decision models by incorporating context patterns, an improvement to current topic models used in text mining.

An award-winning teacher, Seref has worked with Alan Abrahams to develop the BIT Showcase event and the department’s undergraduate teaching assistantship program. The showcase, held every semester, allows company sponsors to view junior and senior student projects from decision support systems classes. Sponsorship of the event supports the latter program, in which top students from previous semesters serve as teaching assistants, offering other students additional help and mentorship.

Seref has also won the Pamplin Outstanding Diversity Award and has chaired the Pamplin Diversity Case Competition for multiple years. She has received Safe Zone diversity training. Diversity and inclusion are important issues for her, she says. ■

—Dan Radmacher



SHELBY LUM

VINCE MAGNINI

Virginia agritourism booms

Agritourism is booming in Virginia, Vincent Magnini, associate professor of hospitality and tourism management, found in a study he co-authored that was released recently.

While agritourism is growing nationwide, Magnini believes it is growing especially fast in Virginia. “About one-third of the venues in Virginia have come online in just the past few years,” he says. “We have all the natural assets, including mountains and beaches and really good highway systems that make it easy to get to these venues. Many venues can be reached in 30 minutes from major metro areas.”

Agritourism includes activities that allow members of the public to visit farms or ranches for recreation, entertainment, or education.

The study – prepared by Magnini, Martha Walker of the Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia Tech, and Esra Calvert of the Virginia Tourism Corporation – found a substantial impact on Virginia’s economy from agritourism. Total economic activity stimulated by the sector was about \$2.2 billion in 2015.

Though Northern and Central Virginia had the highest concentration of venues, every region in the state has a number of agritourism venues, the study found.

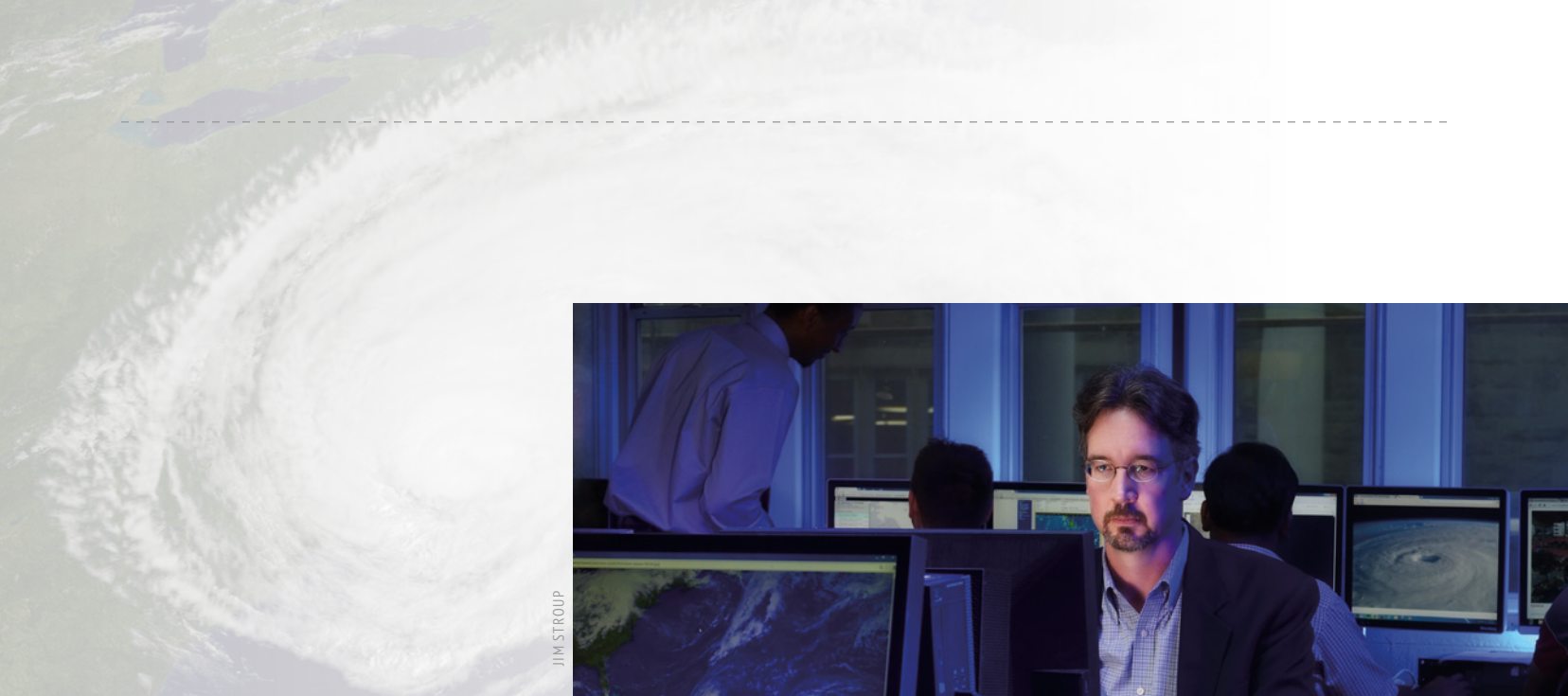
Across the state, the study identified about 1,400 agritourism establishments, which averaged more than 5,300 visitors per year per venue. The economic activity generated by this visitation supports approximately 22,151 full-time equivalent jobs around the commonwealth.

“I was surprised by the diversity of offerings in Virginia,” says Magnini. “The traditional view of agritourism is ‘you pick ‘em’ places for berries and vegetables, but there’s so much more than that. About a third of the venues host weddings, reunions, and other events. There are wineries and breweries. And Virginia is one of the top Christmas tree producers in the country.”

The study was funded by the Governor’s Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund, the Virginia Tourism Corporation, and Augusta, Halifax, Loudoun, and Rockingham counties. ■

—Dan Radmacher

> SEE MORE AT: WWW.MAGAZINE.PAMPLIN.VT.EDU



Bracing for impact

Disaster resilience requires proactivity

Business information technology professor Christopher Zobel is a member of the Virginia Tech team that recently received a \$3 million grant from the National Science Foundation to establish a graduate education and research program in disaster resilience and risk management.

Zobel's research focuses on humanitarian logistics and developing a better understanding of supply chain resilience.

He and other faculty members on the multidisciplinary team will teach a series of seminars and facilitate a regular speaker series.

Along with completing coursework in their home departments, the master's and doctoral student trainees will collaborate on projects from the program's two main research thrusts: hazards and physical impacts, and socioeconomic impacts and recovery, which Zobel will co-lead.

Students will also get the opportunity to build on their own research and coursework through summer internships and

workshops on stakeholder interaction and engagement.

Disasters evolve from natural or man-made hazards, Zobel said, and can have "cascading effects on individuals, communities, governments of all levels, economies, and ecosystems."

Zobel and other team members note that disasters are very complex events that require leaders in academia, government, and industry to have deep interdisciplinary understanding and cultural sensitivity in order to effectively prepare for and respond to them. The team stresses the need for proactive policies, smart planning, and active engagement of communities and stakeholders — all critical factors in limiting the potential impacts of a disaster.

Zobel said more than 30 faculty in six colleges are involved in the training effort, which is connected to larger university-wide initiatives in the areas of global systems science, integrated security, intelligent infrastructure and human-centered communities, and policy. ■

—Soakhan Ho

▶ CHRIS ZOBEL is helping to train graduate students in research on disaster resilience and risk management.

┌ Disasters can have cascading effects on individuals, communities, governments of all levels, economies, and ecosystems.

Seeking solutions to complex problems in society

From privacy and security to the downsides of shopping and employee success



Downside of exceeding expectations

“When employees go above and beyond their regular job tasks to please customers or take care of sick patients, we know that customers and patients are more satisfied, and organizational effectiveness tends to improve,” says Jeffrey Arthur, associate professor of management. But can there be too much of a good thing? To find out, Arthur is studying the impact of recognizing employees’ organizational citizenship behaviors on hospitals’ performance and patient satisfaction over time. The goal is to determine how organizations can benefit from encouraging such citizenship behavior by employees without incurring potential costs.



Data security

“Phone apps, medical devices, smart cars, internet tracking, and many other devices collect data about consumers on an intimate level,” says business law professor Janine Hiller, “and that data has the potential to be intentionally shared or criminally hacked.” Hiller will study the legal limits and ethical uses of products and services that are part of the internet of things. She will examine how laws and ethics can most effectively achieve the personal security that can be threatened by data that is collected by large numbers of personal devices.



Privacy decisions

How individuals and groups make privacy decisions is the focus of a study by Tabitha James, associate professor of business information technology. “To test our theory of multilevel information privacy management, we examine how individuals and groups develop rule sets (i.e., norms) that guide what information is released and to whom; under what circumstances a particular rule set is used to guide a privacy decision where multiple stakeholders may perceive some ownership of the information being considered for release; and what risk-benefit considerations may cause the individual or group to make a privacy decision that is counter to the one the applicable rule set suggests.”



Shopping-life balance

Marketing professor Joe Sirgy is studying shopping-life balance. Consumers experience opposing psychological forces, Sirgy says – the satisfaction gained from shopping and the stress resulting from the time and money spent and the negative effects on relationships. “We will test the notion that balance between the forces does play a significant role in consumer life satisfaction. We propose to develop a metric of shopping-life balance and test its validity by showing that shopping-life balance is a significant predictor of life satisfaction.” If the concept is empirically supported, he says, programs can be developed to help consumers maximize the pluses of shopping while minimizing its minuses.

Remembrance: Thomas Wells (ACCT '73) and Kathy Dargo

Gift supports excellence in accounting and information systems

It has been more than four decades, but Wayne Leininger can still vividly remember where Thomas Wells (ACCT '73) sat as a student in the cost accounting class Leininger taught in 1971.

“He sat on the last row, on the right-hand side. I can just visualize it,” said Leininger, retired department head of accounting and information systems.

Wells, who was in his junior year, had a “quiet and reserved” personality — “it was a challenge to get him to participate in class.” But he was also an outstanding student, Leininger discovered — “one of the best students I ever had.”

In fact, when Leininger gave exams, he typically checked his answer key against the answers Wells turned in to make sure that the answer key was correct.

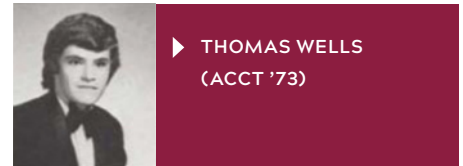
Accounting professor Gene Seago recalls that Wells was in an advanced income tax class he taught in 1972. “He took the class ‘pass-fail.’ Most students who took courses ‘pass-fail’ would do well enough to pass, but no more. Tom attended all classes, was attentive, asked good questions, and consistently had the highest grade in the class on exams. He was an ideal student.”

Wells died of leukemia in 2005 at 54. He started his career at Ernst & Whinney but later moved to Geico Corporation, where he held increasingly important roles, including controller, vice president, group vice president, and chief financial officer, and played a key role during its acquisition by Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway in 1996.

His obituary noted: “The profession he chose was with financial figures. He liked numbers, their precision, clarity, and completeness. He loved to solve complex accounting problems, and did it better than most.”

It included a statement from Geico chairman and CEO Tony Nicely: “When Tom arrived at Geico in 1980, we were just a few years removed from some tough financial challenges; on our way back to financial strength, but still a pretty nervous organization. We needed a keen mind and a calm spirit to help us stay on the right course, and we couldn’t have found anyone who fit that description better than Tom. We continued to benefit from Tom’s wisdom, character, diligence, and financial acumen throughout his career. There is no doubt that we would be a lesser company today if not for him.”

The obituary noted that Wells was known throughout his career for “his uncompromising integrity and his ability to analyze and resolve the most complex financial and accounting problems. He felt that his key role was to always be sure that numbers told an honest story. Aside from his exceptional accounting talents, he gave generously of his time and energy to teach and prepare others for management responsibility.”



Wells’ widow Kathy Dargo, a retired accountant, wanted to make “a legacy gift” to the accounting and information systems department in his memory, said Bob Brown, professor emeritus and a former department head.

The department proposed a research center in financial accounting, Brown said. Over the next couple of years, the proposal was “modified sufficiently to satisfy both parties.”

The final proposal “provided more flexibility to the department and set aside more financial support for undergraduate students than did the original,” he said.

“When the process started, Kathy’s primary residence was in the D.C. area. She made several visits to campus and was a delight to be around,” Brown recalls.



▶ ACCOUNTING PROFESSOR Gene Seago



RETIRED DEPARTMENT HEAD Wayne Leininger ◀



FORMER DEPARTMENT HEAD Bob Brown ◀

At dinner one evening with Brown and other Pamplin faculty, Dargo recounted the numerous meetings her late husband, as Geico CFO, had had with Warren Buffett. During some of these meetings, when a numerical answer was required, Buffett and Wells apparently “had a kind of a contest to see who could come up with the correct answer first,” Brown said.

“She never said who won most often but, from what I heard about Tom, my money was on him.”

John Renner (MGT ’73), managing director of Renner & Company, lived in the same dorm as Wells for most of the time both were students. They took classes and studied together.

“Tom’s quest to learn and excel rubbed off on us,” Renner said. “His enthusiasm to excel quietly challenged us to work harder and hopefully get a higher grade on an exam. I know Tom was, as I am, grateful for the education we received at Tech that launched us off to successful careers.”

Wells, stopping by during one campus visit to see Seago, expressed his appreciation for how well Virginia Tech had prepared him for his business career, Seago recalls.

“His success continues to be a source of great pride for the accounting department, the college of business, and the university.” ■

—Soakhan Ho

Research center, scholarships to honor Thomas Wells, Kathy Dargo

The Department of Accounting and Information Systems

will establish a research center, two professorships, and student scholarships with the initial distribution of an \$8.7 million pledged bequest from the estate of Kathy Dargo, the widow of Thomas Wells (ACCT ’73).

The research center will be known as the Thomas M. Wells and Kathy Dargo Center for Excellence in Accounting and Information Systems.

Wells, who was CFO of Geico, died in 2005. Dargo died in 2016. Her obituary noted that she was a graduate of the University of Maryland, a retired CPA, “an accomplished golfer and an avid dressage rider for 35 years.”

The couple had earlier established two scholarships at Virginia Tech to support students in the Pamplin College of Business and the College of Science: The Thomas M. Wells Endowed Scholarship in Accounting and the Wilbur Francis Wells Memorial Scholarship.

The couple’s generosity will benefit the department and Virginia Tech for years to come, said Dean Robert Sumichrast. “Their support will help us recruit leading researchers and teachers and give future students the chance to receive a world-class education and the skills needed to become productive business leaders.”

Expressing his appreciation, department head Jack Maher said: “We are extremely fortunate to include Tom Wells, with his outstanding intellect and philanthropy, as one of our accounting graduates. We are grateful that Tom believed so strongly in the benefits of the education he received at Virginia Tech that he and Kathy Dargo would establish a center for excellence to enable us to ensure that our students continue to receive an exceptional business education.” ■

—Soakhan Ho



ACIS DEPARTMENT HEAD ◀
Jack Maher

Honors & Awards

NATIONAL



Malone Award

LANCE MATHESON, associate professor of business information technology, received the 2017 Michael P. Malone International Leadership Award from the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities for his career-long commitment to internationalizing business education.



CASE Service Award

TOM TILLAR, former vice president for alumni relations and current special assistant to the dean, received the Frank L. Ashmore Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education for his lifetime achievement in higher education advancement.



Outstanding Woman in Travel Research

NANCY GARD MCGEHEE, head of the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, was recognized as one of the “Top Women in Travel” by Women in Travel and Tourism International. McGehee conducts research on rural tourism development and volunteer tourism management.



Chief Innovation Officers Roundtable

DEVI R. GNYAWALI, head of the Department of Management, presented his research and co-lead the discussion as an expert panelist on the Chief Innovation Officers Roundtable luncheon at the UC Berkeley Haas School of Business. His research interests include co-opetition, innovation, and strategic alliances.



Paper of the Year 2016

ZHENG “PHIL” XIANG, associate professor of hospitality and tourism management, received one of the two Paper of the Year 2016 awards from Electronic Markets. Xiang’s co-authored paper, “Smart tourism: foundations and developments,” was published in the 25/3 (2015) issue.



Best Paper Award

EOJINA KIM, assistant professor of hospitality and tourism management, received the Best Paper Award at the Asia Pacific CHRIE Conference for a paper she co-authored, “Understanding Customer Perception of Restaurant Innovativeness and Customer Value Co-creation Behavior.”



Telly Awards

PRISM, the college’s social media group, received two 2017 bronze Telly Awards for a video promoting the proposed Business Learning Community, now known as the Global Business and Analytics Complex. PRISM competed against professionals in one category and other students in the second category.

ON THE MOVE



BERNARD W. (CHUCK) TAYLOR has stepped down as head of the Department of Business Information Technology, a position he’s held since 1983. Under his leadership, the department grew from a non-degree program with 20 students to a major with more than 1,000 students. As a faculty member, he will teach courses in management science.



ROBERTA S. (ROBIN) RUSSELL has been appointed head of the Department of Business Information Technology. She joined Virginia Tech as an assistant professor in 1983, was promoted to associate professor in 1988, and to professor in 1993. Her awards include the American Society of Quality’s Gyrna Award and teaching excellence certificates.



JANINE HILLER, professor of business law and holder of the Richard E. Sorensen Professorship, has been appointed Pamplin’s director of integrated security. She will work closely with Pamplin administrators in the Blacksburg and National Capital Region to advance the college in the Integrated Securities Destination Area.



SARAH WHITE has been appointed assistant director of development for leadership gifts. She brings a wealth of experience in higher education and relationship management to this newly created role. Most recently, Roberts served in Harvard University’s West Coast alumni affairs and development office.

COLLEGE


Annual Faculty Award for Excellence in Research

FRANK MAY, assistant professor of marketing, focuses on time, intertemporal choice, and self-control. His articles include a study of how memories influence self-control, and a study that finds thinking about how a task is to be completed reduces duration estimates for simple tasks but increases estimates for complex tasks.


Commencement keynote speaker

WAYNE ROBINSON is president and CEO of Career Path Management & Associates, an academic and career services consulting group he founded in North Carolina. He has more than 15 years of experience in the field and has served on the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors since 2014.

The Pamplin Society created an awards program to honor outstanding alumni. The inaugural awards were presented at the annual gathering of the Pamplin Advisory Council in September.


Mentoring Award

NICHOLAS CULLEN (FIN '91) serves as a managing director for Goldman Sachs, overseeing the foreign exchange sales force. He is Pamplin's most senior alumnus at the firm and has been the key driver behind the development of a recruiting pipeline from the college.


Rising Alumni Awards

CHRISTINA TODD (FIN '09) is a vice president and financial advisor at Cary Street Partners. She has been in the financial services industry for more than eight years and has been in a leading financial advisor role since 2013. Todd serves as vice president of the Recent Alumni Board.


Ut Prosim Award

T.J. LOEFFLER (FIN/MKTG '11) is the founder and CEO of Loeffler International. After working as a sales analyst for Goldman Sachs, Loeffler began a search for purpose as an entrepreneur. Today he travels the world speaking a message of hope and meaning, teaching others how to own their identity and discover their purpose.


ASHTON WILSON (FIN '07) is a vice president at Goldman Sachs, trading equity derivatives in the healthcare, pharmaceutical, and biotech industries. He is one of the youngest senior traders in his industry area. Wilson dedicates significant time to helping Pamplin students prepare for Wall Street careers.

Corporate Ambassador Award

DELOITTE has demonstrated long-term support of Pamplin's mission and students. Through its recruitment programs, the firm currently employs more than 600 Virginia Tech alumni. **JON TAILLON** (CEEN '98), a principal with Deloitte, accepted the award on behalf of the firm.


BOBBY BAL (FIN '10) is a director in the mergers and acquisitions group in UBS Investment Bank, where he has completed more than \$50 billion in transactions in the energy, healthcare and industrial sectors. He was promoted to this role after just seven years of industry experience.

UNIVERSITY


Sporn Award

STEVE SKRIPAK, professor of practice in the Department of Management, designed Pamplin's first-year experience course and leads a faculty team in teaching the course and assisting in the students' transition to college.


National Capital Region Outstanding Staff Award

ROBIN LITTLETON, graduate program coordinator, has implemented a system for creating a database of prospects and an extensive communications plan. As a result, the quality of academic advising has risen considerably, according to surveys of MBA students.

Virginia Tech

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