

VIRGINIA TECH Business

MAGAZINE of the PAMPLIN COLLEGE of BUSINESS

Alumni summit

Mobilizing Pamplin volunteers

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NOTABLES

Dean's message

▶ ROBERT SUMICHRAST



Dean Robert Sumichrast

As I write this message, our university, along with the rest of the world, continues to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like others at Virginia Tech, Pamplin faculty and staff have quickly adapted to meet the educational needs of our students in this new era of social distancing and telecommuting.

Our faculty rose to the immediate challenge of converting courses for online delivery. Some faculty members have taught online extensively and very successfully, but many others have not, and some also had reservations about the format. But all took the necessary steps right away, including knowledge sharing from the experienced online teachers, who offered suggestions on effective delivery, engagement, and evaluation to those who wanted advice.

Our faculty are also helping by offering their research and teaching expertise to the general public via local and national media stories. For example, Pamplin faculty members Barbara Hoopes, David Simpson, Derek Klock, and Nancy McGehee, from the departments of business information technology, finance, and hospitality and tourism management, have been quoted in stories about the impact of the pandemic on global supply chains, cyber risk and security, finance and the national economy, and travel and tourism.

Our IT staff members and their student assistants spent countless hours developing training, answering questions, pointing us to university resources, and supplying appropriate hardware and software.

Our administrative staff have also stepped up, responding to the needs of students, faculty, and the broader community and providing direction and support to all of us.

I have heard from many Pamplin students who expressed appreciation for the hard work and assistance they received from our faculty and staff. I am deeply appreciative and very proud of their efforts.

We do not know how our work and lives will change over the next months. The college is looking at possible contingencies and making plans for how we can respond.

Meanwhile, please take care of yourselves, your loved ones, and others in need. I hope that this issue, which highlights engagement, leadership, and service, will encourage or inspire you to make a difference in the lives of others. We have to stay apart for now, but let's come together as Hokies, in the spirit of Ut Prosim.

ROBERT

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National rankings

No. 1 **Master of Information Technology**
(Cybersecurity) · Cyberdegrees.org

No. 1* **Business Information Technology**
(Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods/Business Analytics) · College Factual

No. 3 **Master of Information Technology**
(Information Technology Programs for Veterans) · U.S. News & World Report

No. 4 **Master of Information Technology**
· U.S. News & World Report

No. 3** **Business Information Technology**
(Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods/Business Analytics) · College Factual

No. 4* **Real Estate** · College Factual

No. 4*** **Hospitality and Tourism Management** · QS Top Universities

No. 17 **Best Colleges for Business Majors**
· Money Magazine

No. 19 **MBA** (Evening) · U.S. News & World Report

No. 20 **Accounting** · College Factual

*College Factual "Most Popular" category **College Factual "Top Ranked" category ***Among U.S. schools; international ranking is No. 22

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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 undergraduate and graduate programs in accounting and information systems, business analytics, business information technology, finance, hospitality and tourism management, management, marketing, and real estate. Pamplin emphasizes the following areas of study: business intelligence and analytics; human condition; innovation and entrepreneurship; and security, privacy, and trust. 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.

You can support the Pamplin College of Business through your estate, through your retirement account, or with a gift that produces lifetime income for you. To learn more, please call Elizabeth Mitchell at 800-533-1144 or email elizhm@vt.edu.

WEB MAGAZINE

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PCLE: A new community for leadership and engagement

The Pamplin College of Business receives significant support from its 20 advisory boards and their nearly 480 members. Now, a new group of alumni and friends has been formed to promote communication and collaboration among those boards.

Established in the wake of the Pamplin Engagement Summit last October, the Pamplin Community for Leadership and Engagement comprises representatives from the advisory boards guiding the college and its departments, centers, and programs. The PCLE is led by a six-member board of directors appointed by Pamplin dean Robert Sumichrast.

“There has never been a mechanism to provide for communication, collaboration, and sharing of ideas and best practices among the boards,” said Jim Hatch (MACCT ’72), who will serve as interim chair of the PCLE board until it elects a chair and vice chair.

The PCLE will provide that framework, Hatch said, with the aim of enabling more effective, efficient, and strategic overall support for Pamplin and its units.

The PCLE itself is not an advisory board, Hatch noted, and is not authorized to recommend changes to the college’s boards. “Our mission is to strengthen the individual and collective impact of Pamplin’s advisory boards and to foster a stronger sense of community among them,” Hatch said.

PCLE members, who currently number 18, will serve a three-year term. The group, which held its inaugural meeting in December, will meet twice a year during the meetings of the Pamplin Advisory Council.

“We believe that great things can come from this association of volunteer leaders who share a common passion for Virginia Tech and Pamplin,” Hatch said.



ABOVE: Jim Hatch addresses the plenary session of the summit.

ABOVE RIGHT: Negar Jamshidimehr

RIGHT: James Wu



PCLE board of directors

JIM HATCH, Interim Chair; **SHIRLEY EDWARDS** (ACCT ’82), Pamplin Advisory Council; **NEGAR JAMSHIDIMEHR** (FIN ’11, MACIS ’13), Accounting and Information Systems Emerging Leaders Board; **KYLE KORTE** (FIN ’02), Finance Advisory Board; **PHIL MOORE** (ACCT ’00, MACCT’01), Business Information Technology Advisory Board; **JAMES WU** (ECON ’01), Marketing Industry Mentoring Board; **CHRIS XYSTROS** (ACCT ’84), Accounting and Information Systems Advisory Board

2020 Virginia Tech Entrepreneur Challenge



GLENN FEIT, of grand prize winner QuickTech, pitches the team’s product.

The 2020 Virginia Tech Entrepreneur Challenge was won by QuickTech, a business and engineering team that took the grand prize of \$15,000 for its medical technology venture.

Eight teams made it to the final round of the campus-wide student startup competition in February. The teams competed for recognition of their initiatives as the best business model and a chance to win up to \$40,000 in cash awards and prizes.

The event, organized by the Apex Center for Entrepreneurs, brought together students, successful alumni-entrepreneurs, and industry partners.

The judges were Chiny Driscoll, founder and CEO, MetiStream; Eric Heffernan, principal, Grant Thornton; Fourd Kemper, partner, Woods Rogers LLP; Rob Cummings, co-founder, Deal Cloud, and managing director, Falfurris Capital Partners; Russ Thomas, CEO, Availity Health; and Sean Finney, senior consultant, Appian. The event was sponsored by 1901 Group, Grant Thornton, Woods Rogers, and Silicon Valley Bank.

QuickTech comprises Pamplin student co-founders Glenn Feit, a management major, and Gregory Grande, a marketing major, and fellow team members Jacob Merizian and Thomas Grady, from the College of Engineering. Their venture aimed to “facilitate faster, easier, and more affordable orthopedic recovery through new technologies.”

Second-place winner Scientiach won \$10,000 for its proposed autonomous vehicle to sample soil. Third-place winner Lookbook won \$5,000, pitching a mobile-friendly marketplace for renting and selling clothing. Fan favorite LUV won \$5,000 for its proposed sun protective and sustainable clothing line.



PAMPLIN ALUMNI LIFE
CYCLE PANELISTS (from
left) Shirley Edwards,
Kenneth Cooke, and
Negar Jamshidimehr.

RIGHT: Kevin Lane addresses
the plenary session of the
Oct. 10-11, 2019 summit.

Alumni summit: Mobilizing Pamplin volunteers

"Please don't raise your hand for anything," Erik Hoffman (ECON '93, FIN '93, PSCI '93) recalls his wife quipping before he left for a meeting as a new member of the industry advisory board for Virginia Tech's real estate program.

She was only partly kidding. Hoffman is an attorney at a large Washington, D.C., law firm that specializes in affordable housing and community development. Representing project developers keeps him busy, as does serving on the boards of two nonprofit housing organizations.

Getting involved with another group would mean additional obligations. But he had joined the Virginia Tech board because he wanted to help guide the real estate program and its current and future students. "People are sometimes nervous to raise their hands at meetings, because they think they are going to be tasked," Hoffman said. "But you're there already. You should take it to the next level."

Kenneth Cooke (ACCT '92) has been a steadfast donor to Virginia Tech since graduation: "I did not make much money, but I had to give something, because I had such a great experience, and I thought I needed to be financially committed." His gifts grew in size as his career flourished. Now a vice president-controller at American Express (see p. 12), Cooke also seized opportunities to expand his ties with the university.

Inspired by other alumni, Cooke accepted one invitation to join the accounting

and information systems advisory board, and later, another, for the Pamplin Advisory Council. "It's as simple as someone calling and asking you to get involved," Cooke said. "I was asked, and I said 'yes.' Along the way, I started asking others to get more engaged." And, as a result, he said, he has gotten to know alumni he never would have met otherwise.

For Shirley Edwards (ACCT '82), being an active alum evolved naturally from her student leader days, as president of Beta Alpha Psi. As a young accounting professional, she returned to campus as a recruiter for her firm and classroom speaker on industry topics. These activities, she said, kept her connected with campus and, she said, "very importantly for me, with the faculty."

"Maintaining those connections really kept me grounded with Pamplin and the university, so that as I progressed in my career, that level of involvement continued to progress." Edwards, a partner at EY, joined her department's board and eventually the

"Maintaining those connections really kept me grounded with Pamplin and the university."

—Shirley Edwards

Pamplin Advisory Council. "And as I moved through those iterations of alumni engagement, so did my philanthropy."

Hoffman, Cooke, and Edwards were among the 300-plus alumni and friends who showed up for Pamplin's first-ever Engagement Summit on Oct. 10-11, 2019 at the Hotel Roanoke.

The event brought the college's senior volunteer leaders — members of Pamplin's 21 organizations of alumni and friends — together with Dean Robert Sumichrast and Pamplin department heads and other



Erik Hoffman joined the Real Estate Advisory Board because he wanted to help guide the real estate program and its current and future students.





“I really feel that that momentum is truly in Pamplin right now. I want to be a part of that.”

—Kenneth Cooke



program leaders to discuss the state of the college’s alumni engagement (see sidebar 1) and the role such activities — including board service, philanthropy, and event participation — can play in the college’s efforts to transform business education for the 21st century through its planned Global Business and Analytics Complex.

“The summit was an unprecedented networking opportunity for us to exchange ideas, partner with one other, and plan to shape the future of the college,” said Sumichrast afterwards.

The event’s timing, he said, reflects the launch of Pamplin’s new five-year strategic plan and coincided with the public kickoff of Boundless Impact: The Campaign for Virginia Tech, which seeks to raise funds and engage alumni and friends.

The summit included Sumichrast’s state-of-the-college address, remarks by Virginia Tech senior vice president Dwayne Pinckney, and breakout sessions on mentorship, alumni community building, and the role of volunteer leaders.

A highlight was a panel featuring Cooke, Edwards, and Negar Jamshidimehr (FIN ’11, MACIS ’13), who talked about their service activities at Pamplin and Virginia Tech and their motivations for involvement. The discussion was moderated by Kevin Lane (ACCT ’95, MACCT ’00), who chairs the Pamplin Advisory Council’s alumni engagement committee.

Why is alumni engagement important? Such

activities, Lane said, helped the college achieve what it has so far, but “we need more to get us to where we want to go — and we have to be more deliberate, more intentional, in our outreach.”

There are challenges to overcome, opportunities to seize. How best to recruit new supporters? What are unexplored possibilities, tools, blind spots? What motivates alumni to get involved?

Some alumni find philanthropy fulfilling, while others are animated by classroom speaking and advising and mentoring students. “We want to approach alums in ways that resonate with them and that will enhance their experience with and affinity for Pamplin,” Lane said.

The college is especially interested in drawing from underrepresented groups, including younger alumni and black alumni. A more diverse volunteer community would help attract a more diverse body of students and faculty members. Said Cooke: “Not just black students, I want LGBTQ+, disabled, Indian ... I want more of everything that makes us better.”

Younger alumni, with their priorities of building careers and tending families, have been a particular challenge to engage.

Jamshidimehr, a tax manager at EY, is among the

PERHAPS THE GREATEST

legacy of an alumnus, said Kevin Lane (top), is in the other Hokies they inspire and whose lives they touch or make a difference, not just in building successful careers but in developing a deeper and richer relationship with Pamplin and Virginia Tech.



THE SUMMIT was an unprecedented networking opportunity, said Dean Robert Sumichrast.

Alumni, engagement defined

The Pamplin Advisory Council has adopted the definitions of the Council for Support and Advancement of Education (CASE) for alumni and engagement.

In short, alumni are graduates of Virginia Tech as well as others with a prior academic relationship with the university, including non-graduates, certificate holders, and distance or lifelong learners.

Engagement comprises activities that help build a lasting and mutually beneficial relationship between the university and its alumni. These are activities that alumni value, inspire their loyalty and financial support, and involve them in supporting their alma mater’s mission and reputation.

CASE categorizes the activities as volunteer (board membership, student mentoring, and classroom speaking, for example); experiential (not just a series of special events, but experiences that inspire alumni while promoting the institution’s mission and reputation), philanthropic (all forms of financial and in-kind support), and communication (interactive and informative communication, including social media posts and “likes” and class notes submissions. ■



young alums who have stayed actively involved. As a student, she had “benefited tremendously” from her interactions with and mentorship from active alumni and professors, “specifically, Drs. Reza Barkhi, Debra Salvador, Larry Killough, and Eugene Seago.” As a result, she was eager to similarly give back as soon as she graduated.

As the vice chair of the Accounting and Information Systems Emerging Leaders Board and a PUMP mentor, Jamshidimehr advises students that they do not need to wait 10 or 15 years after graduation to start giving back, “because giving back is not solely monetary contributions — mentoring is what you can be doing as soon as you graduate.”

At the other end of the spectrum, alumni who are in retirement or nearing it represent a singular opportunity for the college. Such veterans could be tapped to be speakers, mentors, teachers, Edwards said. “We’ve got to capture that energy and not let that slip away.”

Lane has been working on what he calls Pamplin’s alumni lifecycle framework. “Over the last year we have built a basic design that will be the foundation of the framework that we will refine into a detailed design that we can then operationalize.”

Tackling the many tasks ahead will take a village of volunteers. “We have to take full advantage of all the talent we have, and we need everyone’s help,” Lane said. “Everyone’s opinion matters and can help shape how we engage in future.”

Perhaps the greatest legacy of an alumnus, Lane said, is in the other Hokies they inspire and whose lives they touch or make a difference, not just in building successful careers but in developing a deeper and richer relationship with Pamplin and Virginia Tech.

Said Cooke: “I really feel that that momentum is truly in Pamplin right now. I want to be a part of that.”

For Hoffman, showing up is half the battle. Stepping it up means stepping forward, following up, taking on, “producing a real deliverable.” He’s ready to roll up his sleeves. ■

-Sookhan Ho

DEAN Robert Sumichrast addresses the state of Pamplin at the summit plenary.



EVENTS

Engaging alumni and friends

Some 300-plus participants, including members of Pamplin's 21 organizations of alumni and friends, gathered for the college's inaugural Engagement Summit in October 2019 in Roanoke, Virginia. Over two days of activities, participants immersed themselves in board meetings, receptions, plenary and breakout sessions, and, of course, networking opportunities.

They discussed the future of alumni involvement with and support for the college through volunteerism, experiential opportunities, and philanthropy, as it seeks to transform business education to meet the needs of the 21st century.

CATCHING UP with old friends and meeting new ones at the volunteer appreciation and networking reception at the Taubman Museum of Art.



Teresa Maher, Jack Maher, Chris Xystros (ACCT '84)



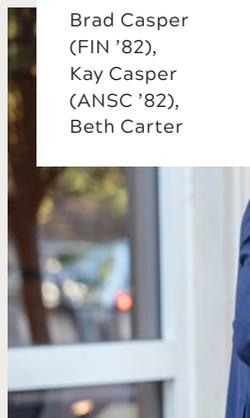
Neha Shah and Amara Wibowo, members of the Dean's Advisory Board of Students.



Rishav Khanal, Srijana Khanal, Donna Wertalik



Dan Lasik (ACCT '86), Debra Emory (MKTG '87)



Brad Casper (FIN '82), Kay Casper (ANSC '82), Beth Carter



ALL PHOTOS BY BRETT LEMON



LEFT: Randy Lucas (ACCT '91, MACCT '92), Tommy Amal (M.S., ALS '14)
BELOW: Dean Robert Sumichrast and Kelly Pickerele (FIN '82) congratulate Mallory Tuttle (M.S., HTM '14), who received an Ut Prosim Award from the college.

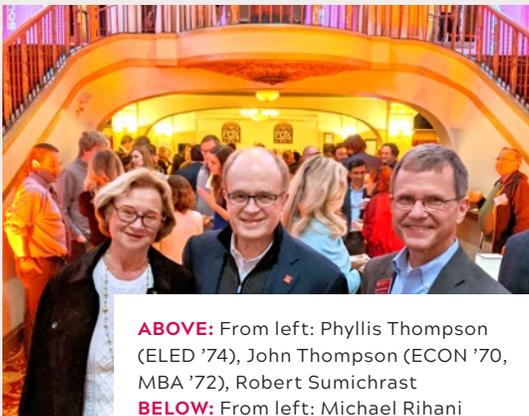


Dan St. Martin, Kim Shanahan (FIN '93)



ABOVE: Pamplin campaign co-chairs Mike Clarke (Fin '83), Bridget Ryan Berman (GBUS '82), Jake Lutz (FIN '78)
LEFT: Debbie Petrine (MGT '78)





MARISE ROBBINS-FORBES

ABOVE: From left: Phyllis Thompson (ELED '74), John Thompson (ECON '70, MBA '72), Robert Sumichrast
BELOW: From left: Michael Rihani (BIT '08), Ben Congleton (BIT '05, CS '05, M.S.-CS '07), Robert Sumichrast



MARISE ROBBINS-FORBES

January Business Horizons

EY, KPMG, and Enterprise Holdings were among the 110 employers that attended Pamplin's January Business Horizons career fair at Squires Student Center that drew 1,660 students. The college also hosted a "Preview Day" in the Pamplin atrium for 14 companies.



COURTESY OF BUSINESS HORIZONS

Northern California campaign kickoff celebration

Pamplin Hokies showed up for Virginia Tech's second regional Boundless Impact Campaign Kickoff event, which drew more than 120 Silicon Valley Hokies to the Fox Theatre in Redwood City, California, in January. They enjoyed a reception and dinner and a formal program. The mingling began some hours before at a reception for a small group of Pamplin Hokies hosted by Jonathan Ebinger (FIN '86) and his wife Mary Louise Ebinger at their home and continued the following day, at a breakfast for Hokies in the area hosted by Pamplin Advisory Council member Phil Bullock (ACCT '86), Apple's global head of tax, at his office on the Apple campus in Cupertino.



MARISE ROBBINS-FORBES

ABOVE: Michael Clarke (FIN '83), Phil Bullock (ACCT '86)



COURTESY OF BUSINESS HORIZONS



COURTESY OF BUSINESS HORIZONS

Winter break study abroad

Dominican Republic

Where better to study resort management than at some of the world's premier resorts? That's what a dozen students did in a program at Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic, led by hospitality and tourism management professor of practice Tom Duetsch. The program comprised classroom lectures and discussions at the Punta Cana Resort and Club and site visits to many of the leading resorts in the area.

Punta Cana offers diverse resort experiences and opportunities for learning, Duetsch said, "due to its recognition as one of the top spots in the Caribbean to vacation." In addition to service, food and beverage operations, event management, marketing, and crisis management, the program examined resort design and the relationship between land developers and golf course communities, the environmental impact of resorts and their sustainability efforts, and the growing businesses of spas, timeshares, cruise ships, and destination weddings.

Among the tour stops were Hyatt's newest all-inclusive properties; the Tortuga Bay Resort (the only AAA Five Diamond property in the country); the La Cana golf course, where the students learned about golf course architecture and received a golf lesson from architect P.B. Dye (son of the late golf course architect Pete Dye); the public medical clinic in the town of Veron, which is often assisted by medical residents in the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine; and a behind-the-scenes tour of cruise ship operations while in port with Miles Clark (HTM '15), who works for Carnival Corporation and flew out to meet the students.

LEARNING about a working farm and the efforts some farms are making to attract agri-tourism visitors with Elso Rijo in Bayhíbe, Dominican Republic.



TOM DUETSCH



TOM DUETSCH

AT THE WESTIN PUNTA CANA RESORT

with Alberto Abreu, vice president for hospitality (right), and Frank Ranieri (center), who helped create Punta Cana as a travel destination more than 50 years ago. Punta Cana now receives almost 6 million tourists a year.

Spain

Students had a chance to practice their Spanish and learn about business, culture, and leadership in Spain during a 16-day program led by management associate professor of practice Reed Kennedy during winter break. Their itinerary included Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Pamplona, San Sebastian, and Toledo, where the group visited businesses that included the Barcelona Stock Exchange, Pastoret Yogurt Factory, and Torres Winery; explored historical and cultural sites such as the Arch of Triumph in Barcelona (below); and went on nature hikes. The program included discussions comparing leadership philosophies and styles in Spain and the U.S. From left, front row: Guy Deschamps, Arellana Bacon. Back row: Suhani Pant, Akshat Chopra, Alicia Booher, Ben Lawson, Kanisha Khatri, Will Pilkinton, Amrit Dhanjal, Delanie Harris, Lauren Elmore, Anastasia Conyers, Destanie Taylor, Reed Kennedy, Kaela Kinder, Myriam Alazar.



TOM DUETSCH

ON THE AIDA PERLA CRUISE SHIP. From left, front row: Victoria Brunson, Shelby Mullen, Gabby Ward, Cameron Buzzard, Olivia James, Won Park Seo. Back row: Jeremias Lachner (crew member), Miles Clark, Julia Hannon, Michaela Smith, Reilly Canard, Lydia Radley, Nicki Winum, Amy Pearson.



REED KENNEDY

Amex VP: Mentoring minorities for success

Kenneth Cooke (ACCT '92) pursued a business degree, dreaming of a big corporate office and a \$30,000 salary that he thought would make him rich. But what has kept him in the world of finance for so many years is very different.

"I thoroughly enjoy working with my colleagues every day to tackle dynamic business challenges," Cooke said. "Also important to me is that, in an environment where there are so few minorities in positions

the global controllership and global accounting policy and advisory group and various other initiatives.

Cooke landed his first job after graduation as an auditor at Coopers & Lybrand, which was a legacy firm before the merger resulting in PwC.

A native of Norfolk, Virginia, Cooke moved to Richmond at the age of seven. When it came time to choose a college, he gave up a full scholarship from the University of Virginia to attend Virginia Tech. "After visiting both campuses, I just felt more welcome at Tech," he said.

But that feeling started to fade as he struggled as an engineering major. Then he met Norrine Bailey Spencer, then Pamplin's associate dean for undergraduate programs. "Having a faculty member who really cared about me was pivotal," he said.

"Dr. Spencer not only talked to me but genuinely listened to me. I was already interested in accounting at that point, and my family fully supported my going that route. She helped me make the switch to Pamplin and recommended ways I could engage more on campus," said Cooke. "Maybe even more important, she followed up with me throughout my years at Virginia Tech."

A few months before graduation, Cooke started donating money to Virginia Tech, because he had strong feelings about "investing" in the university that enabled him to enter the professional world.

Another driving force for his continuing philanthropy: "I want to pay it forward — to help someone behind me not have to work as much as I did to pay for college."

Cooke is a Pamplin Advisory Council member and serves on the alumni and engagement committees. He is the curriculum chair of the Accounting and Information Systems advisory board as well.

Pamplin's Engagement Summit was a great opportunity to network and share best practices, he said. "It was a pleasure meeting people from different advocacy groups and learning where we have synergies and what we can do better.

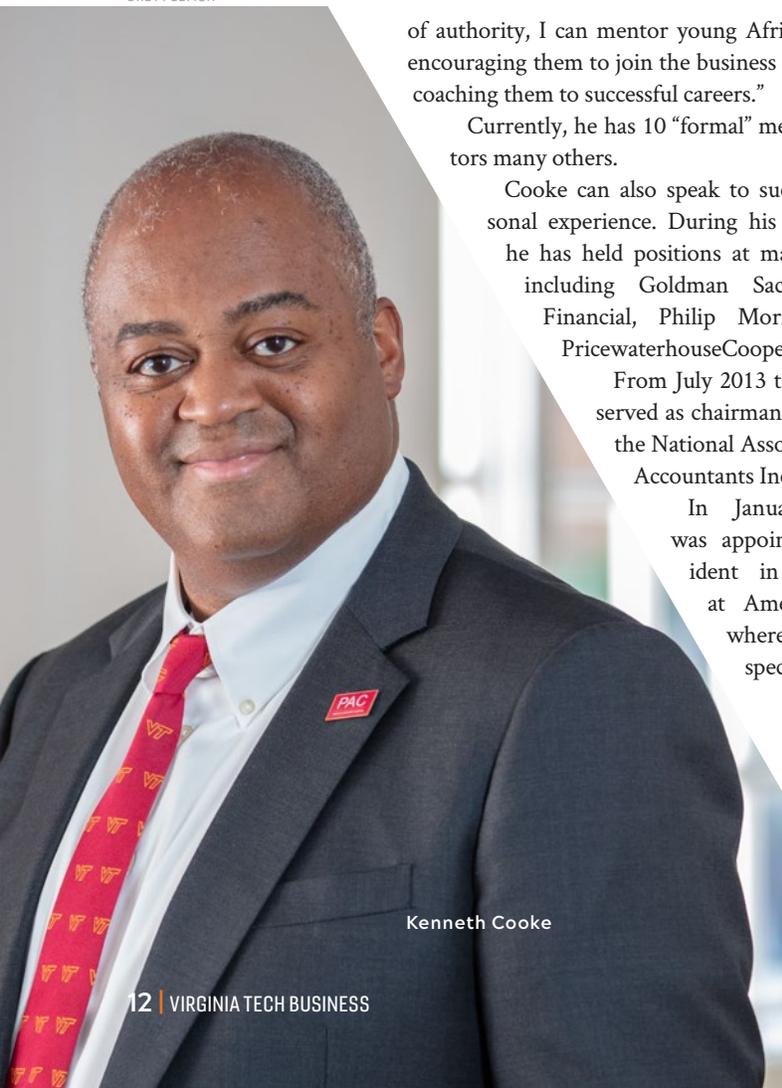
"It is also important that we foster a true commitment to inclusion and diversity by attracting and educating students from across the spectrum — race, age, religion, identity, experiences — who will graduate, lead successful lives, and represent Virginia Tech well." ■

—Barbara Micale

"Having a faculty member who really cared about me was pivotal."

— Kenneth Cooke

BRETT LEMON



Kenneth Cooke

BRETT LEMON

Melissa Milione

Events drive Hyatt exec

Melissa Milione (HRIM '88) says she was not the typical college senior when she stubbornly set her sights on working for just one company. But as it turned out, her instincts were right. Milione has spent most of her successful 31-year career at Hyatt Hotels, where she started as a corporate management trainee after graduating from Virginia Tech.

Milione refers to her vast industry experience as a “lattice” approach, because it includes all aspects of food and beverage management, catering, sales, event planning, and customer service.

In June 2014, Milione was promoted to corporate director of events. In this position, she supports the professionals who sell and coordinate the catering and conference services for all of Hyatt’s full-service hotels in the Americas. In addition, she is responsible for developing and executing all training for the division, delivering innovative technology to support events, and developing talent for the hotels.

A first-generation college student from Christiansburg, Virginia, she entered Virginia Tech as an electrical engineering major. Three years later, she began to question her initial career choice.

“I was working at the Farmhouse Restaurant in Christiansburg where a faculty member from the Virginia Tech hotel restaurant and institutional management program was doing some consulting,” she said. “One day, I was talking to him about career options, and he told me I would be a natural for hospitality. I had no clue I could major in restaurant management. The next day, I switched majors and never looked back.”

She is often invited to speak to students in hospitality and tourism management classes, where she offers tips on interviewing and how to succeed in the workplace based on her long-time experience.

“Being in the hospitality industry, I look for a great personality and attitude, first and foremost. I’m always looking for candidates who make me smile within the first few seconds of meeting them,” said Milione.

One other bit of advice: “Focus on what you can do rather than on what you cannot change. This mindset will help you be more nimble when dealing with unexpected things that come your way.”

Milione said she was excited when she was asked to join the Hospitality and Tourism Management advisory board four years ago. She has served as chair for the past two years and in that position, also serves on the newly created Pamplin

“Focus on what you can do rather than on what you cannot change.” —Melissa Milione

Community for Leadership and Engagement.

Last October, Milione attended the inaugural Pamplin Engagement Summit.

“I found the experience very valuable,” she said. “It was great to engage with board members from other departments within Pamplin, and we were able to identify some best practices on how to improve our board engagement and effectiveness. I was thrilled to learn about Hokie Mentorship Connect and look forward to participating in this program.” ■

—Barbara Micale

James Wu

Brand consultant for change makers

James Wu (ECON '01) ditched his chosen career path in what would have been his senior year at Virginia Tech. Accepting that journalism was not the most lucrative profession, Wu changed majors, then dropped out for a semester to join a local startup before finally graduating after 5-1/2 years.

Today, Wu is a self-employed brand consultant in New York City who tries to pick his clients based on whether they are “building a more just and sustainable world,” even if it sometimes means walking away from work.

Over the past two decades, he worked for different employers, helped build fledgling organizations, and discovered a love of marketing and branding as well as a desire to help mentor students for more fulfilling careers and lives.

Wu began his first job out of college while he was still in school — at Blacksburg startup Nueweb, launched by Virginia Tech students David Catalano (FIN '05) and Aaron Herrington (FIN '00), which later became the digital ad agency known as Modea. To help get the venture off the ground, Wu left school for a semester, to his

parents' consternation. But these were “the early days of the internet,” he recalls, “and there were dreams of getting rich quick!”

He left the firm after four years to explore work in the nonprofit world, landing a job at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, which sparked his interest in organizations dedicated to making the world a better place. It led to another job, at an emerging nonprofit in New York called Acumen that sought to tackle poverty through business and entrepreneurship.

He helped grow Acumen during his seven-plus years there, leading it through a global rebranding. During that process, he was struck by how branding “could give clarity to an organization — not just in terms of marketing and communications, but also in terms of strategy, operations, and culture.”

Seeking more branding experience, Wu joined SYPartners. The firm works at the intersection of management consulting, innovation, and branding, he said. There, he helped lead projects for Coach, IBM, and USA Today before venturing out on his own.

Now in his fifth year as an independent consultant,

"I also try to get a sense of how willing they are to challenge the status quo and how much they identify as risk-takers."

—James Wu

Wu has worked with Sesame Street, Duolingo, National Geographic, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, General Motors, and the United Nations Development Programme.

The clients he takes on are working in such fields as education and health services, environmental sustainability, human rights, clean energy, and criminal justice reform, he said.

When sizing up potential clients, he tries "to get a sense of the organization's culture, values, and ethics, and how its leaders demonstrate those in service of a greater mission," Wu said.

"I also try to get a sense of how willing they are to challenge the status quo and how much they identify as risk-takers. At Acumen, they call this combination 'entrepreneurial moral leadership.' The world is filled with both remarkable entrepreneurs and remarkable leaders with great moral clarity, but rarely do you find these traits embodied in the same person. You need both to enact meaningful change, especially when tackling some of the greatest challenges we face in our communities and society."

Wu, who volunteers with several New York-area education, civic, and business organizations, has also made time to be more actively engaged with Pamplin and the Honors College at Virginia Tech. Invited to join the marketing department's advisory board, he accepted and has been serving as the board's president for about 18 months.

Advising students and inspiring them to pursue careers and lives of great meaning can be very rewarding for board members, he notes. "It's an incredible feeling when you unlock curiosity, belief, and courage in a student. Personally, I hope I can inspire more than just a few to think about how 'Ut Prosim' can fit into their careers."

Wu, having attended Pamplin's inaugural Engagement Summit last October (see p. 4), thought it was "a great first step in aligning Pamplin's advisory boards around the strategic direction of the college." ■

—Sookhan Ho

Wu's thoughts on branding

BRANDING MATTERS

"The best brands understand that the line between external and internal perception no longer exists. If your brand is all about empowerment, fairness, and transparency, but if you treat your employees poorly and have a culture that's at odds with those values, all the advertising, PR, and clever TikTok videos in the world won't be able to hide the fact.

"The world's top talent want to work for companies that walk the walk. Anyone can go onto Glassdoor and see how people really feel about a company and its leadership. It's important that the words I help my clients come up with don't just sit in a brand book filed away in a drawer but serve as a North Star for how to behave every day. People may fall short from time to time, but they need to be aspirational."

COMMON MISTAKES

It's not just about a logo.

"Many don't understand how intrinsically tied design, language, strategy, and culture are. Branding isn't just about making things look or sound prettier but a chance to solve big challenges, develop greater clarity about the future, and align and excite everyone around that vision."

All need not agree.

"Many do a poor job of socializing the work along the way. The risk of extreme backlash to a rebrand or advertising campaign is significantly minimized through a thoughtful and inclusive process. The challenge is doing this without watering down the best ideas by thinking that decision making should be consensus-driven. If a small percentage of people don't hate the work, you've probably played it too safe."

You're not done when you're done.

"Executing a brand strategy requires an investment in talent and resources, and you can't rest on your laurels. A brand is a living, breathing thing that needs constant tending in order to reach its full potential." ■

BRETT LEMON

Volunteer groups advance Pamplin vision

PANELISTS at the October 2019 Hokie Mentorship Connect Session from left: Joy Capers, Jay Williams, Nick Amorim, Jeanette Flory, Maria Wallace

How can Pamplin make the most of the service that its alumni and friends provide and the resources and opportunities such volunteers, current and future, represent?

How can busy department and other program heads manage such interactions efficiently and effectively? What might be good ways to promote the sharing of ideas and best practices among Pamplin’s volunteer groups?

A total of 21 volunteer organizations — Pamplin Advisory Council (PAC), Pamplin Society, and 19 advisory boards — with nearly 480 members overall serve the college and its departments, centers, and other programs.

The organizations have distinct missions and priorities. They range in size from 5 to 66 members and in vintage from long established to newly minted. Member activities include mentoring students, serving as guest speakers or panelists in classes or special events, advising on curriculum development, assisting in recruiting and job placement, and fundraising.

At Pamplin’s Engagement Summit, the college’s administrators and volunteer leaders gathered to learn about and from each other’s boards, discussing such topics as board governance, shared challenges, best practices, and communications.

The summit featured three distinct breakout sessions, each facilitated by a PAC member: “Hokie Mentorship Connect,” “Pamplin Alumni Life Cycle,”

and “The Role of Volunteer Advisory Leaders.”

Participants were eager to collaborate on shared challenges of their respective boards. They agreed on the need to sustain the interest and momentum created by the summit and to find practical and effective communication tools and processes to share future information and ideas and work together. To that end, the newly launched Pamplin Community for Leadership and Engagement (PCLE) held its inaugural meeting in December (see story on p. 3).

“The premise driving the PCLE is that we can provide a platform for advisory boards to collaborate, share best practice, and increase overall awareness of board, Pamplin, and university activities,” said Jim Hatch (MACCT ’72), interim chair of the PCLE.

They regard it as a great first step but want to know how Pamplin plans to build on the momentum and turn the energy into action, he said. “What are the areas of collaboration, and how can the PCLE drive this? Finally, how do we ensure constructive feedback is heard and acted upon for future events?”

Issuing a “call to arms” at the close of the summit’s plenary session, Kevin Lane (ACCT ’95, MACCT ’00) noted the myriad opportunities ahead for alumni engagement.

“We have to take full advantage of all the talent we have,” he said. “We know there’s more we don’t know, and we need your insights. Data collection begins today, ideation begins today. Every person in the room is officially deputized as a champion of alumni engagement.” ■

—Soakhan Ho



BRETT LEMON

In Memoriam

Jon Taillon (CEEN ’98) died unexpectedly on February 20. Taillon was a principal at Deloitte Consulting in the firm’s national defense, security, and justice sector.

A proud Hokie, Taillon was also Deloitte’s “school champion” for Virginia Tech. At Pamplin, he was vice-chair of the Department of Business Information Technology’s advisory board, which he had served on since 2010 and was expected to become chair of later this spring.

“Jon cared deeply about Virginia Tech and was committed to supporting students and faculty alike,” said department head Robin Russell. “We will miss his leadership, his energy, and his heart.”

Pamplin dean Robert Sumichrast said: “Jon was an actively engaged alumnus and made many contributions to advance the university he loved so much. We extend our deepest condolences to his family and to his Deloitte family.” ■

Providing the student perspective

Being in a meeting with dozens of accomplished industry professionals and veteran academic officials may make some undergraduates a little anxious. Intimidated, even. Not Ben Kennedy.

Kennedy, a finance senior, addressed a breakout session at the Pamplin Engagement Summit, after a department head expressed a wish for student assistance with advisory board activities and other volunteer outreach as well as regret that not all students are comfortable interacting with alumni. There can be an “intimidation factor,” the administrator noted.

As if on cue, Kennedy, who is co-president of the Dean’s Advisory Board of Students, introduced himself to the meeting participants and offered to provide more information about his group to anyone interested. “If you’re looking for those great students that are rocking and rolling in your department,” he declared, “they are on the Dean’s Advisory Board of Students.”

These students have succeeded academically, he said, and are in leadership roles in the organizations for their major. “If you want to contact them, reach out to me.” Kennedy then gave out his cell phone number, repeated it for good measure, and invited people to call.

His own confidence aside, Kennedy acknowledged that “engaging with business leaders or professionals is very intimidating for a lot of students.” He added: “It is usually something we do not have practice with. We spend so much time around people our age that it can become uncomfortable to speak with successful adults. Even though business leaders or professionals want to engage with students, it is easy for the student to feel like they will mess it up somehow and just avoid the interaction.”

What motivated him to speak up was that “we have exactly what they were looking for. Our members come from all over Pamplin and have already taken steps to improve Pamplin, so the interest is there as well.”

Kennedy, who joined the student board in September 2018 “because I wanted to make Pamplin better for Hokies to come,” has been co-president since May 2019, sharing duties with Neha Shah.

Forging ties with alumni can benefit students

greatly, notes Kennedy, who has chosen the Certified Financial Planner option and is an officer in the Virginia Tech student chapter of the Financial Planning Association. “In the Financial Planning Association, most of what we do is build networks between students and alumni. We have presenters from industry come in every week. This is how students build connections — many of them find their jobs through these presenters.”

And though getting employed is important, Kennedy advises his fellow students not to lose sight of networking’s other possible values. “I haven’t seen students make a lot of connections with alumni for the sake of mentorship. Rather, it seems to be the alumnus is in the field or at the company the student wants to be at, so that is why they end up connecting. Ongoing mentorship isn’t fostered when students are just looking for a job.”

He recalls some reassuring mentorship he received from one such connection last year. He

“As students, it is awesome to have our input taken seriously by the dean of our college.”

—Ben Kennedy

had accepted a summer internship with the Golub Group near San Francisco and felt nervous about his upcoming transition.

“One of the presenters had lived in Virginia his whole life like I had and was moving out there. We exchanged contacts and talked about what we were nervous about, excited for, and what prompted the change. Talking with him through his transition and moving to a place where he did not know anyone made my own transition a lot smoother.”

“As students, it is awesome to have our input taken seriously by the dean of our college,” said Kennedy, who also served on Pamplin’s strategic planning task force. “Being on the board, we can see the changes that ideas from our meetings have had, and it feels good knowing that you are never too young to make a meaningful contribution.” ■

—Soakhan Ho



Ben Kennedy

Team work and hands-on learning, international style



SHAWN SPROUSE

PRESENTING their Singapore Management University project roadmap during a class presentation in February 2020, from left: Andrew Barstow, Hannah Vaas, Grigori Martirosyan.

In the internet age, it's common for collaboration to occur among members of a business team who are based in different countries. But such team members aren't usually undergraduate business students.

In a recent Pamplin College of Business course, nine seniors participated in a project with one of Asia's top business schools, Singapore Management University (SMU), to develop software it wanted to aid student learning.

The project was part of "Business Analysis Seminar in IT," a capstone course for the decision support systems concentration in business information technology, Pamplin's most popular major.

The endeavor ignited last spring when Alan Abrahams, associate professor of business information technology, won a \$2,500 grant from Pamplin's international programs office. Last summer, he flew to Singapore to plan the course with SMU faculty members Venky Shankararaman and Swapna Gottipati.

SMU wanted a multi-platform app, Abrahams said, that its students could use to monitor their progress, as shown in peer reviews, across each project the students would undertake.

The software would be developed using the Agile Sprint method, he said. In that fast-paced method, a software component is fully described, designed, developed, and demonstrated to the client every two weeks, a period called the "sprint."

"Agile" requires small teams, so Abrahams divided the nine students into two teams. Members were responsible for their own specific phase throughout the course, whether it was designing, coding, or testing.

At the conclusion of each sprint, SMU would provide feedback via video, Abrahams said. The goal was to have a "minimum viable product" at the end of each cycle. Ultimately, the teams became so efficient that they delivered their final sprint in half the allotted time, he said.

Speed was not all the students learned. "It was great for them to get exposure to the way system development operates overseas," he said. "It also gave them a deeper appreciation for cultural differences."

For example: "Students got exposed to different modes of assessment. They began to understand that, at least in this overseas location, there is a heavy emphasis on self-assessment — internal developmental goals — not a course grade."

Then there were the practical issues of communications and time zones — Singapore is 12 time zones ahead of Blacksburg. Keeping up contact was crucial, Pamplin senior Yunhe Li said, and timing, work synchronizing, and employing different means of interacting, such as video or email, were all part of the real-world international experience.

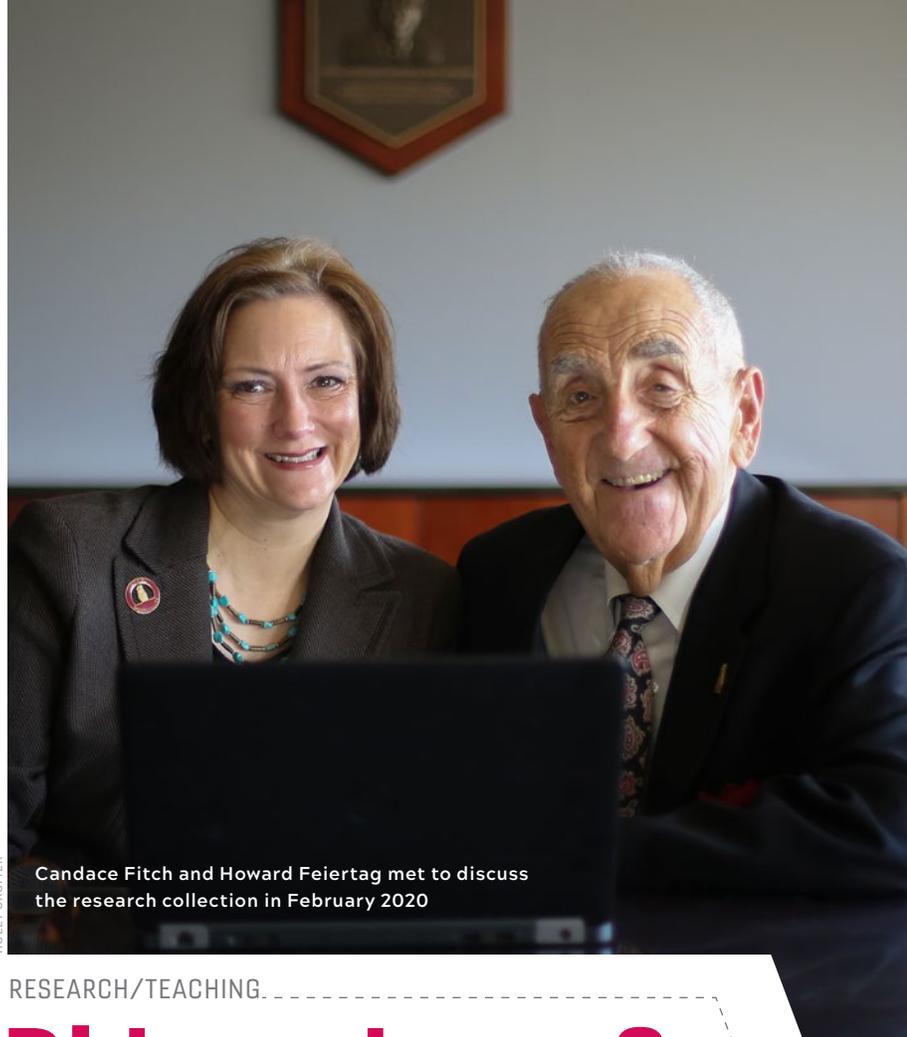
TOP: Responding to questions about their project roadmap, from left: Quinn Anderson, Elise Dixon, Joyce Tavares. **BOTTOM:** Alan Abrahams says the Singapore project provided lessons in speed, systems development, and culture.



SHAWN SPROUSE



SHAWN SPROUSE



Candace Fitch and Howard Feiertag met to discuss the research collection in February 2020

HOLLY GROMER

RESEARCH/TEACHING

Did you know?

The Feiertag Hospitality Academy-to-Industry Research Collection makes hospitality research easily accessible to industry professionals, academic scholars, students, and others.

Named for Howard Feiertag, a longtime instructor after whom Pamplin's nationally and internationally ranked hospitality and tourism management department has also been named, the electronic collection has been growing steadily since it was established in 2017 in University Libraries' VTechWorks.

Feiertag sought to bridge the gap between industry and academe through an open source of research and information on hospitality management for industry leaders and practitioners as well as academic faculty and students.

The collection has so far gathered 689 submissions of summaries of works that include academic articles, trade or industry articles, and electronic theses and dissertations.

"Our goal is over 800 by May," said hospitality and tourism management instructor Candace Fitch, who is overseeing the collection's growth and development. Graduate student assistants under her supervision create and submit the summaries.

The collection covers wide-ranging topics in hospitality, including sales, revenue management, hotel operations, and hotel management.

"It has garnered more than 1,750 views, averaging over 50 views a month — with no advertising or marketing to the industry," Fitch said. "It has been viewed in 42 countries that we track, the most visitors being in the U.S., France, Germany, United Kingdom, Canada, and China." ■

-Sookhan Ho

Svetlana Filiatreau, Pamplin's director of international programs, said that a few Pamplin undergraduates had studied at SMU in 2018 and 2019 through the college's new study-abroad program in Singapore.

But this was the first international project to follow the Collaborative Online International Learning model, she said. "Pamplin hopes to educate more internationally informed professionals, graduates who are versed in how to do business across cultures and are well prepared for an increasingly global workplace."

Pamplin's office of international programs and international programs committee have piloted an embedded study-abroad model, Filiatreau said. "Some required courses offer an opportunity to integrate a short-term, faculty-led, study-abroad component."

The global learning seed grants, like the one Abrahams received, are intended to facilitate this, she said. In the past two years, more than 10 faculty members have received these awards.

Filiatreau especially appreciates Abrahams's innovation. "Many students may never leave the U.S., but through collaborative online international learning, they can get a little international experience without leaving campus." ■

-Mark Filiatreau

Executives Behaving Badly: Why Do They Do It?

For his scholarly research, Robert Davidson has employed licensed private investigators and through them purchased several thousand criminal background checks.

Davidson, an assistant professor of accounting and information systems, studies executive behavior and its effects on the firm. His articles examining CEOs and corporate governance, culture, and social responsibility have been published in the top journals in accounting and finance.

Davidson can also just as readily discuss epic poems and their resonance for researchers of executive deceit — “in ‘Inferno,’ the eighth circle of hell was reserved for fraudsters” — or fine fibers and the economics and ecological impact of cashmere production — “something as innocent as the sharpness of an animal’s hooves or the way it consumes plants can dramatically affect the environment.”

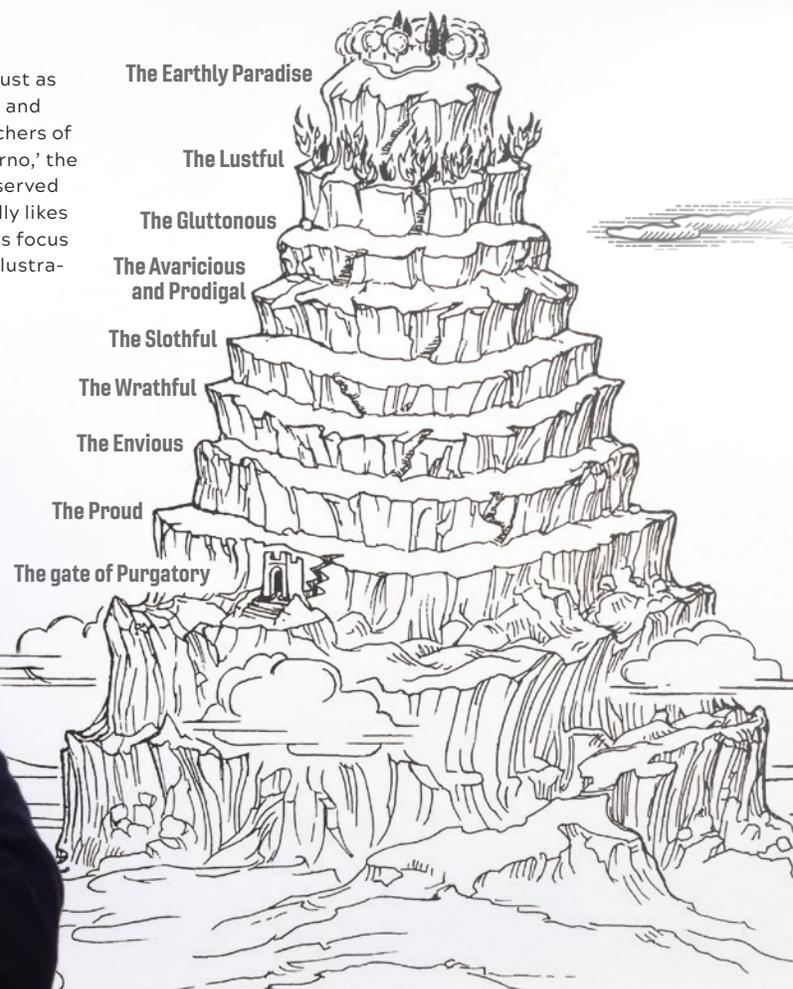
But back to executives behaving badly. Following his latest study, on the limited

success of corporate mechanisms in deterring fraud (see sidebar on p. 22), Davidson is now pondering new research questions, such as how boards of directors have responded to the transgressions that gave rise to the #MeToo movement.

He thinks that boards are now more alert to consumer activism, especially about the personal conduct of senior management. He would like to test “whether this increased awareness is more consistent with the traditional shareholder view of the firm and a focus on pure profit maximization than with a broader stakeholder view that considers the firm’s responsibilities to employees, the environment, and customers,” he says.

“Are these responses motivated by purely economic incentives, or is it something bigger? We might agree that holding corporate leaders to a higher standard of conduct is a good thing, but it is still valuable to understand why boards have recently become much more proactive here.”

Robert Davidson can also just as readily discuss epic poems and their resonance for researchers of executive deceit — “in ‘Inferno,’ the eighth circle of hell was reserved for fraudsters” He especially likes “Purgatorio” (right), with its focus on intentions or motives. Illustration used with permission.



Current events and their media coverage, Davidson says, not only give researchers a strong sense of what questions captivate the public most but also offer teachers a ready source of classroom material.

“Students are really well informed about what is going on in the world. Cases like Enron may be interesting, but if they happened 20 years ago, students rightly question how relevant they are today. The media can bring attention to interesting cases that are taking place right now, and I can have students analyze and compare them to historical data, and see what has changed.”

Davidson, who grew up in Windsor, Canada, completed a bachelor’s degree in accountancy at Wayne State University in 2003. In 2011, he received an MBA and a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, writing his dissertation on whether economic conditions and performance incentives affect the propensity to perpetrate fraud.

Organizations had less appeal as a study subject for Davidson — “firms do not commit fraud, people do,” he says, and the question of who was more likely to do wrong intrigued him.

“After you research enough cases, you realize that it is about a lot more than just ethics, though ethics are important. A lot of good people give in to pressure, or make significant mistakes, and I wanted to learn about who was more likely to commit fraud.”

The work of his dissertation advisor and another faculty member, both of whom have co-authored articles with him, helped shape his research focus — as did memories from his employment at a natural gas company in Detroit, where he did inventory accounting.

When the Enron scandal erupted, his older co-workers were worried about the consequences of a similar implosion at their firm. If that happened, he could just start over without much loss, Davidson, who was still an undergraduate then, recalls thinking.

“But people who had been working at Enron for years and had invested all their retirement savings in Enron stock were basically wiped out. Some of my colleagues were in a similar position; it wasn’t clear what they would do if they lost their jobs and savings as a result of one big shock,” he says.

“I didn’t decide to pursue a career in accounting research with this in mind, but early on, when I started thinking about questions that were worth answering, I thought that anything we can do to understand these types of frauds better and prevent a few cases or detect them earlier is important.”

Learning about the intricacies of tracking billions of cubic feet of colorless, odorless gas along thousands of miles of pipeline (“more

complex than counting tangible goods in a warehouse”) wasn’t the only job experience Davidson had before heading to grad school.

He also worked for a small accounting firm that specialized in property and sales and use taxes and had the Ford Motor Company as its biggest client. Property tax, he discovered, is another thought-provoking topic.

“For firms with large manufacturing plants, property taxes are often much more important than income taxes — and they must be

“A lot of good people give in to pressure, or make significant mistakes, and I wanted to learn about who was more likely to commit fraud.”

—Robert Davidson

paid regardless of whether the company recognizes any profits.

“Manufacturing firms often apply for tax credits related to pollution control or worker safety, and the way in which heavy machinery is depreciated has important tax consequences.

“Large firms also receive large tax breaks on occasion to build or maintain facilities in certain areas; these are often in the form of relief from property taxes.” One notable recent example, Davidson says, is Amazon’s highly publicized process of “having cities in essence campaign to have the firm build its second headquarters in their jurisdiction.”

A third position — at a non-profit organization in Wayne, Michigan, that assessed the in-home assistance needed by people with various disabilities and located appropriate service providers — was “an emotional introduction to the economic problem of scarcity.”

Davidson’s role was in finance and budgeting. “I worked with a lot of dedicated people, and the agency did a lot of good in improving our clients’ quality of life.” Still, it was sometimes “frustrating to not have enough resources to meet our clients’ needs.”

Pursuing a Ph.D. in a business discipline is a full-time commitment, he says, and he was not employed while a graduate student. He also found that though professional experience equips people “with strong institutional knowledge that may help them identify interesting research questions, it doesn’t prepare you for actually producing research.”

Davidson has made time for other pursuits. His interest in textiles — cashmere and wool as well as silk and linen — began with a contemplation of clothing prices: Why does

The Late Repentant
The Negligent Rulers
The Unabsolved
The Indolent

The Excommunicate



cashmere, from goats, generally cost more than wool, from sheep? Is the former inherently better, or just better marketed?

In seeking answers, he has acquired a collection of books and considerable knowledge about the different characteristics of fibers, the problems of poaching and extinction, and the requirements for sustainable production and cultural preservation.

“Beyond science and the chemical differences among wool, fur, and hair, producing and maintaining the highest quality of wool over centuries is an art and a contributor to the culture and economies of many small, pastoral communities.”

As for epic poetry, Davidson says he has enjoyed the stories since childhood, before perceiving their deeper meaning. The pleasure he now takes in them may also stem from the thematic connections that he senses can be made to his scholarly work. “Both show that a lot of life takes place in moral gray areas. Dante encounters many of the presumed heroes in the ‘Iliad’ during his journey through hell.”

His favorite work is “The Divine Comedy,” “Purgatorio” specifically. “It deals more with the intentions or motives behind our actions instead of the outcomes,” he notes.

“We are skeptical when people argue that the end justifies the means, or that doing wrong for the right reasons somehow makes the behavior acceptable. Conversely, our motives have to count for something, right?”

“Applied to my research, we distinguish cases of intentional manipulation (fraud) from honest errors or mistakes (negligence), and, at least legally, that distinction is meaningful.

“But from the perspective of someone victimized by fraud (or other misconduct), how important were the motives that led to the outcome?”

Such concerns imbue his research. ■

—Saakhan Ho

Who cheats?

In-house policies to check fraud by executives have been in place at companies for decades. How effective are they?

It depends, says new research by accounting and information systems assistant professor Robert Davidson. Such policies work when the executives have either no record of law breaking or only small traffic violations but tend to be useless against executives with severe offenses.

“Collectively, our evidence suggests that while governance mechanisms can discipline executives with minor offenses, they appear largely ineffective for those with more serious infractions,” notes Davidson’s article, “Executives’ Legal Records and the Deterrent Effect of Corporate Governance.”

The article, co-authored with Aiyasha Dey, of Harvard Business School, and Abbie Smith, of the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, is forthcoming in “Contemporary Accounting Research,” one of the top journals in accounting.

Previous studies on the subject have treated executives as a homogeneous group, “effectively assuming that they all respond to these mechanisms in the same way,” the authors note.

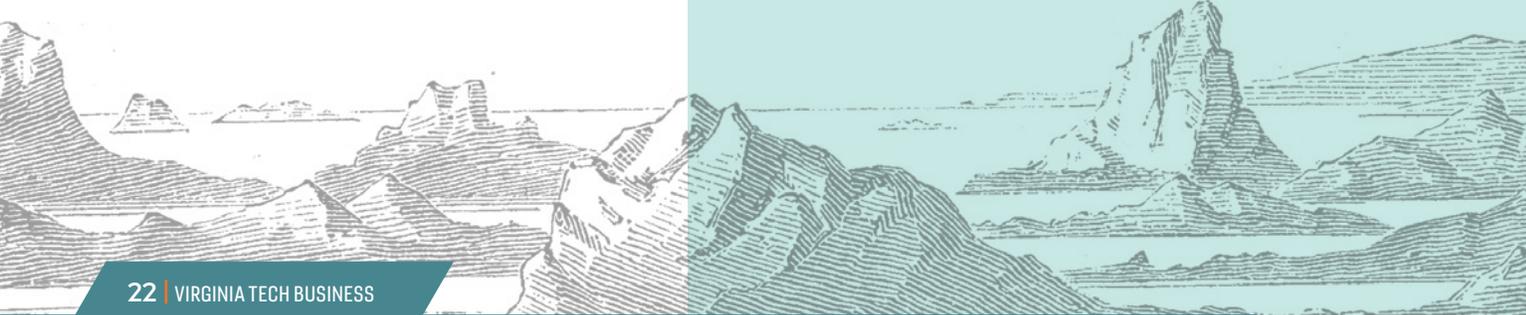
Theirs is the first to find that governance effectiveness varies, within the same firm, according to the “psychological type” of individual executives – personal traits that reflect the extent of their self-control and their respect for rules and laws.

Their findings may be useful to boards of directors and regulators when considering governance mechanisms to monitor and prevent undesirable executive behavior, the authors write.

The study was based on a sample of 281 firms and 1,474 executives over three decades, 1986-2017. Individual records of legal infractions served as a proxy for the executives’ personal characteristics or psychological type.

Offenses include driving under the influence of alcohol, drug-related charges, domestic violence, reckless behavior, and sexual assault.

Looking ahead, the authors note that their results raise questions about the deterrent effect of governance in other corporate contexts and open up new research opportunities. ■



Supporting the Global Business and Analytics Complex



JIM STRIROUP

The Thompsons with President Tim Sands (right) in 2017.

Gregory C. Thompson (ACCT '77), and his wife Kathryn L. Thompson, of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, have made a \$1 million commitment in support of GBAC. Greg Thompson is the executive vice president and chief financial officer of KEMET Electronics Corp. Before joining KEMET, he served in the same role at Axiall Corp. and has held senior leadership positions at other manufacturing, medical products, and technology companies. Thompson serves on the cabinet of the Pamplin Advisory Council. He has served as PAC president and as cabinet chair.



DANA MAXSON

The Clarkes share a light moment with Bob Brown (right) at the 2019 Hokies on Wall Street reception.

Michael W. Clarke (FIN '83) and his wife Kathy Clarke (CT '84), of Vienna, Virginia, have made a \$1 million commitment in support of the Global Business and Analytics Complex. Mike Clarke is the founder and former CEO of Access National Corporation, which was acquired by Union Bankshares Corporation last year, and currently a member of the board of directors of the merged entity, Atlantic Union Bank. He serves on PAC as a member of the cabinet and the strategic initiatives committee. He also chairs the finance department's advisory board.



BRETT LEVON

AT THE OCTOBER 2019 ENGAGEMENT SUMMIT: Pamplin dean Robert Sumichrast (second from right) with Pamplin alumni who work at EY – Brian Benson, Baback Bazri, Negar Jamshidimehr, Shirley Edwards, Dan Lasik, and Tom Bornemann.

EY partners who are Virginia Tech alumni have made a \$1.6 million commitment in support of GBAC. Their past philanthropy has included donations to an employer-matching gifts fund for the accounting and information systems department. EY, which received the college's 2019 Corporate Ambassador Award, is one of the top five employers of Pamplin graduates.

John S. Sepple (MBA '88), and his wife Valerie Sepple, of Highlands Ranch, Colorado, have made a \$500,000 commitment in support of GBAC. Jack Sepple is a senior managing director of Accenture, where he has developed a 30-plus year career that includes leading teams in its cloud practice, infrastructure services, and network operations. Sepple is a member of the advisory board for Virginia Tech's master of information technology program. ■

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