



# The Exchange

THE OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS MAGAZINE ♦ FALL 2010

## COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

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**Tod D. Perkins**, Chapdelaine & Co, New York, N.Y.

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**Peter V. Potwin**, Benson Industries Inc., Portland, Ore.

**Eric H. Schoenstein**, Jensen Investment Management, Lake Oswego, Ore.

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**Ron Susa**, Chevron Corporation, San Ramon, Calif.

**Ken Thrasher**, Compli Corporation, Portland, Ore.

**Jack Wilborn, Jr**, retired (KPMG International), Lake Oswego, Ore.

#### EX-OFFICIO

**Edward J. Ray**, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Ore.

**Ilene K. Kleinsorge**, Oregon State University College of Business, Corvallis, Ore.

## The Exchange — Fall 2010

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*On the cover: OSU-Cascades in Bend, Ore., is home to the new hospitality management program (see story on page 20).*

*At right: Ilene K. Kleinsorge, dean of the Oregon State University College of Business (Photos by Chris Ho)*



## Building Business at Oregon State University

Bexell Hall has housed Oregon State University's business program since it was built in 1922. Nearly a century later, we are bursting at the seams. Student enrollment has grown dramatically, and we expect it to increase as our curriculum expands to help our students meet the challenges of an evolving global economy.

Education and the business world have changed significantly since 1922. For example, today's businesses are more team-oriented than they were a century ago. We must give our students learning spaces that support this new collaborative environment—spaces that make it possible for students to work in partnership with faculty, their peers, and visiting professionals.

With two lead gifts totaling \$16 million, we successfully launched a campaign this spring to build a new home for the College of Business. We are extremely grateful to Ken and Joan Austin and to Al and Pat Reser and their family for their exceptionally generous contributions that have enabled us to make substantial progress toward our goal. Read the full story on page 4.

We're building more than walls. We're building innovative programs that try to stay a pace ahead of exponential change. We now offer more undergraduate majors than any other college of business in the Oregon University System, which allows our students to specialize their education in one or more of nine academic disciplines. In addition, we keep our eyes trained on specific markets that require particular focus, such as the growing hospitality industry. This fall, Sandy Chen is teaching a course that launches our new hospitality option at OSU-Cascades.



In this issue, you can also read about some of the other unique learning opportunities at the College of Business, such as our inaugural CEO Summit, the Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series, and the Integrated Business Project competition, all of which enable students to gain valuable insights from working professionals that will help prepare them for the world outside academia.

Strategic planning at the executive level led to the creation this year of four university divisions that will make us a stronger and more sustainable institution. As a result, we're gearing up to create greater collaboration with the College of Engineering; see page 30 for more information about this exciting step into a bold new future. Also learn how the experience of MBA graduate Sunny Grover superbly proves the point that business and engineering go together like bread and butter, and that balancing a background in technology with solid business savvy provides a great foundation for success.

Sometimes our buttons burst with pride as we watch our students and graduates blossom and begin to truly make a difference in the world. Kegan Warrington and Tate Koenig learned valuable lessons and increased their global awareness when they participated in a grueling six-week journey through Africa to launch a new nonprofit organization that will encourage and support other students to engage in charity projects abroad. We wish them great success in this worthy endeavor. Recent graduates Ryan Armstrong, Monte Gerber, and Dau Nguyen wasted no time in starting an entrepreneurial business venture that serves a unique market off the ground, and we expect to see great things from this trio in the future.

Building business is a cooperative effort and achieving our educational mission is simply not possible without your generosity. Please contact me to discuss how you can help us continue to provide quality programs and facilities for our business students at Oregon State.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ilene K. Kleinsorge". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ilene K. Kleinsorge, Dean  
Sara Hart Kimball Chair



# Building a New Home for Business

By Marie Oliver

Building a world-class business program at Oregon State University takes a village, and no one knows that better than College of Business supporters. Alumni and friends of the college are pooling their resources to fund a new \$50 million home for the university's dynamic, expanding business program that has been at capacity for many years.

Since fundraising efforts began this spring, the college has secured well over half of the \$30 million in private donations needed to erect a state-of-the-art facility in which to educate tomorrow's business leaders. Private gifts will be combined with \$25 million in state bonds, subject to approval by the state legislature. The additional \$5 million in private funds is included in the project to help with start-up costs and ongoing building operations.

Lead gifts include a \$10 million commitment from Ken Austin ('54) and his wife, Joan, of Newberg, Ore., and a \$6 million commitment from the late Al Reser ('60), his wife, Pat, of Beaverton, Ore., and their family. Four million dollars of the latter gift is a challenge grant that will be matched with other gifts to inspire other donors to give by December 31, 2010.

The Austins are co-founders and owners of A-dec, one of the largest dental equipment manufacturers in the world. Joan is also president of Springbrook Properties, which developed and owns the highly acclaimed Allison Inn & Spa.

"As business people, Joan and I see very clearly the need for a great business school—one that is focused on the specific needs of Oregon businesses and their leaders," said Ken. "Our family is glad to help OSU take the next big step forward."

*(Continued on page 6)*

**At left: The College of Business launched a fundraising campaign to build a state-of-the-art facility that will be nearly twice the size of historic Bexell Hall. (Rendering by DECA, Inc.)**

## HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR DONORS

### \$10 million

Joan D. and Ken Austin ('54)

### \$6 million

Patricia Valian Reser ('60), Alvin L. Reser ('60), and Family

### \$1 million

Marian C. and Stephen M. Bailey ('70)

Margie and Jon A. Masterson ('61)

Kate ('83) and John A. Stirek ('82)

Thomas W. Toomey ('82)

### \$500,000 – \$999,999

Jennifer and Donald A. Robert ('82)

### \$250,000 – \$499,999

Dena B. and Larry H. Brown ('58)

Barbara A. and Duane C. McDougall ('75)

Kimberly D. and Tod D. Perkins ('86)

Cynthia Boldman Potwin ('75) and Peter V. Potwin ('72)

Marta and Ken Thrasher ('71)

### \$100,000 – \$249,999

Chris and Steven J. Gomo ('74)

Robert W. Lundeen ('42)





***The new building, shown here as a conceptual representation, will contain classrooms, offices, student service areas, and collaborative learning spaces for the college's growing undergraduate and graduate programs. (Rendering by DECA, Inc.)***

The building will be named in the Austins' honor. In addition to the recent gift, the couple has generously supported Oregon State for many years through their gifts and their service on multiple advisory boards. Their donations launched the Austin Family Business Program and the Austin Entrepreneurship Program.

“The Austins are champions of education throughout the state,” said Oregon State University President Ed Ray. “In addition to their remarkable support of our College of Business over the years, they have also significantly invested in schools and educational programs in their local community. The building on our campus that will bear their name will be a fitting tribute to their contributions to the core

academic programs of the college and an enduring testament to their commitment to future Oregon Staters and indeed to all Oregonians.”

The Austins' daughter and son, Loni Parrish ('81) and Ken Austin III ('76), Loni's husband, Scott ('81), and Ken III's wife, Celia ('76), also are loyal alumni.

Al Reser grew Reser's Fine Foods, a small family business that got its start selling potato salad door to door, into an international brand with 2,000 workers and \$800 million in annual sales. Pat serves as chair of the company. Among other major contributions, the Reser family made leadership gifts to expand Oregon State's football stadium, which now bears the Reser name, and to construct the Linus Pauling Science Center. Their children, Martin ('83), Mark ('88), Michael, Michelle ('90, '93), and Mindy ('94), also strongly support Oregon State and its programs.

The new five-story, 100,000-sq.-ft. facility will be built adjacent to Fairbanks Hall and across the street from Weatherford Hall, home of the Austin Entrepreneurship Program. It will contain classrooms, offices, student service areas, and collaborative learning spaces for the college's growing undergraduate and graduate programs.

“Our goal is to build a 21st-century facility that enhances learning and discovery by encouraging interconnection, collaboration, and creativity,” said Ilene Kleinsorge, Sara Hart Kimball chair and dean of the College of Business, when she announced the building campaign at the 2010 Alumni and Business Partner Awards in Portland, Ore., on May 6. “The facility is the most visible part of our campaign for the College

of Business, but we are building more than just walls—we are building business at OSU for the future.”

The new facility will be nearly twice the size of historic Bexell Hall, which was built in 1922 when the school had 900 students. Today, the college serves more than 2,400 undergraduate business majors and this year graduated the largest cohort of students in the college’s history: more than 550 undergraduates and nearly 60 MBA recipients. Increased student demand will require continued use of space within Bexell Hall for some business programs, and the remainder of the historic building will be used to accommodate growing enrollment in other university programs.

Work on the new building is expected to begin in spring 2013 and completion is slated for fall 2014.

“Coming at the dawn of our second century of operation, this new building signifies the beginning of a very exciting new era for the college. We are profoundly grateful to the Austins and Resers for making this advancement possible,” said Kleinsorge. “Our MBA program is growing, and our emphasis on entrepreneurship, innovation, and experiential learning has made our undergraduate programs especially well attuned to today’s business needs, and therefore increasingly in demand.”

***Left to right: Joan and Ken Austin (center), co-founders of A-dec, celebrate the announcement of the building campaign on May 6, 2010, with OSU President Ed Ray (left) and College of Business Dean Ilene Kleinsorge. (Photo by Chris Ho)***

President Ray noted that promoting economic growth and social progress is one of three key areas the university has identified as core strengths and priorities for investment. “By partnering with the Austin and Reser families as well as other private investors, we will dramatically enhance our ability to prepare future generations of Oregon’s business leaders,” he said.

The building initiative is part of the Campaign for OSU, the university’s first comprehensive fundraising effort. Guided by the university’s strategic plan, the campaign seeks \$625 million to provide opportunities for students, strengthen Oregon’s economy, and conduct research that changes the world. Approximately \$611 million has been committed to date, including gifts early in the campaign that transformed the historic dormitory of Weatherford Hall into a unique living-learning environment for the Austin Entrepreneurship Program—the largest residential program of its kind in the world. ♦



# Alumni and Business Partners Honored

By Abby P. Metzger

The College of Business hosted the ninth annual Alumni and Business Partner Awards in early May 2010 to celebrate prominent industry leaders and their contributions to business excellence. Held at the Governor Hotel in Portland, Ore., the event also marked the official launch of the college's fundraising campaign to build a new \$50 million facility.

The awards ceremony was made possible in part by sponsorships from the Portland Tribune and Community Newspapers and Bank of America, and generous donations from college alumni and friends. During the ceremony, Ilene Kleinsorge, College of Business dean, emphasized the need to build strong programs and cutting-edge learning spaces through strategic partnerships.

"We are building bridges—bridges that make dynamic connections between higher education and the world of business, bridges that link our institutional past with our vision for the future, bridges that span generations of students and alumni, and bridges that bond healthy profits with healthy people and a healthy planet," she said.

**Honorees of the 2010 Alumni and Business Partner Awards (left to right, top to bottom): Larry L. Brown, Doug T. Deurwaarder, Tod D. Perkins, Ron J. Susa, Brian J. Bronson, and Roger W. Hinshaw (Photos by Chris Ho)**

In step with this vision, the college recognized alumni and business partners who have made noteworthy contributions to their respective fields. Five business leaders received an Alumni and Business Partner Award. In addition, the college presented the inaugural Innovative Business Leader Award, which honors an individual who has shown creative leadership throughout his or her career.

The most distinguished award—the Hall of Fame—went to Larry L. Brown ('75). After becoming one of the youngest accounting partners in the history of PricewaterhouseCoopers, Brown helped grow numerous companies and develop exit strategies and initial public offerings. Today, he is repaying the mentors who facilitated his career climb by teaching accounting at the College of Business as its Executive in Residence.

Brown said he was honored to be inducted into the Hall of Fame alongside other prominent alumni, including food industry giant Al Reser, who recently passed away. "I am humbled to be included in the same breath as past Hall of Fame honorees and long-time friends and acquaintances such as Art Tokin, Bernie Newcomb, Ken Poorman, Steve Gilley, Duane McDougall, Ken Thrasher and, of course, Al Reser," he said at the event.

Tod D. Perkins ('86) received the Distinguished Business Professional Award. Perkins is president and chief operating officer of Chapdelaine & Co., a New York-based boutique broker-dealer that specializes in credit trading in the fixed income markets, including the high-grade, high-yield,





distressed, bank loan, and structured products arenas. In 2009, he retired as a Wall Street investment banker after nearly 23 years of experience working with financial services companies.

Brian J. Bronson ('93) won the Distinguished Early Career Business Professional Award. Bronson joined RadiSys in 1999 and today is the company's chief financial officer. Previously, Bronson fulfilled multiple management roles at Tektronix, Inc., where he was responsible for investor relations and domestic and international finance and accounting functions.

Doug T. Deurwaarder ('01) garnered the Distinguished Young Business Professional Award. Deurwaarder joined Cushman & Wakefield in 2003. He specializes in the downtown office market and works on both tenant and landlord representation projects as a brokerage services professional.

Ron J. Susa ('80) with Chevron Corporation won the Distinguished Business Partner Award. Susa serves as finance manager for Chevron Business and Real Estate Services—a position he has held since 2006. He is responsible for finance operations for Chevron's global real estate portfolio, which includes locations in the U.S. and more than 30 countries worldwide. He directs the organization's business analysis activities, capital program, and billing activities.

Roger W. Hinshaw received the inaugural Innovative Business Leader Award. In his position at Bank of America, Hinshaw helped the company expand its market presence during an extremely challenging time for financial institutions. He oversees general operations in the Oregon and Southwest Washington region and leads the commercial banking team.

In addition, the College of Business and the Portland Tribune and Community Newspapers recognized four high school business educators for outstanding instruction and mentorship. Sherril Daniels from Oregon City High School, Oregon City, Ore.; Lucinda Josephson from Legacy High School, Vancouver, Wash.; Judy Story from Mazama High School, Klamath Falls, Ore.; and Kristen Torkelson from Bend Senior High School, Bend, Ore., received the awards. ♦





# CEO Summit Addresses Leadership in Tough Economic Times

*By Abby P. Metzger*

In the midst of a struggling economy, with Oregon's unemployment rate hovering around 10 percent, the College of Business hosted its first CEO Summit to address winning strategies and leadership in difficult times. The Portland Tribune and Community Newspapers sponsored the event, which took place on May 6, 2010 at the Governor Hotel in Portland, Ore.

"During our current economic climate, industries as different as high-tech and retail have faced unprecedented challenges," said Ilene Kleinsorge, College of Business dean. "Yet many are transforming these challenges into opportunities by finding new and more efficient ways to do business."

The CEO Summit was an opportunity for professionals, community members, educators, and students to hear lessons learned from respected industry leaders. The event began with a keynote address from Roger Hinshaw, president of Bank of America's Oregon and Southwest Washington

***Roger Hinshaw, president of Bank of America's Oregon and Southwest Washington division, delivered the keynote address at the inaugural College of Business CEO Summit. (Photo by Chris Ho)***

division. He shared how the company seized opportunity and expanded its market presence during a time when many banks were struggling to survive.

When the recession first hit, financial institutions became a lightning rod for public rage over executive compensation and home foreclosures. Between 2007 and 2010, public trust in banks in the U.S. fell by 39 percent, creating a difficult business climate for Bank of America. “The loss of trust in the banking industry is something I felt continually when I was at meetings, out in the community, and talking to employees—and there’s no doubt it made my job more challenging,” Hinshaw said.

After emerging from the worst of the recession, Bank of America learned five key lessons, which Hinshaw shared at the CEO Summit:

1. Embrace change, even when it’s coming at you 100 miles per hour.
2. When times get tough, communication—both internal and external—becomes more critical than ever.
3. Always be developing the next generation of leaders.
4. Listen to what your customers want, and then give it to them.
5. Provide unwavering support to communities, and don’t underestimate the power of corporate social responsibility.

Hinshaw has personally experienced the importance of adhering to these five principles. “I’ve seen how these principles really help one seize opportunity in challenging times,” he said.

He remains guardedly optimistic about the future. “I’m encouraged by some early signs of growth I’m starting to see, but I’m also mindful of the work still needing to be done if Oregon wants to remain a competitive place to live, work, and do business.”

The CEO Summit featured two panel discussions moderated by Steve Clark, president of the Portland Tribune and Community Newspapers. In the first discussion, panelists from the manufacturing, retail, renewable energy, and other sectors shared innovative strategies to overcome adverse economic conditions.

Panelist Matthew Donegan, co-president of Forest Capital Partners LLC, said the recession has been challenging for his investment firm, but it has also provided a chance to re-evaluate company priorities. “During good times, it’s a lot more crowded and harder to distinguish yourself. During the downturns, you can really differentiate your company through customer service, community support...treating your employees well, and emphasizing communication and values,” he said.

For Chandra Brown, vice president of Oregon Iron Works Inc., product diversity helped her company through tough times. Oregon Iron Works manufactures products for numerous industries, such as the aerospace, marine, and nuclear sectors. “When one area is down, another is up,” she said.

Alysa Rose, president of Rejuvenation Inc., a manufacturer and marketer of authentic reproduction household parts and lighting, had a different story to tell. Her business is tied to

*(Continued on page 12)*

## SEIZING OPPORTUNITY IN CHALLENGING TIMES

### **Roger Hinshaw**

President, Oregon and Southwest Washington,  
Bank of America

## VISION AND STRATEGY: KEYS TO SURVIVING AND MOVING FORWARD IN A CHALLENGING ECONOMY

### **Bob Beisner**

Vice President, SolarWorld Industries America

### **Chandra Brown**

Vice President, Oregon Iron Works Inc.

### **Matthew Donegan**

Co-President, Forest Capital Partners LLC

### **Corey Parks**

Chief Administrative Officer & General Counsel,  
Les Schwab Tire Centers

### **Alysa Rose**

President, Rejuvenation Inc.

## BEYOND THE BOTTOM LINE: COMMITMENT TO PEOPLE AND CORE VALUES

### **Rachel Bristol**

Chief Executive Officer, Oregon Food Bank

### **James Curleigh**

Chief Executive Officer & President, KEEN Inc.

### **Sue Hennessy**

Vice President, Health Plan Services,  
Kaiser Permanente

### **Tom Kelly**

President, Neil Kelly Company



the housing industry, which started to weaken in early 2007, giving Rejuvenation time to prepare for the deeper recession. “Our revenue and growth we were experiencing prior to 2006-2007 covered up a lot of inefficiencies, a lot of bad practices, and a lot of mistakes. So we’ve really had to get smart, and what’s left is an organization that’s strong and poised for growth,” she said.

The 2010 CEO Summit concluded with a second panel discussion on the importance of people and core values in driving company culture, brand, and strategies. James Curleigh, chief executive officer and president of KEEN Inc., said his young shoe and apparel company has core values built into its mission. “When [your company is] born this century, words like sustainability are part of your vocabulary. They’re part of your DNA,” he said. Neil Kelly Company has a similar philosophy. Tom Kelly, president of the remodeling business, said they were exploring solar power and low-energy solutions before sustainability had come into vogue.

Panelists also reflected on how they negotiate company values during times of change. Despite the temptation to lose sight of values during a recession, Oregon Food Bank continues to focus on its most important asset: people. “We believe that no one should be hungry. We believe that food is a human right, and that if we want our communities and businesses to thrive and children to learn, they need access to adequate nutrition,” said Rachel Bristol, chief executive officer of Oregon Food Bank.

A young company like KEEN faces different challenges in keeping with its core mission, which Curleigh illustrated by using a metaphor based on a 1980s-inspired hairstyle: the mullet. “We somehow have to stay simple on the front side, but have a level of sophistication on the back side that truly meets the growth we’ve set for ourselves and what our customers have come to expect,” he said.

Regardless of their business background, panelists concurred that core values should remain an essential function of any enterprise, and in many cases, business ideals are more important during hard times. “We have to make sure that our business solutions are congruent with our core values,” said Sue Hennessy, panelist and vice president of health plan services for Kaiser Permanente.

Overall, the 2010 CEO Summit offered fresh insights into the state of Oregon’s economy and important values that shape company culture. As evidenced by the keynote and panel discussions, the state faces several challenges in the near future, but it also has the opportunity to transform hardship into new business ventures. ♦



*Vice President of SolarWorld Bob Beisner listens as Chandra Brown, vice president of Oregon Iron Works Inc., discusses strategies that her manufacturing company has undertaken during the recession. (Photo by Chris Ho)*

# Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series Features Diverse Business Leaders

*By Abby P. Metzger, Cheri Hahn, and Jason Evans*

The Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series is an opportunity for the Oregon State University and Corvallis communities to gather and hear discussions on relevant business topics. During the 2009-10 academic year, the series featured presentations on unifying brand culture, building business models, and planning for innovation. Lectures were held at LaSells Stewart Center and delivered by prominent speakers in the sports, information services, and high-tech sectors.

## Unifying people in a championship culture

During a lecture in September, Portland Trail Blazers President Larry Miller said that in his three years with the team, he has strived to unify people to help build a championship culture among players and staff. This is no small feat even for Miller, who is responsible for all aspects of the organization's business portfolio, including all team business and basketball activities, and the Rose Quarter. The president of Oregon's only major league franchise has a strong track record of developing a brand culture for large companies. Before joining the Blazers, he worked in support of popular brands, including Campbell Soup Company, Jantzen, and Nike. He became a Blazers fan when he moved to Portland 18 years ago and joined the community in support of the team.

To Miller, a championship culture is not only about winning and bringing in talented players, but also about bringing in "players who have character," he said, "We look not just at what talent the player brings to the table, but also who they are." He said the primary goal of the organization is to hire players who

elicit the pride of Portlanders and Oregonians, and explained that character is more important than whether the team wins or loses. "We can't guarantee that the team is going to win every night they go out there," Miller said, "but we can guarantee that we are going to put a team out there that this community can be proud of every night."

Miller said one thing that has helped build the championship culture is the interconnectivity and shared goals of the entire franchise, including the people working on the business side of operations, and those closer to the court. Leaders in the organization realized the Blazers brand was more than just basketball—the championship culture they sought to achieve amongst players was also important to how they operated as a franchise.

Miller recalled a time around the year 2000 when the Blazers were not as focused on bringing in players with character, and the community lost connection with the team. Since then, the sports franchise has had to rebuild its image and brand essence. "The organization is working together to refocus the brand and build the team on the court," said Miller. "The product is our players."

More recently, the Blazers face a different challenge in maintaining their championship culture: the economy. Sponsor dollars are fewer as the economy falters, but the Blazers are fortunate to be the only major league professional sports team in town and to see ticket sales on the rise. As part of its effort to unify players and personnel, the organization remains conscientious about building mutually beneficial relationships with key partners and sponsors, even in a tough economic climate.

Miller said a key to his success is his passion for going to work every day, which has grown out of the organization's strong team ethic, both on and off the court. "If you are part of a team or organization," concluded Miller, "you put the team's goals first. If you focus on achieving and accomplishing the goals of your team and organization, your individual goals will be accomplished."

*(Continued on page 14)*



## The power of information

By his own admission, Don Robert ('82) was a mediocre business student at Oregon State back in the 1980s. But despite his penchant for pinball and social gatherings, Robert learned valuable academic lessons that helped him become the chief executive officer of Experian, a global leader in the information services industry. "I got a great business education at Oregon State, which formed a platform for me to build a career that gives me tremendous pleasure and enjoyment," he said. Robert returned to his alma mater to deliver the Dean's Distinguished Lecture in October 2009, when he discussed the information services industry and how Experian became a leader in the field.

Robert was appointed chief executive officer in February 2005, with responsibility for Experian globally. Before joining Experian, he held leadership positions at First American Corp, Credco, and U.S Bank. Throughout his career, Robert has overseen approximately 100 acquisitions and numerous divestitures while managing long-range planning and technology initiatives.

Robert said information sharing, when done properly, can benefit consumers and help businesses operate more efficiently. For example, during his travels from London to Corvallis, Robert voluntarily surrendered his credit card number, passport, and other personal information, which allowed him to purchase a plane ticket, check his bags, and use the airport wireless Internet, among other services. "Every day, our lives are touched by an enormous amount of information sharing," he said. "As citizens and consumers, we expect that our information will be used appropriately, legally, and safely. In exchange, we get an incredible amount of convenience and freedom."

Society's increasing dependence on information provides new opportunities for businesses like Experian to enhance consumer welfare by helping them make informed business choices, said Robert. Information service companies may

***Portland Trail Blazers President Larry Miller delivered the Dean's Distinguished Lecture in September 2009. Miller was also the convocation keynote speaker. (Photo by Chris Ho)***



collect data on marketing trends, car and truck performance, Internet surfing habits, and business protocols. He explained that the vast amount of information about consumers is useful only when analyzed properly. As an example, data on used car sales alone may not be relevant, but once Experian applies a confidence score to the data, consumers know a vehicle's performance before buying.

But information access must be tempered with consumer privacy, Robert advised, especially in the face of identity theft. To help people maintain their reputation and credit standing, Experian recently released a new product called ProtectMyID.com, which helps catch identity theft and fraud.

Robert took questions from the audience about the future of Experian, credit scores during a recession, and how to negotiate information access and consumer privacy. Several audience members asked about Robert's background—just how did an Oregon State graduate become chief executive officer of a company with a market capitalization of \$8.5 billion and 15,000 employees in 35 countries? His answer is simple: find what you're passionate about and always try to meet new people.

"If I could leave students with one bit of career advice, it would be this: If you find a job you really love, then you will gain confidence every day that you are a successful practitioner of that job. This confidence will make you better and better, and you will continue to succeed and move upward in your chosen career," he said, adding, "and don't ever eat lunch alone behind your desk. Who can you expect to meet when you eat lunch all by yourself?"

## The law of accelerating returns: Intel's next 40 years

In the third lecture of the series, Justin Rattner spoke about the accelerated pace of technology and Intel Corporation's role in the future of innovation. Rattner is the chief technology officer and vice president of Intel Corporation and father of recent College of Business graduate Noah Rattner.

Rattner's credentials in the world of advancing technology are impressive. He was named Scientist of the Year by R&D Magazine in 1989 and Person of

the Week by ABC World News in 1996. He has received two Intel Achievement Awards for his work in high-performance computing and advanced cluster communication architecture. Rattner joined Intel in 1973 after working for HP and Xerox. He holds BS and MS degrees from Cornell University in electrical engineering and computer science, respectively.

Intel Corporation was founded in 1968 to build semiconductor memory products and moved into microprocessors in 1971. As a leader in silicon innovation, the company develops technologies and products to advance the way people live and work. Rattner focused his speech on technological advances that will impact consumers' lives and advances that Intel will likely spearhead in the next 40 years.

As Rattner explained in his lecture, the "law of accelerating returns" challenges linear views of advancement and describes the exponential growth of technological progress. He said that looking into the future is a way to think about the real potential of science and technology.

In preparation for the acceleration of these advancing technologies, Intel has already developed many next-generation products that will be released in the future. Rattner introduced a few concepts, such as new uses for radio communication that could affect the way individuals function in the world. Radio devices can be found in today's common cell phones, but in the future, integration of radio technology could expand to the extent that any one person might own or use up to 1,000 radios during his or her day. Another potential trend that could affect the way the world uses technology is informative television, which merges television and computing into one system. As for the biological sciences, Rattner described a future where patients can walk into a doctor's office and have their genetic sequence analyzed almost on the spot.

"We are advancing at an extraordinary speed at an ever-accelerating pace that really makes it possible for any of you to create the future simply by inventing it," Rattner said to his audience of students and members of the general public. ♦



# Judges Add Value to MBA Education

*By Marie Oliver*

Each year, candidates for a Master of Business Administration degree at Oregon State University prepare an Integrated Business Project (IBP), which is roughly equivalent to a thesis in other master's programs. Unlike traditional thesis projects, however, the IBP process gives students a crash course in collaborating with a team of peers, writing a business plan for a legitimate entrepreneurial idea, presenting the idea to seasoned professionals, listening to and integrating the professionals' feedback, and competing for venture capital. It gives students on-the-ground experience that helps to prepare them to step seamlessly into their respective careers.

The IBP process would not be possible without the dedicated involvement of numerous working professionals from outside the university who act as mentors and/or judges for the IBP process. Tom Dowling, management instructor and IBP thesis adviser, recruits judges who are venture capitalists, managers with experience in evaluating and funding business plans, and/or entrepreneurs who have built companies around new intellectual properties.

"Judges are selected based on their reputation in the new venture intellectual property space," said Dowling. "The people we have selected are regionally and nationally known for their leadership in the area we're interested in, which is taking innovations to market."

## Mentoring MBA students

Most IBP judges accept several responsibilities when they agree to support the IBP process. The first is to act as informal mentors and, when necessary,

*Judges like Bruce Carpenter provide expertise and feedback to MBA students in developing investor-ready business plans. (Photo by Chris Ho)*

introduce students to other professionals within their industry so the students can obtain valid information upon which to base their business plans.

“These people are on my speed dial and in my Rolodex,” said Dowling. “Many have offered to meet privately with student teams or arrange professional meetings for them.” Oftentimes, the networking students do while developing their business plans can reap valuable business contacts and, in some cases, lead to employment upon graduation.

“A number of our students have gotten jobs as a result of meeting these judges and having the judges pass their resume along to potential employers,” said Dowling. This year, between three and five MBA candidates stepped into new jobs directly attributable to the IBP process immediately after graduating, he said.

Some professionals work privately with the students in a mentoring capacity throughout the year. A mentor with specific knowledge and experience related to the technology that a student team is exploring can help to ground the team in reality.

## Studying the students' business plans

One of the more important tasks the judges perform is to read the students' business plans prior to the IBP competition. Each judge reads four plans and does whatever research they believe is necessary to be the best possible support to the students. “They come with their questions about each of the four plans, which they have read several weeks in advance,” said Dowling. “They come with dog-eared copies—a couple of the plans have been to Europe and back.”

Scott South ('83), chief executive officer of Stevens Water Monitoring Systems Inc. in Portland, Ore., has read student business plans for the past four years and says he enjoys it. “It's really interesting to read the thought process of the MBA students and compare that to the reality of the business world—and bridge that gap,” he said. South said it is quite common for students to underestimate the time to market and the challenges involved in taking a product from invention to commercialization. It is also common for students to either grossly over- or underestimate potential revenue. Of course, if the students did everything right the first time, they wouldn't need the judges to help provide valuable perspective.

## Judging the elevator pitches

All the preparatory work culminates in early April when the judges come on campus for the IBP competition. On a Thursday night, they listen to the students give an “elevator pitch,” which is a 45-second sell intended to spark the interest of a venture capitalist. The elevator pitch gives students the opportunity to really hone their message. Judges take turns role-playing opposite the students and then decide which pitch came closest to engaging their interest.

Several of this year's judges said that what they want most to hear in an elevator pitch is the student's enthusiasm for the project. “What I'm listening for is whether they have an ability to capture my imagination with a compelling idea,” said Jeff Strickler ('82), chief financial officer, chief operating officer, and vice president of corporate services at North-

*(Continued on page 18)*

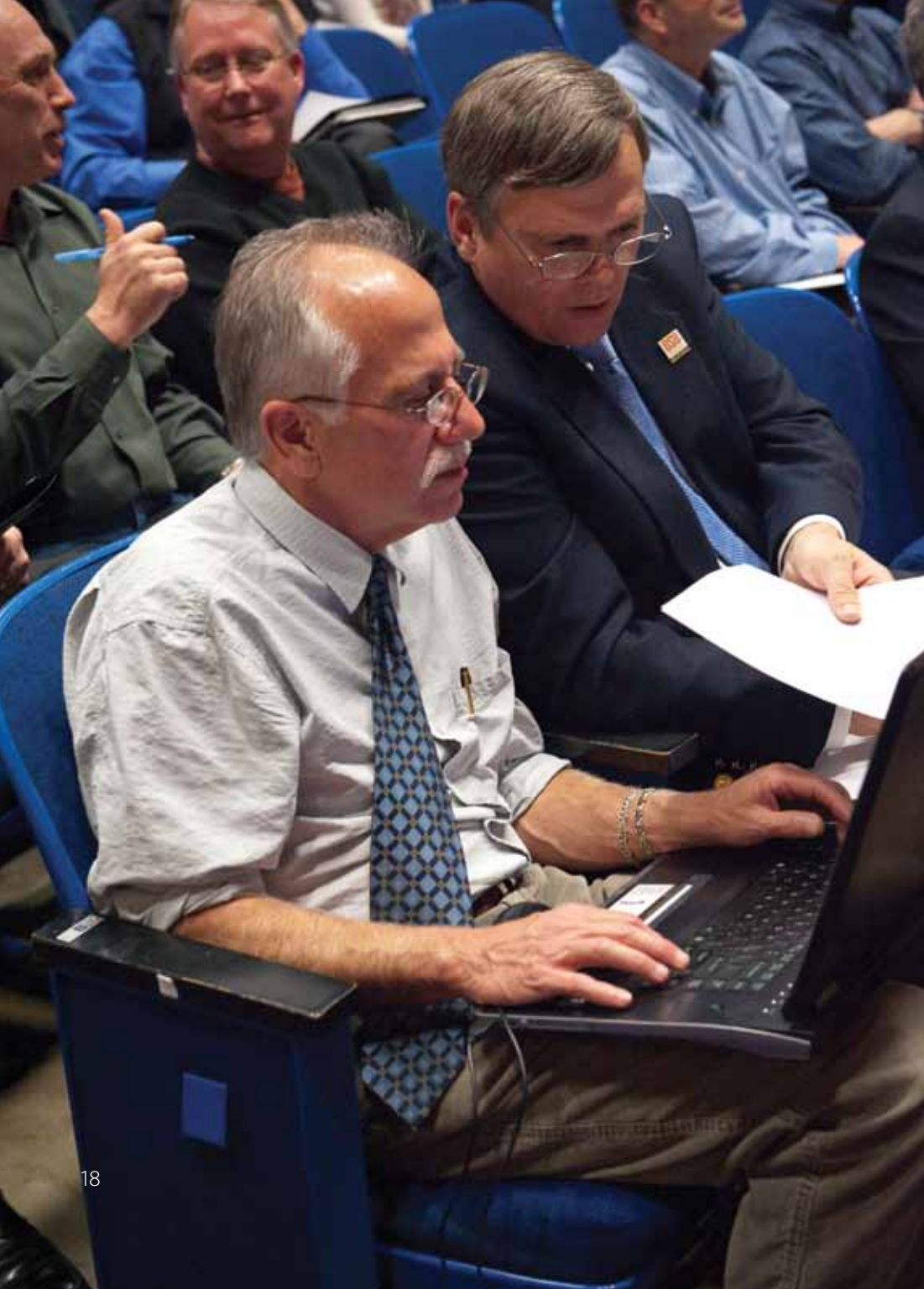
## JUDGES

**Steve Allen**, Attorney and Founder, Belle Vallee Cellars  
**Jeffrey Bock**, Partner, Perkins Coie LLP  
**Larry Brown**, Retired Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers  
**Richard Carone**, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Chairman, Korvis Automation  
**Bruce Carpenter**, Vice President, Transmission and Distribution Services, Portland General Electric  
**Kevin Gartner**, President, Geofolio Software  
**Tim Myers**, Patent Development Manager and Attorney, HP  
**Skip Rung**, President and Executive Director, Oregon Nanoscience and Microtechnologies Institute  
**James Schupp**, Senior Vice President, Investments, Schupp Plemmons Cook Wealth Management Group of Wells Fargo Advisors  
**Kathleen Sego**, Chief Financial Officer, Innovation Asset Group  
**Scott South**, Chief Executive Officer, Stevens Water Monitoring Systems  
**Jeff Strickler**, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operations Officer and Vice President, Corporate Services, Northwest Evaluation Association  
**Craig Topping**, National Account Executive, BullsEye Telecom  
**Dan Whitaker**, retired (co-founder of Rogue Wave Software)  
**Bob Wiggins**, Managing Partner, Mount Hood Equity Partners LP  
**Brad Zenger**, Managing Director, Pivotal Investments

## MENTORS

**Carl Casale**, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Monsanto  
**Steve Dunfield**, Vice President, Service and Support, Korvis Automation  
**Brian Hartman**, Manager, Product Marketing, Trimble  
**Clay Higgins**, General Manager, HP  
**Michael O'Halloran**, Director of Technology I & AT, CH2MHill  
**Grant Pease**, Business Development Manager, HP  
**Stephen Shields**, Partner, SynNovation Works LLC  
**Rachel Todd**, Vice President, Clinical Services and Specialty Practices, Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center  
**Dan Whitaker**, President and Chief Executive Officer, D & W Enterprises  
**Julie Wrazel**, Chief Technology Officer, Home Dialysis Plus





west Evaluation Association in Lake Oswego, Ore. Strickler, who has been a venture capitalist and has worked with emerging businesses for many years, has been a judge since the IBP first started eight years ago. He said it's even better if the team is willing to do more than ask for a meeting. He wouldn't mind hearing them actually ask for money.

"You're really trying to get them across the finish line," he said. "It's hard to say it: 'I need a quarter of a million dollars, and here's why. And if I had this quarter of a million dollars...'" He said he rarely sees that kind of courage from students, but he isn't surprised, because he was just as reticent when he was first learning.

Dan Whitaker ('81), co-founder of Rogue Wave Software in Corvallis, Ore., and angel investor, also has been with the IBP process since its inception. He says he asks several questions to determine whether a team's elevator pitch was successful: "Did they get the essence of what the business does across? Is there viability to it? Can they relate that information very quickly? Do they really understand what their business is?"

Whitaker's view is that students try to get too much information across in an elevator pitch. "Just give us the one-liner, not the five-minute pitch condensed down to 30 seconds," he said. "Give us the ten-second pitch with the personality wrapped around it."

## Listening and responding to presentations

After a late evening, the judges are up bright and early preparing to spend the day listening to MBA candidates present their business plans in detail. Each team presents to three judges in the morning and to another three judges in the afternoon. Dowling said one of the purposes of this part of the process is to help students gain the confidence necessary to make presentations to a board of directors.

"The judges are the people who are in the board room every day," he said. "These are the CEOs, CFOs, CIOs, and CTOs who regularly sit and have young professionals

***College of Business faculty Roger Graham (left) and Jim Coakley (right) tally scores for the elevator pitch segment of the MBA Integrated Business Project competition. (Photo by Chris Ho)***

present to them projects, plans, and ideas. We want students comfortable standing in front of those kinds of people, being questioned by them, and feeling confident when they leave here that they can replicate that experience in the private sector.”

After listening to the students’ longer pitch, the judges offer feedback. Their insights and targeted questions can help move the students’ thinking to the next level and enable them to prepare for their final presentation to the degree-granting committee.

## Assessing viability

Oregon State’s MBA candidates play a role in developing the business case for intellectual properties from technology firms such as HP, medical facilities such as Oregon Health and Science University, and Oregon State University’s Office of Technology Transfer. In the process of receiving their education, their work has the potential to move innovative ideas into the marketplace. The professionals who act as judges for the IBP competition provide invaluable perspective on the commercialization potential for these intellectual properties.

“The value of the judges is to professionally vet cutting-edge science while at the same time mentoring the next generation of business leaders,” said Dowling.

Bruce Carpenter (’79), vice president of transmission and distribution services with Portland General Electric (PGE) in Portland, Ore., stepped into the role of judge for the first time this year. He was intrigued by a presentation about a patented Oregon State innovation that promises to increase solar collector efficiency. Although PGE doesn’t produce solar energy, the company partners with firms that do, so he took the business plan back to his office and passed it along to the company’s economic development team.

“I wanted to see if there’s something here that we could take to the manufacturers of solar,” he said. “Right now the cost of solar puts it outside good economics. Their project suggests that they could increase the efficiency of the solar collector by 40 percent, thus reducing the cost and improving the overall economics

of solar as a viable energy source. If they could truly take 40 percent out, that’s notable. That would be a good thing for everybody.”

## Bridging business and academics

Jim Schupp (’79), senior vice president of investments with the Schupp Plemmons Cook Wealth Management Group of Wells Fargo Advisors in Corvallis, Ore., was among the first judges recruited to work with MBA students. He sees a lot of value to the way today’s Oregon State MBA program is structured. “They’re touching every single part of the business, whether it’s finance, management, staffing—the whole thing,” he said. “So it gives them all that incredible experience so that when they go out in the real world they actually have some real experience. That’s so valuable.”

To support the college’s mission of producing profession-ready graduates, the IBP presentation day ends with a round-table discussion among the judges hosted by Dowling, the dean, and other college faculty. Judges have an opportunity to share their viewpoints on the state of the academic program. “It’s a chance for us to get feedback from these successful professionals,” said Dowling, who is always seeking input from industry leaders about how the MBA program could be improved to meet employers’ needs.

Many of these professionals who give so much of their valuable time to help Oregon State’s MBA program said they reap benefits from their involvement. For one thing, it provides an opportunity for the judges to stay in touch with today’s up-and-coming professionals so they can stay current. “For some of us who have been out of school for at least 20 years, the IBP competition is an educational process,” said Rich Carone (’72), chief executive officer and executive chairman for Korvis Automation in Corvallis, Ore., who has been a judge for the past eight years. “The whole thing is really enjoyable. Not only that, but these guys are smart, so this is a learning experience for us.” ♦



# OSU-Cascades: A Destination for Hospitality

**By Thuy T. Tran**

A view of no less than eight snow-capped peaks in the Cascade Range. Access to fishing, rafting, and canoeing on the world-famous Deschutes River. A multitude of luxury spas and boutiques. And an average of 300 sunny days a year. It's no wonder the city of Bend in Central Oregon is dubbed "the outdoor playground of the West." The city's unique combination of outdoor recreation and cosmopolitan sophistication has made it a tourist destination. Could there be a more ideal place to study and practice hospitality management?

The hospitality industry is big business in Oregon, and yet no formal, four-year degree in the discipline through an AACSB-accredited business program has been offered in the state since 1992. That's when the hotel, restaurant, and tourism management program was suspended at Oregon State University's Corvallis campus as a result of budget cuts due to the passage of Ballot Measure 5. Meanwhile, the industry is increasingly looking for managerial-level workers who are specifically trained for hospitality careers, and Oregonians have had to look elsewhere to obtain an undergraduate degree in the field.

Beginning this fall, business students at Oregon State University-Cascades will be able to specialize in hospitality management as a part of their business administration major. The new option gives students the fundamental skills traditionally learned from the general business curriculum while also training them to think strategically about creating value in a hospitality setting.

Students who declare the hospitality option will develop skills in asset management, environmental scanning, and competitive methods. They will learn to assess

***Rebecca Johnson, vice president of OSU-Cascades, discusses the future of the Central Oregon campus and opportunities for growth. (Photo by Chris Ho)***



cause-and-effect relationships about the forces driving change and how to influence the competitive environment within the industry. The program is designed to help them develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become leaders in hospitality settings, such as hotels, cruise lines, casinos, and amusement parks.

As Oregon's transfer university, OSU-Cascades offers an affordable way to access higher education. Students fulfill lower division requirements at a community college—where tuition is lower—and then transfer to OSU-Cascades to complete their upper division courses. Along with the international business option, the general business and the hospitality management options complement the academic portfolio of the business program at the Corvallis campus. The latter two programs are taught only at OSU-Cascades.

With a current 12:1 student-teacher ratio, the OSU-Cascades experience is intimate, personal, and student-centered. “I can tell you the hopes and dreams of each of my students,” said Marla Hacker, associate dean of academic programs and associate professor in industrial engineering and business management. “It’s a different student experience because of the natural cohort formed with each class.”

One of the business program's most distinct advantages, however, is that students have a direct link to the hospitality community. Many industry leaders have retired to Central Oregon, and the college routinely invites them on campus to share valuable insights gained from their professional experience. “Bringing them in as speakers really enriches the

classroom,” said Rebecca Johnson, vice president of OSU-Cascades. “Our students get a private school experience at a public school price.”

The creation of the hospitality management program fits in well with the strategic plan for evolving the nine-year-old OSU-Cascades campus. “It’s a startup kind of operation that has a lot of room to grow,” said Johnson. Other new academic offerings at OSU-Cascades include a Master of Arts in Teaching, an energy engineering management degree, and a sustainability double degree.

In addition to developing new programs, the number one goal for the campus is to grow enrollment, which was up 20 percent last year and is expected to grow at a similar level this year. Although Johnson recognizes the challenges inherent in expanding public institutions, she doesn't see a limit to the campus' potential growth. “This is a very attractive location,” she said. “If we can accommodate the infrastructure of a major university, this region would welcome it.”

Although OSU-Cascades leaders were originally charged only with providing Central Oregon with access to higher education, the institution's success has led to an expansion of the vision. “Now, we're working on how we can be seen as a destination of choice for out-of-state and international students,” said Johnson. With Bend as the destination, the hospitality management program at OSU-Cascades is well-positioned to play a role in manifesting the vision. ♦

**Marla Hacker and Sandy Chen, business faculty at Oregon State University-Cascades (Photo by Chris Ho)**





# Improving Hospitality through Research and Teaching

*By Thuy T. Tran and Jason Evans*

Sandy Chen, assistant professor in hospitality management, arrived in Bend, Ore., in July 2010 to help develop the new hospitality management option for the College of Business at OSU-Cascades (see article on page 20). This fall, Chen is teaching a course that explores how external and internal forces influence the hospitality industry, and she is preparing two additional courses for upcoming terms.

Chen's current academic work focuses on service quality, hospitality management, and tourism marketing. Her research explores topics such as tourist behavior, improving service quality, the causes of demand for tourism services, and meeting consumer expectations.

"My research focuses on how to help the hospitality industry increase the bottom line through increased service quality and a better understanding of the traveling public, which leads to customer retention and repeat business," said Chen.

*Sandy Chen (Photo by Chris Ho)*

In addition, Chen is interested in determining better ways to recruit and retain qualified staff. “Salaries and wages can be low compared to other sectors, which can be a drawback to those who work in the industry or companies that aim to develop hospitality leaders,” she said, pointing out that companies might consider offering benefits or emphasizing less tangible enticements to those seeking employment in the hospitality industry. “Benefits such as opportunities for quick career advancement, working in different countries, and interacting with people from a variety of backgrounds are enormous.”

One of Chen’s more recent research projects is especially relevant to the current debate in Central Oregon among local residents and developers regarding the proliferation of destination resorts in the area. Her research explores the perception residents have toward tourism, how they form their attitudes, and why they decide to support or not support it. Her study concludes that local residents care more about general benefits for their community than personal ones, and that marketing efforts do not impact residents’ beliefs about tourism. In analyzing her findings in this area, Chen suggests that even people who prefer less tourism in their community are willing to support it at a certain level. This finding can provide guidance to community leaders when they are studying the probability of public support for developing tourism as opposed to other industries within a community.

Chen was born in Beijing and raised in central China’s Hubei Province. Conforming to social norms and her parents’ desires, she earned a BA in library and information management at Beijing Foreign Studies University in 1989. At that time, however, societal expectations for women in the workplace were changing in China and instead of pursuing a career as a librarian, she decided to accept a position as sales manager at Beijing International Hotel, which was

a much better fit for her gregarious personality. Chen became enamored of the hospitality industry at a time when China was experiencing dramatic social and economic reform, and the industry was growing.

After working at Beijing International Hotel for six years, Chen was recruited by Walt Disney World in Kissimmee, Fla. Through a Chinese government contract, she worked for a year as a cultural representative and manager trainee. While at Disney, she interacted with many levels of management and networked with Disney professionals to learn about and exemplify the Disney culture. Her experiences at Disney opened her mind to equal opportunity for female employees and the possibility of pursuing job advancement.

Chen earned a master’s degree in hospitality administration from William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, and completed a PhD from the same institution in 2003. Prior to joining the College of Business faculty, her academic career included appointments at Central Connecticut State University, Arkansas Tech University, the University of Nevada—Las Vegas, and the Institute for Tourism Studies in Macau, China.

Chen said she draws on her teaching philosophy in part from her Chinese heritage. Opportunities are available to those who work hard and set their standards high, she said, and she encourages her students to set achievable, realistic expectations. She believes the teacher’s role is to recognize and encourage students to achieve their potential. “Confucius was an adviser and distributor of knowledge, guidance, and encouragement,” she explains, “He did not often praise his pupils, so the praise he doled out was precious.” She feels particularly rewarded when her students incorporate positive advice and grow into responsible members of their community with a well-developed worldview. ♦





Front row (left to right): Roger Graham, V. T. Raja, Melissa Elmore, Carol Leder, Jayne Andersen, and Tristen Shay; back row (left to right): René Reitsma, Kishani Kalupahana, Abby P. Metzger, Nancy Homan, Malcolm LeMay, Brenda Sallee, Don Neubaum, Sandy Neubaum, and Amy Bourne (Photo by Jim Carroll)

## Reflecting on the Year's Achievements

By Cheri Hahn

College of Business faculty and staff took time at the year's end to celebrate and reflect on faculty and staff achievements. The Celebration of Achievement awards dinner recognized the accomplishments of the entire college, including faculty, staff, and students.

"We are a college on the move," said Ilene Kleinsorge, dean, who hosted the event in partnership with Jack Drexler, associate dean for faculty.

Eight different award categories recognized the outstanding achievements of faculty and staff this year.

The Outstanding Professional Faculty and Staff Award was given to two recipients. Melissa Elmore was recognized for her exceptional standard of customer service and for her assistance in the Ties to the Land program, a woodland management initiative sponsored by the Austin Family Business Program. Abby Metzger, who works in the Communications and Marketing group, earned the award for her part in creating a positive image for the college through communications pieces, including *The Exchange*, the dean's annual report, and speeches.

The Betty and Forrest Simmons Excellence in Graduate Teaching Award was given to V.T. Raja, who teaches advanced information systems for the MBA program. He was recognized for his deep respect for his students, preparation of teaching material, and dedication to classroom learning.

The Byron L. Newton Award was established in 1976 to honor excellence in the classroom and was presented to Amy Bourne. Bourne, a member of the accounting faculty, received high teaching evaluations from her students and serves as the faculty adviser to Beta Alpha Psi, which maintained "superior chapter" status during her entire tenure as faculty adviser.

René Reitsma received the Excellence in Scholarship Award for his contribution to academic research. In 2009, Reitsma published a chapter on Web technologies in the *Handbook of Technology Management* and two chapters in the *Encyclopedia of Geographic Information Science*.

Since 2003, Reitsma has obtained research grants totaling \$448,280 from federal and private sources.

Three new awards were added to the celebration this year. First, the new Experiential Learning Award was given to Sandy Neubaum for her leadership in social entrepreneurship activities that improve communities and enhance student learning.

Second, the new Internal Service Award was given to Kishani Kalupahana to applaud her efforts in reviewing and analyzing the undergraduate core programs of dozens of peer institutions.

Finally, the new Service Outreach Award was presented to Don Neubaum, who has served on multiple university-level committees and on the editorial review board for top academic management and entrepreneurship journals, including the *Journal of Management* and the *Academy of Management Journal*.

In addition, the College of Business presented the Newcomb Fellowship Awards, which were established by Bernie Newcomb ('65), co-founder of E\* Trade. The college honored three Newcomb Fellows this year: Roger Graham, Malcolm LeMay, and the academic advisers.

Graham, an accounting professor, created a circle of external stakeholders called the Accounting Circle, which offered financial support for the program, recruited graduates, and provided valuable information about needed changes to college curriculum. He was also instrumental in the accounting program's accreditation review process. LeMay demonstrated extraordinary effort in the college's

AACSB accreditation review and took leadership in adopting a customer relationship management system.

The academic advisers received a Newcomb Fellowship for their dedication to mentorship and student success. Each academic adviser assisted more than 500 students with internships, study abroad programs, and registration problems—far above the standard load for Oregon State.

College of Business students garnered awards and recognition through several programs of excellence. The college's accounting program consistently cultivated high-achieving students who surpass the national average pass rate on the CPA exam. In addition, the Oregon State chapter of Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) took first place in a national hunger awareness competition sponsored by Campbell Soup Company and also earned the highest honors at the National SIFE Conference.

In addition, MBA students developed business plans for 12 cutting-edge business ideas, including numerous products developed through the Oregon State University Office of Technology Transfer. The Oregon State Investment Group continued to manage OSU Foundation dollars and impress the finance committee with their investment success.

The College of Business continued to develop lasting community and business relationships through its successful programs and partnerships. For example, the Austin Family Business Program, which celebrated its 25th birthday, continued to develop relationships with Oregon's business community. This year, the program received grants to help woodland owners plan for succession. In addition, the Business Solutions Group expanded its work with the Oregon Department of Transportation, and the Close to the Customer program successfully launched the Building Community Initiative, a university-based program aimed at enhancing the information available to universities and colleges regarding donors and potential donors.

The college also continued to adapt its curriculum to reflect market demands. With the addition of four new majors—business information systems, management, finance, and marketing—the college now offers more undergraduate degrees than any other college of business in the Oregon University System. ♦



# Students Choose the Hard Road to Global Awareness

*By Abby P. Metzger*

For more than a century, intelligence quotient (IQ) scores have been used to measure brainpower and predict educational achievement. As cultural and environmental skills become more important in the business world, perhaps a new—if more nebulous—metric might be considered to appraise college success: call it a global awareness quotient. College of Business students Tate Koenig and Keegan Warrington recently started a nonprofit organization they named Citizen of the World (COW) that encourages students to increase their global awareness quotient and sense of social responsibility through participation in charity projects abroad.

Koenig and Warrington exemplify the college's mission of graduating learners who can synthesize diverse concepts, such as business technology, sustainability, and the international economy. Ventures like COW are part of a larger effort within Oregon State to provide experiential learning activities, where students demonstrate success not only on paper, but also through real-life projects.

*Tate Koenig and Keegan Warrington (Photo courtesy of COW)*



According to the nonprofit's Web site, COW plans to promote experiential learning by sending herds of students abroad to participate in direct action projects. The hope is that once students understand how all economies and cultures must share the pasture, they will become well-rounded professionals and proactive citizens.

With this vision in mind, COW's first major effort was the Africa Rally, a six-week, 10,000-mile charity race from London, England to Kribi, Cameroon. "We participated in the Africa Rally to jump-start our charity and bring attention to our cause," said Warrington.

Despite facing innumerable risks—from men with machine guns to bedbugs—the Africa Rally taught Koenig and Warrington vital skills and made their considerable efforts worthwhile. All the hours they poured into securing sponsorships, filing for nonprofit status, structuring their charity, and planning for the Africa Rally paid off in many ways, including dramatically increasing their global awareness quotient scores. They will begin their junior year of classes having practiced many of the skills they seek to master in upper division courses.

## When COW was just a calf

The inspiration for COW grew out of Koenig and Warrington's international experiences. Warrington took a year off after high school and backpacked through Asia, and Koenig worked on a sustainable farm in Nicaragua. Their time abroad exposed them to social and environmental issues facing other countries and instilled a sense of obligation to help with pressing problems. Hoping to encourage global citizenry among other students, the two launched COW in the summer of 2009. The real work began when they embarked on their mission to bring attention to their cause and get other students involved. Foregoing traditional fundraising events like bake sales and walkathons, the COW team went all out and signed up for the Africa Rally. Out of nearly 90 participating

teams from around the world, they were the youngest, and the only team from the U.S. West Coast.

The Africa Rally is unique in its scope and rules—or lack of them. There are no planned routes, and no backup. The only requirement is that participants travel in a car smaller than 1.3 liters. Only half of the teams finished the prior year. Some broke down in the middle of the desert and others spent time in a Nigerian prison. Undaunted, and with help from classmates and their Chi Phi fraternity, Koenig and Warrington spent weeks researching the terrain and planning their route.

They also needed to raise money for the trip. Their goal was to raise \$20,000, a large portion of which would fund three select charities of the Africa Rally: Send a Cow, a Christian nonprofit that runs sustainable agricultural programs; Ape Action in Africa, an organization working to protect gorillas and chimpanzees; and the Rain Forest Foundation, a funding agency for rainforest protection groups.

Putting their business skills to work, they set up a Web site to sell COW t-shirts and gear, and sought sponsorships from businesses in the region. They garnered support from big-name entities like Wieden+Kennedy and Pico. Throughout the process, both students said they learned invaluable business lessons that prepared them for life after college. "The skills I learned through this experience will help me no matter what I end up doing," said Koenig.

After collecting enough funds, he and Warrington purchased a 1986 Suzuki for their rally car, along with tools and provisions. On December 13, 2009, just a few months after starting COW, they left for London to start the Africa Rally. They were confident that Koenig's mechanical prowess could get them through car breakdowns, and Warrington's communication skills could help them negotiate lodging and customs. Dozens of friends and family would be following them from home and providing satellite support. Even so, neither could have anticipated the challenges and opportunities they would face.

*(Continued on page 28)*



***Tate Koenig and Keegan Warrington traveled in their small Suzuki through deserts and dirt roads for the Africa Rally. (Photo courtesy of COW)***

## To Africa

The Africa Rally was almost finished before it had even begun. When Warrington and Koenig arrived in London, they learned that delivery of their car was delayed. They also received notice from rally organizers that the race was cancelled because of extreme terrorism in Mali, Algeria, and Mauritania. On top of that, they couldn't get their visas for Côte d'Ivoire and were told they probably wouldn't make it out of the country alive anyway.

"It's almost comical the amount of bad luck we had," said Warrington. Koenig added, "We had all these people back home following us and donating money, so we couldn't go home. But then we had to weigh in the factor of how it would look if we didn't come home at all."

Luckily, the race resumed, the car arrived, and Warrington and Koenig redrew the route to avoid Côte d'Ivoire and other countries where internal violence made travel dangerous. By then, however, they had been in Europe for a month, instead of the week they had planned. Because of the delay, they would have to travel alone in Africa—an unanticipated and dangerous reality for the COW team. "If you look at other teams' photos, it's them and a line of three other cars. But for Tate and me, it was a different situation. We were completely alone," said Warrington.

Their troubles in Europe were nothing compared to the challenges ahead: dealing with impossible customs regulations, driving on horrible roads, sleeping in shanties, overcoming language and cultural barriers, witnessing starving children, and feeling malnourished themselves from living off rice and Cliff Bars. "In some places, we saw awful, awful conditions. Most people here (in the USA) could never imagine it," said Warrington.

The pair also had to be constantly alert. "No matter what, even if you're in a safe area, you still had to be aware. Your 'best friend' who is trying to get you a deal on a loaf of bread is also trying to snag the wrenches from the back of your car when you're not looking," said Koenig.

But for every instance of bad luck, the COW team encountered unexpected kindness. They met a photographer named Luke from New Orleans who traveled with them and documented the journey. A stranger got them visas to Ghana by writing an invitation to stay in the country and helping them with the paperwork.

In Mali, a poor farmer with two wives and eight children provided lodging and food, even though he lived in a dirt shack. In Nigeria, when their car broke down so thoroughly that Koenig couldn't fix it without proper tools, a man invited them into his mansion, where he had a fully stocked car garage. The man fed them steak and potatoes and let them stay in his air-conditioned house. "Tate and I were like little kids on Christmas," recalled Warrington. "I've never eaten so much in my life."

Even seemingly dangerous encounters turned in their favor. For example, when they were stuck in the middle of nowhere in the pitch black and suddenly realized they were surrounded by more than 75 strangers with uncertain intentions—none of whom spoke English—instead of panicking, Warrington pulled out his camera and started taking pictures. What happened next confirmed the COW team’s belief in the Beaver Nation.

“Tate crawled on top of our car, we hit the flood lights, and the next thing we know, I was leading 75 plus Nigerians in the OSU Fight Song. They just went nuts,” said Warrington. Koenig said the experience taught him that regardless of age, culture, gender, language, or race, people are people.

## Finishing the race, lessons learned

After weeks of intense heat and pot-holed roads, the COW team arrived in Kribi, Cameroon, on February 21 and finished the race. They were one of 27 teams out of the original 90 to accomplish the feat. It was a pretty heady feeling as they pulled into the hotel at their final destination, but they were admittedly a bit shell shocked. “It didn’t kick in for a couple days that we had actually done it,” said Koenig.

After such an adrenaline-producing activity within a few short weeks, Warrington said he felt at loose ends for a while. “I had this feeling like, ‘Uh, now what do we do?’,” he said. “We worked for so long to get to this point, and now suddenly we’re finished.”

One thing they did was to celebrate by jumping into the hotel swimming pool and sharing a pack of Starburst candies they had saved for the finish. Both said it was one of the most simple, enjoyable experiences of their lives.

All told, the COW team surpassed their fundraising goal of \$20,000 through direct donations and sponsorships, and a good portion of the funds collected went to support the Africa Rally. Combined with funds raised from other participating teams, the rally generated more than \$100,000 for the three charities.

Koenig and Warrington gained tremendous perspective and developed a new appreciation for education. “When you’re in a village of 5,000 people and literally none of them can read, it makes it so much easier to do my homework and commit myself to learning,” said Koenig.

Gaining the kind of skills necessary to succeed in a race across Africa may also help them to succeed in the professional world. “I’ve learned what can happen when we put our minds to it,” said Warrington. “When everything goes wrong, you keep trying until something goes right.”

Koenig echoed his COW teammate: “If you refuse to leave failure as an option, it won’t be one.”

## The future of COW

The 10,000-mile trip was invaluable, but Koenig and Warrington are ready again for new adventures. Like an author who has written a bestseller right out of the gate, they feel obliged to top their incredible journey through Africa. They continue to seek donations and sell COW gear through their Web site, which they hope will enable them to send student teams to Nicaragua to facilitate a charity project tailored to their skills. An engineering student, for example, could help build houses, or a forestry student could assist with woodland management. More recently, they provided support and information to help two OSU students travel to Costa Rica to volunteer. People from all over the country and the world have offered help, so they anticipate strong support going forward.

Regardless of the direction COW takes, Warrington and Koenig will focus on getting students to think outside the box and go out and make a difference in the world. Warrington believes the risk of traveling abroad reaps a reward too great to pass up. “It wasn’t easy. It wasn’t fun. But I’m so glad we did it,” he said. “It’s from these uncommon situations that you grow the most. Who wants to live a boring life anyway?”

For more information: [www.beacow.com](http://www.beacow.com) ♦





# Colleges of Business and Engineering Form Innovative Partnership

*By Jason Evans, Todd Simmons, and Thuy T. Tran*

Campuses throughout higher education are suffering from declining public funding while struggling to meet the expanding and more complex demands of students, businesses, governments, and society. Oregon State University is no different. But what sets Oregon State apart is its proven commitment to meeting these challenges head-on. As a result of an ever-deepening strategic planning process, the university in 2009 introduced a bold new idea: the creation of four academic divisions that bring together OSU's 11 colleges in ways intended to create economies of scale, foster greater collaboration, and encourage synergies in teaching, research, and innovation.

The colleges of Business and Engineering have come together in the Division of Business and Engineering. The three other divisions are the Division of Arts and Sciences (Education, Liberal Arts, Science), the Division of Earth Systems Science (Agricultural Sciences, Forestry, Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences), and the Division of

***Ilene Kleinsorge, dean of the College of Business, and Ron Adams, dean of the College of Engineering, are working together in new ways. (Photo by Chris Ho)***

Health Sciences (Health and Human Sciences, Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine). The restructuring will support the university's vision to advance the science of sustainable earth ecosystems, improve human health and wellness, and promote economic growth and social progress.

No changes are planned in the current organizational structure within the colleges of Business or Engineering. "We intend to preserve the missions, visions, and strategies for excellence of the two colleges in our division and to maintain college identities," said Ilene Kleinsorge, dean of the College of Business. Kleinsorge recognizes the division as a partnership; each professional college will maintain separately governed accreditation processes and external curricular and strategic advisory boards. "The initial steps in our division-creation process include building community within the division and recognizing and celebrating existing efforts," she said.

"Innovation" is the unifying theme for the new division—a theme that will serve the university's strategic goal of promoting economic development and social progress in Oregon and beyond. "We believe our focus will strengthen and elevate the quality of both colleges as we pursue an opportunity-laden collaborative joint venture," said Ron Adams, dean of the College of Engineering and new executive dean of the Division of Business and Engineering. Adams shares responsibility with other division deans for leading efforts to form the university's new, highly collaborative model, including identifying opportunities for synergy and refocusing educational, research, and outreach programs.

One area that will continue to be emphasized and strengthened in the partnership between the two colleges is the commercialization of technology that emerges from university research. An example of opportunities afforded by such collaborative efforts is NuScale Power, Inc., a Corvallis-based company that began several years ago as a research project in the nationally recognized Department of Nuclear Engineering at Oregon State. NuScale Power was founded to produce a modular, scalable 45-megawatt nuclear power reactor, which was marketed through a partnership with the College of Business. The company's novel designs are now being shepherded through the Nuclear Regulatory Commission approval process, and the company itself is nationally recognized for taking the lead in the resurgence of nuclear power derived from safer, wholly reinvented processes. Along the way, the company has attracted tens of millions of dollars in investment capital.

The new divisional alignment highlights Oregon State's traditional strengths, and is guiding decisions in faculty recruitment, education, research, and outreach in addition to federal, state, and corporate partnerships. It enhances the impact of faculty efforts and generates new strategies for growing the revenue base to offset the decline in state support. As the four divisions have come to life, faculty are increasing their ability to garner research contracts and grants. Oregon State attracted a record \$275 million in fiscal year 2010—an increase of \$23 million over the previous year.

To support the university's mission, Provost Sabah Randhawa approved the creation of 30 new faculty positions for the 2010-11 academic year. The Division of Business and Engineering received five full-time equivalents in the areas of technology management and clean energy innovation; sustainability, resilience, and rehabilitation of the built environment; nanocomposites; smart materials for health monitoring; innovation and commercialization; and renewable energy. These positions will enable the division to build on existing competencies.

"As a division, we will engage our unique strengths to achieve even greater impact on the thematic areas of the university's strategic plan, and enhance our capacity as a college," said Kleinsorge. ♦



# Business and Engineering: A Powerful Combination

*By Marie Oliver*

For most companies, remaining nimble and responsive in a fluctuating economy requires visionary business leaders with the ability to think broadly and creatively. It is even better if business executives can understand a company's day-to-day operations in depth. Consequently, a potential employee with multidisciplinary talents and technical skills has a distinct advantage in the marketplace. Someone who is equally comfortable and adept in the worlds of engineering and management is well-positioned to succeed at the highest levels of business.

Oregon State University graduate and recipient of the Dean's Outstanding Leadership Award, Manan Sunny Grover (BS '05, MS '07, MBA '10), recently discovered just how much employers value his diverse background. He was a profession-ready graduate who—even in these difficult economic times—was able to choose among job offers.

## Off to a good start

Grover was born in New Delhi, India, and immigrated to the United States with his parents during his high school years. He started his higher education at Portland Community College and transferred as a sophomore to Oregon State University. Because he was gifted in math and science, engineering seemed like an “obvious choice” for a career path, he said, so he applied and was accepted into the College of Engineering professional school. He began the program in his junior year.

While completing a BS degree in electrical engineering, Grover captured the attention of Professor John Wager, who offered him a research assistant-

***Manan Sunny Grover launched a new career after returning to his alma mater to earn an MBA.  
(Photo by Chris Ho)***



ship after graduation. Continuing at Oregon State as a master's candidate, he focused his graduate studies in transparent semiconductors and electronics. A few months after earning his master's degree, he went to work as an equipment engineer for Hynix Semiconductor in Eugene, Ore.

It was an impressive beginning for the young man. Hynix was one of Lane County's largest employers and it seemed like a stable place to build a successful career in the technology sector. But the realities of contemporary business hit home when Hynix closed its Eugene operation in September 2008. Grover was among the more than 1,100 Hynix employees who were laid off.

Still confident of his employability, he spent several months looking for work, but the economy was beginning to weaken and he was unsuccessful. Fortunately, he was eligible for Trade Adjustment Assistance, which is a federal retraining program for employees who lose their jobs under certain conditions. The program would pay for his education and extend his unemployment benefits for 15 months if he returned to school in a field other than engineering. He discovered that at Oregon State, he could complete a Master of Business Administration degree in nine months.

"Earning an MBA was something I'd always considered doing later on in my career," said Grover. "I thought, 'Why not do it now, since there's an opportunity?' My admissions process was really easy because I had two academic degrees from OSU."

Once he made the decision to earn another degree, Grover didn't waste any time. The next MBA class didn't begin until fall term 2009, but he started taking classes at OSU and Linn-Benton Community College during the prior winter term to complete some necessary prerequisites for the business curriculum.

## Immersion in the MBA

The core of the MBA curriculum at Oregon State is the Integrated Business Project (IBP), in which student teams collaborate to write and present a formal

business plan for commercializing an innovative technology (see related story, page 16). For Grover, the IBP process began at orientation when he listened to presentations from Oregon State entrepreneurs and scientists who have developed promising technologies.

At the same event, Grover met the members of his IBP team. Team members had been carefully chosen by the MBA program's administrators to ensure that the team could draw on a wide range of skills and abilities while working together to create their business plan. The team's first job was to discuss which of the technologies it was most interested in promoting. "All the teams submitted their preferences, and most teams got their second or third choice," said Grover.

Grover's team was asked to write a business plan for a patented wood compression technology developed by scientists in the College of Forestry. "The whole idea of the IBP was to take this technology that's really savvy and works well in the lab, and go find a need for it out in society—to commercialize the technology," he said.

Before moving forward on the project, however, the team needed to organize itself. "We were all basically peers, and that was one of the really challenging things about the IBP," Grover said. "It was really a learning experience for all of us. Out in the workforce, you have lines of hierarchy that we didn't have in our IBP. We had to make it all work together as a team."

As it turned out, Grover's team decided to work a little differently from the other IBP teams. Most teams divided responsibility for chapters of the business plan among team members. Each member worked on their part of the plan separately and then the team pulled it all together at the end. Grover's team wanted to try something else. "We split roles, but wrote all the IBP together, so that was very unique to us," he said. Grover assumed a leadership role and was the primary writer/editor for the plan. Other team members conducted the interviews and research, and kept track of references and resources.

*(Continued on page 34)*

The team’s method “had its own advantages and challenges,” he said. “The advantage, obviously, was that everyone was on the same page. The business plan, once it was done, really had one voice because there was only one person doing all the editing and writing. The challenge was that it was ten times harder to accommodate each others’ schedules, because we worked on everything together.”

## The other side of the fence

Grover said the team members were pleased with the outcome of their academic efforts. In the IBP competition held in April, they took first place for technical merit, which put a little money in their pockets. But they still felt somewhat disappointed, because they could not find a feasible business opportunity for the technology. “From a business plan perspective, we felt that this technology shouldn’t be commercialized,” he said. “That was the message of one of the final presentations we did for the OSU Office of Technology Transfer.”

Even though the outcome of the research did not yield a business plan that the team believed would attract investors, the value of going through the process was not diminished for either the MBA candidates or the Office of Technology Transfer.

“Inside a lab environment, all technologies seem really powerful,” said Grover, “but the real challenge is to transform these technologies into solutions that meet existing needs of the outside world.” He said the IBP experience was useful for him because he was able to see things from a new perspective. “I’ve done both sides of it now. I was in the lab working on some very groundbreaking technologies, and the MBA program completed the picture for me. It showed me what kind of effort and risk goes into the process of commercializing something—to bring it out into the world where people will actually buy it and use it. There were a few other engineers in the program and we all shared that learning.”

In addition, the Office of Technology Transfer now has a much clearer picture of the business potential for a novel invention by Oregon State scientists. “There are different kinds of variables inside the lab—your focus is entirely on making it work,” he said. “Outside the lab, the questions are different: How do we market it? Where do we sell it? When do we sell it? Who are our competitors? Those things really get materialized when you start thinking about commercializing the thing.”

## Back in business

Grover didn’t wait to have his MBA in hand before putting out feelers to potential employers. His job search began at least four months before he graduated. One of the ways the College of Business supports the transition from academia to career is to host job fairs, where company representatives come to campus to acquaint students with employment opportunities. With the encouragement of a friend, Grover went to a job fair in February, and was really glad he did.

“I found two businesses that way,” he said, and they both eventually made job offers. “I wouldn’t have even known about them if I hadn’t gone to that job fair.” After accepting the offer from Hitachi Consulting, a business consulting firm with offices in Portland, Ore., he received a call from a third firm that likely would have led to another offer.

He earned his second master’s degree in June and went to work as an IT consultant at Hitachi with the eventual goal of moving into business consulting with the firm. “Nobody really wants your opinion until you’ve done something,” he said. “Eventually I would like to transfer over into business consulting—things like supply chain management, HR management, operations management. That’s really where I see my focus and growth. IT is just the pillar they start you in.”

## Appreciating the cross-over

Grover said he first became open to looking for jobs outside engineering when he listened to the executives who came to the College of Business to speak to students. “We had several CEOs and other executives come and talk to us through the course of the year, and what I realized from the experience of those executives is that not one of them was where they had started,” he said. “They moved all over the place, and that’s how they got to the executive role. They had seen the bigger picture. That’s why consulting really excited me, because the scope of your project changes every six to eight months and you get to do something new. You’re getting a lot of experience in a short amount of time, as opposed to just moving up.”

He said maybe he will find his way back to engineering as a focus, but for now he is interested to see where this shift in emphasis takes him. “Instead of seeing those six years as a loss, I’m seeing them as an investment that brought me to this platform,” he said.

He remembers that one small company he interviewed with during his job search was interested in him primarily because he had an engineering background and an MBA. “I can speak both languages,” he said. “They really needed someone who could do customer development for them, who could understand the technology and engineering aspects of it and communicate that to customers. So that has been a great benefit for me.”

## Taking advantage of opportunities

Grover is glad he took advantage of as many resources as he did during his MBA year, including career fairs, conferences, seminars, and College of Business social events. “There are a lot of opportunities if you’re willing to seek them,” he said. “That’s something I had to learn with the MBA program: if I’m going to get

a job at the end of this, I have to make it happen for myself. People are there to help me, but it’s not going to be just given to me on a silver platter.”

One of the most important skills he learned during his MBA year was how to network. “The MBA program is where I learned this whole idea of networking—getting to know people and getting yourself out there and making connections,” he said. “And doing that just because it’s the way to be in the business world, not because you have an ulterior motive or because you want to get something from someone.”

He said job hunting was not as easy as it was the first time around—partly because of the economy and partly because of the shift in career emphasis—and getting out and about helped to increase his visibility in a positive way. “I realized that this is probably true all the time, but even more true in this economy,” he said. “So many people are out there with such varied skill sets looking for a job; the employer needs to be able to put a face with a resume, otherwise they may or may not remember you. Follow-up is so crucial. That was something I really learned through this whole process.” ♦

**Manan Sunny Grover (center) with his Integrated Business Project teammates (left to right) Cheri Hahn, Duc Nguyen, and Joseph Jenkins (Photo by Chris Ho)**







# Young Grads Take Creative Leaps onto the Cutting Edge

*By Marie Oliver*

In written prose, the three dots that form an ellipsis can signal a quick transition between topics. Ellipsis Design, an up-and-coming graphic design firm founded by three Oregon State University graduates, uses the symbol to represent the inspired leaps that happen among the company's co-founders when they collectively create a promotional look and feel for their clients.

The dots also represent the company's co-founders, thereby providing a perfect example of the layered communication that becomes possible when Ryan Armstrong ('08), Monte Gerber ('05), and Dau Nguyen ('08) put their heads together. The trio creates and manages brand identity for their clients by designing for print, Web, and video. They offer Web development services and particularly enjoy leveraging social media to help their clients establish a strong online presence.

It was Armstrong who first had the idea to start a graphic design company. He began his education in computer science, but as his interests broadened, he changed his major

*Dau Nguyen and Ryan Armstrong discuss a current project in their design studio in Portland, Ore. (Photo by Chris Ho)*

to business. When the Austin Entrepreneurship Program was launched, Armstrong was among the first students to take advantage of the opportunity.

Participation in the entrepreneurship program gave Armstrong real-world experience in numerous aspects of running a business, including writing and presenting a business plan and creating promotional materials. He graduated with degrees in business/entrepreneurship and psychology.

When the idea to start a design company occurred to Armstrong, Nguyen was the first person he thought of as a potential partner. He and Nguyen met while they were both working in one of the student computer labs on campus. They enjoyed working together and gained valuable hands-on experience related to the intricacies of color management and other computer design issues by helping students troubleshoot their projects.

Nguyen also started out as a computer science major, but soon found his artistic side emerging. With a lot of help from his advisers, he decided to pursue a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design.

Gerber, on the other hand, took a more linear educational path. He started and finished his higher education as an electrical engineering major. “I was inspired to go into that because my dad’s an engineer, but during that process of learning about who I was, I discovered that I also have a skill for things creative,” he said. “I really like problem solving, so that also helped me to hook up with these guys. Problem solving in the business realm is very similar to problem

solving in the engineering realm—you just have to wear a different hat.”

Gerber and Nguyen met at a social event on campus, and Nguyen often solicited Gerber’s opinion on projects he was preparing for class. Gerber found himself drawn to the work, and the stage was set for their subsequent partnership. Nguyen said Gerber’s feedback helped to anchor his more organic and abstract communication style. “In the process of getting trained, I would often ask him how I could design something better, so in a way we collaboratively designed right from the beginning,” said Nguyen.

Today, when the company gets a new assignment, the partners go off to work on concepts separately at first. Afterward, they come together to share and refine their ideas, and that is often where the magic happens.

“Dau is very aggressive with his design, which produces some beautiful work,” said Armstrong. “Monte is a little more concise, and I’m kind of in the middle, which I think helps hold us together.... It’s that melting pot that really makes our designs unique.” Although the process is not always comfortable for the partners, bringing everything to the table and remaining open-minded and humble help them to deliver dynamic designs that meet their clients’ needs.

Armstrong said he gained valuable experience learning and practicing the art of networking while participating in the Austin Entrepreneurship Program. Some of the clients Ellipsis Design now works with came through connections initially made on campus.

*(Continued on page 38)*





For example, the trio made inroads into a unique market by doing pro bono design work for the Pride Center, which provides programs and support for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender) community. “We started out doing pro bono work to give us some portfolio samples, but we ended up networking in that segment, and it has been really rewarding and a lot of fun,” said Armstrong.

Networking within the LGBT community led to an assignment with the Human Rights Campaign in Portland, Ore., where Ellipsis Design is pushing its boundaries by designing an interior space for a gala event. “It’s been a lot of fun to apply our design skills to a medium we haven’t tried before,” said Armstrong.

The partners agree that starting and operating an entrepreneurial venture is not for the faint of heart. “It’s a lot of work,” said Armstrong. “It’s a lot of networking, a lot of giving out business cards and handshaking and so forth—things that oftentimes don’t immediately net any direct benefit. You’ll meet a lot of people and never get a job from them, but then they’ll know someone who knows someone who hears something, and then you’ll get a phone call from someone you’ve never met before. Through that chain, you get a job. So you have to be very persistent and get yourself out there.”

On the other hand, Armstrong admits that he enjoys the freedom that comes with being his own boss. “Once you get off and start on your own, you have complete control over where you want the company to go, the direction you want to take, the clients you want to work with, and what you want to do,” he said.

The young company has done their five-year plan and knows where it is headed. The trio wants to continue to ride the cutting edge by working with forward-thinking companies who embrace modern trends in Web development and marketing. “We’ve been focusing on start-ups, specifically new restaurants, bars, and nightclubs, because they tend to not only appreciate designers who are on the cutting edge, but really demand them,” said Armstrong. ♦





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