



The Business of
Difference Making[®]

SPRING 2026



**DUQUESNE
UNIVERSITY**

Palumbo-Donahue
School of Business

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The Business of Difference Making®

Spring 2026

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Welcome to the Business of Difference Making®

2026 Spring Edition

At the Palumbo-Donahue School of Business, the Business of Difference Making® is not merely a motto but the guiding principle of our work.

Our students, faculty, and alumni consistently translate classroom instruction into measurable impact through course-embedded projects, academic competitions, and industry-sponsored challenges that place students in direct collaboration with business leaders. Our faculty bring real-world insight into the classroom, guiding students through experiential opportunities that cultivate confidence, creativity, and the professional competencies essential for leadership.

Strategic corporate partnerships, networking events, academic competitions, and conferences further reinforce these links—bringing practicing professionals into our classrooms and expanding access to internships and career pathways.

Collectively, these experiences embody what distinguishes Duquesne Business: a community steadfast in its commitment to preparing students for successful careers and lives of purpose.



Dean B. McFarlin, Ph.D.

Dean and Professor of Management

Day of Giving 2026: Investing in the Next Generation of Difference-Makers

We are proud to share that the 2026 Day of Giving set a record for the Palumbo-Donahue School of Business. Generous alumni and friends came together to raise more than \$188,000 in support of the School — our most successful Day of Giving in history!

Day of Giving is about participation as much as philanthropy. Each gift, regardless of size, reflects a vote of confidence in our students and our mission. Together, those gifts create momentum that strengthens the School's ability to innovate, adapt, and lead in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

With your support, we continue to empower the next generation of business leaders. Our students graduate ready to think boldly, lead with integrity, and shape the future of business and our communities.

Day of Giving support is tangible. It shows up in expanded programming, enhanced resources, meaningful connections, and opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach. Equally important, it conveys a message from our alumni community and friends to our students: **we believe in them.**

The record set this year is worth celebrating. What's truly inspiring is what it represents: a community united in purpose and committed to equipping the next generation of Difference Makers.

On behalf of our faculty, staff, and especially our students, thank you for believing in their potential and in the promise of the School of Business. Your generosity ensures that we remain at the forefront of business education while staying true to our mission.



Students from the 2025-2026 One-Year MBA cohort thank you for your support.

We are deeply grateful.

SCHOOL LEADERBOARD BY GIFTS		
RANK	SCHOOL	GIFTS
1	School of Business	130
2	School of Law	99
3	Liberal Arts	76
4	School of Nursing	74
5	Health Sciences	57
6	School of Pharmacy	48
7	School of Education	34
8	School of Music	34
9	Science & Engineering	24
10	College of Osteopathic Medicine	6

AMOUNT RAISED LEADERBOARD BY AREA OF CAMPUS		
RANK	AREA	RAISED
1	Athletics	\$338,805.28
2	School of Business	\$188,818.27
3	School of Law	\$179,728.29
4	School of Nursing	\$26,128.59
5	School of Pharmacy	\$21,889.98
6	Liberal Arts	\$21,287.41
7	Health Sciences	\$15,443.31
8	School of Education	\$8,307.90
9	Study Abroad	\$7,395.59
10	Other	\$7,059.69

Save the Date for Duquesne's 12th Annual

February 17, 2027

Day of Giving

From Industry to Impact

Michael Corcoran Leads Experiential Learning and Sustainability in Duquesne's MBA Programs

The School is pleased to announce the appointment of **Michael (Mike) Corcoran (MBA' 95) as Associate Director of MBA Experiential Learning & Sustainability**. A distinguished alumnus and seasoned corporate sustainability leader, Corcoran brings more than three decades of practical experience in environmental strategy, operational performance, and cross-functional leadership.



His appointment strengthens the School's nationally recognized MBA programs at a moment when experiential learning, industry relevance, and sustainability competence are more essential than ever.

Corcoran's career at PPG Industries includes extensive work in waste reduction, water stewardship, greenhouse gas management, and sustainability reporting, giving him a unique command of how organizations set science-based targets, build implementation plans, and measure real-world impact. His view that sustainability and business strategy "shouldn't be separate...they should be integrated" reflects the philosophy he now brings into the classroom.

In 2024, two pivotal moments set Corcoran on the path to academia: becoming eligible to retire after more than 30 years at PPG and meeting Dr. Karen Donovan, who invited him to speak on a sustainability careers panel. This conversation ultimately sparked his shift from corporate leadership to academic impact.

Since then, he has taught the **FLEX MBA Strategic Management Capstone** course and two **One-Year MBA** courses — **Strategic Sustainability Models** and **Impact Investing and Strategic Consulting**. Corcoran is a student-centered educator known for his empathy, clarity, and practical approach.

"Every time I teach, I feel like I'm making a difference," he said, noting that student success is deeply personal to him: "When they succeed, it's a success for me as well."

As the Associate Director of MBA Experiential Learning & Sustainability, Corcoran will formalize

and expand on his work in the MBA programs, most notably through a multi-semester experiential initiative known as the Abandoned Boats Project.

Embedded in the Flex MBA Strategic Management Capstone course, this ambitious collaboration engages MBA students with the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission and Heidelberg Materials to examine existing government regulations and propose new implementation approaches, explore vessel-turn-in programs, and assess the feasibility of repurposing fiberglass hulls for concrete manufacturing.

MBA students confronted logistical, regulatory, environmental, and financial questions facing regional partners. Corcoran guided them to think about what solutions should look like and how they could be implemented, emphasizing that corporate partners "don't want academic solutions...they want something realistic and implementable."

Corcoran's influence extends beyond individual projects. His industry-tested framework helps students understand the full business case for sustainability, including impact on customers, cost-benefit analysis, regulatory implications, environmental outcomes, and opportunities for innovation. He also stresses the importance of valuing sustainability benefits on equal footing with efficiency gains — a perspective shaped by both his engineering training and strategic leadership roles.

The result is an approach to experiential learning that mirrors the expectations of modern employers. Students who work with Corcoran learn to analyze operations with rigor, design

feasible sustainability strategies, and communicate recommendations in ways that resonate with executive decision makers. Through his deep connections across industry and the Pittsburgh business community, Corcoran also expands opportunities for consulting projects, site visits, professional networking, and talent pipelines.

Students already recognize the value he brings. Trey Goff (MBA'25) shared that having Corcoran as a sustainability professor was "one of the most valuable parts of my MBA experience," noting that his "deep industry knowledge and practical approach brought the subject to life." Goff is employed at Federated Hermes, where he credits his MBA education for shaping "how I think about sustainability in my career today."

As a Duquesne MBA alumnus himself, Corcoran credits his own degree with providing the credibility, work ethic, and holistic business understanding that shaped his rise within corporate leadership. Now, returning to the School in a leadership role, he aims to provide today's MBA students with the same tools, augmented by decades of firsthand industry experience and a deep commitment to Duquesne's Spiritan values of ethical leadership, service, and care for community.

Corcoran's appointment signals a forward-looking investment in the School's mission and the next generation of business leaders who understand complexity, think globally, value sustainability, and translate ideas into action. His presence strengthens an MBA experience designed to prepare graduates for successful careers and to empower them to create meaningful, positive impact in their organizations and communities.



2025-2026 One-Year MBA cohort visited the Pittsburgh Airport Microgrid Energy Solutions hosted by Cordia as part of the Sustainable Business Project class.

Flex MBA Strategic Management Capstone class visited Heidelberg Materials, a concrete company, to look at the feasibility of using recycled fiberglass in concrete.

Investment Strategy Institute Expands Faculty

Elevating Experiential Learning and Strengthening Student Outcomes

The School of Business proudly announces a powerful new leadership team at the Investment Strategy Institute (ISI). With the appointments of **John Niedenberger as Executive Director of the ISI** and **Angela Kohler as Associate Director and Instructor of Finance**—alongside **Jennifer Milcarek, Program Director of the ISI & CFP® Certification Education Program**—the ISI is entering an exciting new chapter.

Niedenberger, who is both a Certified Financial Planner® and Chartered Financial Analyst®, has extensive professional experience managing portfolios and security analysis of institutional accounts including pension and endowment funds, and wealth management. He also has over four decades of teaching experience, including serving as an instructor for the Bank Examiner School at the Federal Reserve Board and holding teaching roles at other colleges. He taught at Duquesne for a decade before his recent appointment.

"In the classroom, I'm able to apply theory to practice and use my industry experience to help students understand the relevance of what they're learning and where they might go professionally after graduation," said Niedenberger.

Kohler holds the CFA® designation and brings over 30 years of industry experience in institutional investment management, most recently with Federated Hermes. Her passion for education emerged from training and mentoring equity analysts, which ultimately inspired her transition to higher education. Kohler is dedicated to preparing future finance professionals through robust instruction, practical insights, and industry engagement.

"I love the opportunity to inspire tomorrow's young finance professionals, and to help their paths by providing rigorous instruction, real-world examples, and practical application of what they're learning," said Kohler.

Their appointments further enhance the ISI as a premier student resource for business research and investment analysis. Equipped with 24+ Bloomberg® Terminals, Wharton Research Data Services, Compustat, CRSP, MSCI, Morningstar, StockTrak, KLD, and other leading databases, the ISI provides real-time global market data across asset classes.



Left to Right: Jennifer Milcarek, John Niedenberger, Angela Kohler

REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

The ISI is home to the **Student-Managed Investment Funds (SMIF)** program through the **Asset Management Group @ Duquesne (DAMG)**. Students from across Duquesne can join SMIF and manage nearly \$2.2 million. **The SMIF program oversees three funds, that include:**

- **Duquesne Values Fund (~\$1.8M)**
Large-cap stocks selected in alignment with ESG and Spiritan values
- **Duquesne Balanced Fund (~\$215K)**
Diversified ETF portfolio across stocks and bonds
- **Duquesne Microcap Fund (~\$158K)**
High-potential micro-cap stocks selected using quantitative models

Members of the SMIF program acquire hands-on experience in research, investment strategy, risk management, and professional decision-making.

"The linking of theory to application drew me to the School of Business, especially regarding students gaining real-world investment experience," said **Milcarek**. *"You wouldn't go to a chemistry or biology program if they didn't have a lab. You need to have a space to practice and use the tools."*

WHERE FACULTY AND STAFF KNOW YOUR NAME

The ISI, like the rest of the School, prioritizes experiential learning. Students apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings through national competitions, networking with industry professionals, and managing real assets. With small class sizes, students receive personalized attention and build meaningful, individualized relationships with faculty.

"The faculty here have one-on-one relationships with students and know them as individuals," said Kohler. *"We make sure they understand the material but also know them as people and care about their well-being along with their academic growth."*

Niedenberger shares this sentiment, adding that *"the most satisfying part of this position is seeing students develop professionally and academically and helping to place them in internships and jobs."*

NEW CFP® BOARD-REGISTERED FINANCIAL PLANNING PROGRAM

The School's CFP® Board-Registered Financial Planning curriculum is one of only 170 certified undergraduate programs that prepares students to sit for the CFP® exam, the gold standard in wealth management. Through coursework covering all eight CFP® certification Principal Knowledge Topics, students are equipped to guide clients in investments, retirement planning, tax strategy, estate planning, and more. Financial Planning students benefit directly from ISI resources.

THE FUTURE OF FINANCE IS BRIGHT

With a full leadership team in place, the ISI is poised to accelerate its growth by strengthening industry and institutional partnerships. Building on a strong foundation, the team is focused on deepening long-term relationships that directly enhance the curriculum and elevate the student experience. As Milcarek noted, *"these partnerships don't just complement a great business degree, they help define it."*



Student members of the 2025-2026 Asset Management Group @ Duquesne (DAMG).

The Beard Center for Student Success: A Singular Focus on Serving Students

The Eugene P. Beard Center for Student Success (CSS) has changed the way the School of Business serves its students. Founded in 2022 through the generous support of alumnus Eugene P. Beard, the CSS is singularly focused on empowering students to achieve their personal and professional goals.

The CSS features a robust student services team, comprised of seven staff members who are passionate about helping students maximize their educational experience. Reflecting on what they find most rewarding about their job, our Success Coaches all talk about supporting student growth.



It's such a privilege to see the growth of each of my students throughout their 4(ish) years and hear about all the amazing things they're learning and accomplishing.
—Jessie Parr, Success Coach



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND CREATING COMMUNITY

That journey of support begins with getting to know our students – something we start well before they attend their first class. Through **direct outreach** from Student Success Coaches, **virtual Meet Your Coach sessions**, and the University's **First-Year Advisement Summer Transition (FAST)** program in July, our Success Coaches are busy forming relationships with their students throughout the summer.

We know how critical the home support system can be during the transition to college, which is why parents and families are also invited to these summer activities.

Relationship building continues when students arrive on campus at the beginning of the Fall semester for **First-Year Orientation**, where the connections formed during **FAST** come to life. Orientation is designed to help both students and their families feel confident and prepared as they embark on their Duquesne experience.

During Orientation's **Meet the Dean session**, students are welcomed by the dean and introduced to the exciting path ahead at the School of Business. Here students are encouraged to embrace a growth mindset and to take advantage of the many opportunities they will encounter. Families also participate in a dedicated **Parent and Family Orientation** session, where they can ask questions and connect with School leadership in a supportive setting.

Students then take part in a hands-on **Prep for the First Day session** with their Success Coach, learning how to read a syllabus, navigate Duquesne systems, and access the resources that will facilitate a successful student journey.

Orientation ensures that all new students know exactly who to turn to for guidance and support, helping them feel connected from the start.

The relationship- and community-building continues throughout students' time in the School of Business, with the CSS hosting seminars, socials, and weekly quick-engagement **BizBreak** activities in the high-traffic area of Rockwell Hall. BizBreaks are a favorite for our student services team, offering a fun and spontaneous way to connect with students outside of the classroom.

BizBreaks are a unique engagement strategy to connect with our students outside of our typical 'advisor' role. The students get to interact with Success Coaches in a more relaxed setting that helps to build a connection that carries into our one-on-one meetings.

—Success Coach Shakeria Carter



Dr. Becky Ellsworth, Assistant Dean for Academic Programs and Student Affairs, presenting at the Meet the Dean Session.



First-Year Business Students at the Meet the Dean Session.



Success Coaches Shakeria Carter (left) and Michelle Curry (right) handing out coffee and donuts during a midterm BizBreak.

HELPING STUDENTS DISCOVER THEIR PATH

A favorite part of a Success Coach's job is assisting students in discovering and exploring the many possibilities available to them.

I want to help students get the most out of their education. My favorite conversations center around adding a minor or second major, studying abroad, or pursuing a graduate degree at Duquesne.

—Chris Hilf, Associate Director for Student Success

With a revised Business Core creating more open electives, these types of opportunities are attainable.



Seated Left to Right: Jasmine Jones-Reed, Shakeria Carter, Sloan Spinks
Back Row Left to Right: Jessie Parr, Chris Hilf, Becky Ellsworth, Michelle Curry

The CSS focuses heavily on supporting students as they explore their options. The annual **DuqBiz Expo** features the School's majors, student organizations, study abroad, and other educational opportunities. This year's Expo drew 216 students, who mingled with faculty, staff, and peers. Forty percent of surveyed students said that the Expo helped with their decision in choosing a primary or secondary major, or encouraged them to add a minor.



DuqBiz Expo, February 4, 2026
in the Union Ballroom.

LOOKING AHEAD — WHAT WE'RE EXCITED ABOUT

The CSS continues to find new ways to connect, support, and prepare our students. There is a particular excitement surrounding the Fall 2026 launch of a **School of Business Living Learning Community** in collaboration with the Office of Student Housing.

Designed specifically for first-year business students, this community offers a dynamic residential environment that supports their academic achievement, professional development, and personal growth, while helping them form meaningful peer relationships.

Living and learning alongside fellow business students also encourages collaboration, shared problem-solving, and a strong sense of belonging from the very start of their Duquesne experience.

Student Success Coach **Jasmine Jones-Reed** has a background in residence life and is eager to bring that experience to her role at Duquesne. Her expertise helps bridge the gap between the residential and academic experiences, ensuring students feel supported both inside and outside the classroom.



Success Coach Jasmine Jones-Reed (left) assisting a student.

I am looking forward to building new ways to create a sense of belonging with our incoming first-year students in the new School of Business Living Learning Community. Collaborating with Residence Life will help connect academics with student life, providing our students with a holistic sense of support.

—Jasmine Jones-Reed, Success Coach

THE VALUE OF A PEER PERSPECTIVE

We recognize the importance of peer support, guidance, and learning throughout this journey of exploration and growth.

Our **Peer Mentor program**, launched in 2023, enables students to meet with one of our Peer Mentors to discuss life as a business student.

Peer Mentors support students with:

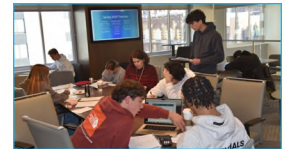
- Organization
- Navigating DU systems
- Communicating with professors
- Developing study habits
- Getting involved in student organizations
- Exploring campus life
- Learning about majors



Peer Mentors Sophia Ginther (left)
and Kensi Staffen (right)

Students also have access to peer-to-peer academic support through the School's **Student Tutoring program**. Throughout the year, student tutors offer assistance in core business courses – including Finance, Business Mathematics, Economics, Accounting, Information Systems, and Statistics. Tutoring sessions are held at scheduled times on the 6th and 7th floors of Rockwell Hall, providing students with convenient opportunities to receive additional guidance.

Faculty mentors and student tutors also participate in the School's popular **Business Math tutoring pizza parties**, creating a relaxed environment where students can strengthen their skills while connecting with peers and instructors.



Business Math Tutoring Party

At the School of Business, students are supported every step of the way — ensuring no one falls behind on their academic journey.

Dangers of Speech Technology for Certain Employees

— *Dr. Min Geiger, Assistant Professor of Management*

AI is now an integral part of many organizations, reshaping how people work and how organizations manage their employees. Although cutting-edge AI technology offers unprecedented efficiency and productivity, it may also damage organizations' efforts to reduce barriers facing employees from marginalized groups.

Research published in *Nature Machine Intelligence* by Dr. Min Geiger and her collaborators focuses on speech technology including systems like Google Translate and Microsoft's Intelligent Speaker.

The authors identified three significant issues that organizations may encounter when adopting speech technology. These issues can perpetuate existing barriers in the workplace and cause disproportionate harm to employees from marginalized groups.

Hidden Performance Barriers

Speech technology can introduce hidden performance barriers that increase existing disparities for employees from marginalized groups. These performance barriers are a byproduct of the technology's limitations in accurately understanding and interpreting speech from marginalized speakers (e.g., nonnative speakers, employees with regional accents or dialects, employees with certain voice-related impairments), causing them to feel they are not heard in the workplace.

Sensitive Biometric Data

Speech technology captures a large amount of sensitive biometric data, including individual characteristics that collectively form a voiceprint. Although some organizations collect biometric data for legitimate purposes (e.g., authenticating identity), others may misuse them by identifying underlying health conditions.

Inclusivity Gaps in Anthropomorphic and Interactive Design

Most speech technology designs and anthropomorphic features tend to overlook characteristics of people from marginalized groups (e.g., non-Westerners, nonnative English speakers). This oversight may promote social disconnection among employees from marginalized groups, leading them to feel they are socially excluded in the workplace.

Geiger's research also provides practical guidance for organizations that seek to implement speech technology responsibly and strive to support employees from marginalized groups. For example, organizations should be aware of the potential performance barriers associated with speech technology. They should also be transparent about biometric data collection and proactively develop internal controls to ensure ethical use of the data. Finally, organizations should take time to truly understand how marginalized employees think and feel when they are interacting with speech technology.

Speech technology can disproportionately disadvantage marginalized employees in the workplace. It is important for organizations to address new forms of marginalization in the age of AI.

—Dr. Min Geiger



Climate Risk Premium: Evidence from Commodity Options

— *Dr. Rui Liu, William and Helen Lyons Faculty Fellow in Finance; Associate Professor of Finance*

Understanding how risks are reflected in financial market prices has been an important area of research, particularly as risks related to climate change have attracted growing attention in recent years. Ongoing work by Dr. Rui Liu examines how climate risks are reflected in commodity market prices.

This study finds that climate risk premiums—the extra return investors demand for climate-related risk—increase with low-to-moderate levels of uncertainty. However, they decline as uncertainty becomes more extreme, creating an inverted U-shaped relationship. This means that premiums rise at first, then fall as uncertainty increases further. In the short term, changes in policy uncertainty are the main factor driving these premiums, with sustained uncertainty increasing how sensitive prices are to that risk. Market participants like investors and traders responded more strongly when uncertainty increased than when it decreased by a similar amount.

By demonstrating that climate policy uncertainty affects risk premiums in uneven and nonlinear ways, Liu's findings suggest that clearer and more predictable policy guidelines could help stabilize market expectations. Consistent environmental regulations are vital for reducing uncertainty, helping markets price climate risk more accurately, and ultimately encouraging more investment in sustainable assets.



Dr. Liu presented her research on November 12, 2025.

By integrating climate factors into market practices, opportunities for sustainable investment opportunities expand. As regulators increasingly emphasize climate disclosures and risk management, quantifying climate risk premiums can inform the development of market practices and regulatory frameworks that align finance with a sustainable, low-carbon future.

—Dr. Rui Liu

Digital Nudging and Donations

—Dr. Georgiana Craciun,
Associate Professor of Marketing

Understanding how users interact with online donation forms is important for non-profit organizations seeking external funding. Charitable contributions can be positively or negatively affected depending on how information is presented.

Nudges are a common design element in online donation forms. Two common types are default and friction nudges. A default nudge is a preselected option that occurs without user input. For example, when a \$50 donation amount is automatically selected in a form, or the monthly recurring donation box is already checked. Default nudges rely on convenience and perceived recommendations to emphasize specific donation options. A friction nudge works the opposite way by adding extra steps to discourage a particular choice. A friction nudge may require users to type in a custom amount for a smaller donation or open a separate menu, for example.

Research published by Dr. Georgiana Craciun studies how users respond to these default and friction nudges, as well as transparency about nudge methodology.

Craciun's findings show that friction nudges lead to significantly higher donation amounts, while default nudge returns are more marginal. Combining default and friction nudges sees significantly diminished returns, and nudge transparency has a negligible effect. Transparency does not meaningfully reduce donations and alleviates concerns about donor backlash.

Overall, these findings suggest that non-profit organizations seeking donations may see more success by using friction nudges under certain conditions.

Offering a higher amount upfront and placing smaller amounts behind an extra step increases giving. Explaining this design openly preserves trust while keeping choice intact.

—Dr. Georgiana Craciun



AI Use and Consumer Well-Being

—Dr. Christina Kuchmaner,
Assistant Professor of Marketing

Some people are threatened by AI because they believe it may eventually exceed human intelligence and capabilities, making human input obsolete. Research published by Dr. Christina Kuchmaner examines factors that decrease user's AI threat perception.

When using AI, consumers automatically apply social rules and expectations to machines, even after one interaction. These humanlike interactions can quickly lead to a feeling of connection with their AI tool as a humanlike partner. Kuchmaner's research establishes the concept of "perceived AI relatedness," which is a user's generalized sense of connectedness to AI. Her research shows that AI relatedness can reduce perceived AI threats through ingroup favoritism, which emerges because users come to view AI as an "us" rather than a competing "them." Notably, however, the reduction does not occur if users feel forced to use AI.

The findings offer important practical and societal implications by demonstrating that fostering a sense of connection between consumers and AI can reduce perceived identity threats and resistance, ultimately improving adoption, satisfaction, and performance across the customer journey. Firms can leverage this by designing AI experiences that emphasize collaboration and personalization while also providing opportunities for voluntary engagement and human support when needed. At the same time, increased AI integration raises broader societal concerns, as reduced threat perceptions that may coexist with risks to consumer well-being. This could include emotional over reliance or psychological harm among vulnerable users. Accordingly, these insights highlight the need for responsible AI design, consumer awareness, and policy safeguards to balance the benefits of AI adoption with protections against its unintended consequences.

We're at a point where AI can feel less threatening and more relatable. But for younger users especially, we need to ensure these technologies support well-being without replacing meaningful human connection.

—Dr. Christina Kuchmaner



Debt and Stock Market Participation: Evidence and Implications of Impulsivity

—Dr. Charles Favreau, Associate Professor of Finance

Economic theory suggests nearly all individuals should have some investment in the stock market, but only about half of U.S. adults do. Participation rates are also declining among younger adults. Several explanations have been offered for low stock market participation, including participation costs, financial literacy, wealth, and social factors.

When researchers study who invests in the stock market, they typically account for wealth—what people own minus what they owe. That approach has intuitive appeal, but it quietly assumes something most of us would dispute: that having \$100,000 in savings with no debt feels exactly the same as having \$200,000 in savings and \$100,000 in debt. Dr. Charles Favreau's research challenges that assumption directly, separating assets and debt and measuring each independently. His findings suggest the two are not simply mirror images—debt appears to discourage participation at nearly twice the rate that assets encourage it. While evidence in the data supports several rational explanations for this finding, the characteristics of some in the sample point to behavioral factors, one of which is impulsivity.

Favreau's research could help policymakers understand and address the widening wealth gap—particularly if debt discourages participation partly through behavioral tendencies like impulsivity, suggesting that financial education may need to focus as much on debt management as on investment literacy.



Dr. Favreau presented his research on November 12, 2025.

Faculty & Staff Awards, December 2025

The Palumbo-Donahue School of Business honors faculty and staff with annual awards, recognizing outstanding accomplishments and dedication to education, research, and service. These awards celebrate the passion and commitment of our school members, highlighting their significant contributions to our community.

2024-2025 Outstanding Teaching Award

- **Dr. Wenqi Zhou** – PwC Alumni Faculty Fellow; Associate Professor of Information Systems & Technology; Managing Director, Viragh Institute for Business Ethics

2024-2025 Dean’s Award for Excellence in Teaching

- **Andrea DiBernardo** – Associate Director, Center for Leadership in Professional Selling; Instructor, Sales and Marketing
- **Staci Offutt** – Director Center for Excellence in Entrepreneurship; Assistant Professor of Practice, Entrepreneurship
- **Dr. Michael Sherwin** – Assistant Professor of Supply Chain Management

2024-2025 Outstanding Research Award

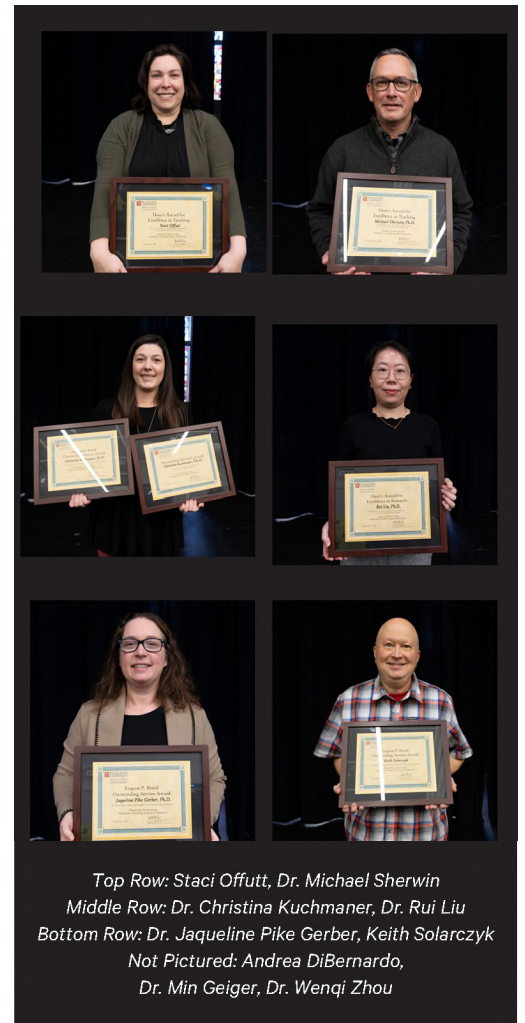
- **Dr. Christina Kuchmaner** – Assistant Professor of Marketing

2024-2025 Dean’s Award for Excellence in Research

- **Dr. Rui Liu** – William and Helen Lyons Faculty Fellow in Finance; Associate Professor of Finance
- **Dr. Wenqi Zhou** – PwC Alumni Faculty Fellow; Associate Professor of Information Systems & Technology; Managing Director, Viragh Institute for Business Ethics
- **Dr. Min Geiger** – Assistant Professor of Management

2024-2025 Eugene P. Beard Outstanding Service Award

- **Dr. Jaqueline Pike Gerber** – Associate Professor of Information Systems and Technology
- **Keith Solarczyk** – Support Analyst/Lab Manager
- **Dr. Christina Kuchmaner** – Assistant Professor of Marketing



Top Row: Staci Offutt, Dr. Michael Sherwin
 Middle Row: Dr. Christina Kuchmaner, Dr. Rui Liu
 Bottom Row: Dr. Jaqueline Pike Gerber, Keith Solarczyk
 Not Pictured: Andrea DiBernardo,
 Dr. Min Geiger, Dr. Wenqi Zhou

Congratulations to Dr. Phil Baird on his retirement after over 30 years at Duquesne.



Celebrating Courage at the 2026 Lending Hearts Gala

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Members of the School of Business community recently attended the **2026 Lending Hearts Gala**, which honored **Chip Ganassi (B'82)** cancer survivor and Owner and CEO of Chip Ganassi Racing.

The evening also celebrated the remarkable story of Penelope Byler and her family. Diagnosed with a rare form of cancer at just 2½ years old, Penelope endured 42 weeks of chemotherapy, 24 weeks of maintenance therapy, and four surgeries. Now 10 years old, she is cancer-free.

The event highlighted the mission of **Lending Hearts**, whose vision is to bring hope, strength, and support to everyone impacted by cancer. Through powerful stories and community support, the gala served as a reminder of the resilience of patients and families and the importance of coming together to make a difference.



Left to right: Penelope Byler and Chip Ganassi

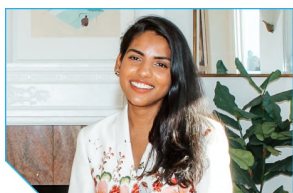


Left to right: Adam Viers, Dr. Dean McFarlin, Martin Black, and Mike LaFrankie

From Sri Lanka to Whole Foods: Sajani Amarasiri's Entrepreneurial Journey

When Sajani Amarasiri (B'12) moved from Sri Lanka to Pittsburgh, she never imagined her journey would eventually take her from Amazon and Microsoft to launching the first Sri Lankan-founded wellness brand in the U.S. Today, her company, **Kola Goodies**, is making waves with culturally authentic products like their lazy girl approved Chai and Sri Lankan Milk Tea Lattes, recently debuting in Whole Foods Northern California.

After graduating from Duquesne, Amarasiri began her career in supply chain roles at Amazon and Microsoft. Along the way, she experimented with entrepreneurial projects, including launching Sri Lanka's first female co-working space in 2018. When COVID-19 forced her to pivot, she turned her focus to something more personal—bringing the foods and flavors of home to an American audience.



I missed my mom's cooking and the traditional drinks I grew up with in Sri Lanka. I wanted to make them accessible and healthy, while staying true to their roots.

With **Kola Goodies**, Amarasiri sources fresh Sri Lankan ingredients directly from farms, without additives or emulsifiers, blending authenticity with modern wellness trends.

Amarasiri credits Duquesne with giving her both the technical foundation and personal support to succeed. *"Duquesne was my launchpad,"* she explained. *"As an international student, I was homesick, but the International Office and my professors were always there to guide me."*

Her decision to study supply chain management, shaped by a small but impactful classroom conversation, proved pivotal. *"What I learned at Duquesne—from supply planning to negotiation strategies—are things I use every day in running Kola Goodies,"* she said. She still recalls a line from her negotiations professor: *"If it's not mutually beneficial, it's not a good negotiation."*



Beyond academics, experiences like serving as a resident assistant, participating in business fraternities, and even etiquette training dinners helped prepare her for leadership. *"Everything I learned at Duquesne, I'm still using,"* she reflected.

Her advice to current students is straightforward: *"Do everything possible. Take advantage of every opportunity—competitions, classes, networking. You never know what will make a difference. And always ask for help; the professors and staff want to see you succeed. The relationships and lessons from my time at Duquesne still carry me forward."*

As Kola Goodies continues to expand, Amarasiri remains rooted in the values she developed at Duquesne: authenticity, service, and resilience.

Follow Kola Goodies online at kolagoodies.com

@kolagoodies @sajaniamarasiri

Images courtesy of Amarasiri.

Alumni from Waldron Private Wealth Share Insights

On February 26, 2026, members of the **Asset Management Group @ Duquesne (DAMG)** welcomed alumni **Matthew Helfrich (B'03), CFP, CEO and Partner**, and **Nikolas Higgins (B'22), Client Service Specialist**, for a discussion on careers in wealth management.

During the session, Helfrich and Higgins shared insights into their work advising clients, discussed trends shaping the wealth management industry, and reflected on how their Duquesne education helped prepare them for their careers. Their visit provided students with valuable perspective on the profession and an opportunity to learn directly from alumni working in the field.



Helfrich (back row left) and Higgins (back row second from left) with members of DAMG along with faculty advisors.

A Dukes Win: On & Off the Court

On December 21, 2025, Duquesne and Pitt's women's basketball teams met at UPMC Cooper Fieldhouse for the 43rd annual City Game. With a final score of 84 to 69, the Dukes celebrated the win—creating the perfect backdrop for a day of school spirit and connection.

During the game, School of Business hosted an alumni family reception in the MFA Club. Guests enjoyed a catered lunch with snacks and drinks available. The event provided a relaxed setting to reconnect and celebrate the school's community. President Gormley, the Duke, and Women's Basketball Head Coach Dan Burt made appearances for photos and conversation. *Stay tuned for future alumni engagement opportunities.*



Left to Right: Alyssa Short (HS'20); Nicholas France (B'19); Kathia Kennedy (A'88); Chuck Kennedy (B'88); Coach Dan Burt; Dr. Karen Donovan (Sr. Associate Dean, Academic Programs & Executive Education; Associate Professor of Marketing); William Donovan (B '80; JD '94)

Tom and Anna Mae Garbe Establish Endowed Scholarship in Memory of Their Daughter

The School of Business is honored to announce the establishment of the **Stephanie Lynn Garbe Endowed Scholarship Fund**, created by Tom and Anna Mae Garbe and family in loving memory of their daughter who passed away suddenly from complications of esophageal cancer in September 2025.

The scholarship honors Stephanie's life, her deep commitment to community service, and her strong connection to Duquesne as a proud alumna of the business school.

While our family takes great pride in Stephanie's academic and professional accomplishments, what we cherish most is the unwavering kindness, compassion, and genuine care for others that defined her throughout her life. Stephanie deeply believed in making a difference in others' lives. This scholarship fund will honor her legacy by providing financial support to continue the Duquesne mission to serve God by serving students, so they can, in turn, serve others.

—Tom and Anna Mae Garbe

Stephanie earned her undergraduate degree with honors from the Palumbo-Donahue School of Business in May 2004, where she developed the academic foundation that shaped her successful professional career. After beginning her career in public accounting, Stephanie returned to campus and earned her law degree from the Thomas R. Kline School of Law.

Known for her intellect, compassion, and dedication to helping others, Stephanie carried forward the values of service and leadership well beyond her time on campus. Throughout her life, she remained deeply committed to strengthening her community and making a meaningful difference in the lives of those around her.

The **Stephanie Lynn Garbe Endowed Scholarship** will provide scholarship support to students in the Palumbo-Donahue School of Business. The fund is designed to recruit and retain qualified students who demonstrate academic promise, a commitment to service, and financial need, with a preference for students pursuing an accounting major.

The scholarship award is renewable, provided the recipient maintains a 3.25 QPA and completes at least 20 hours of community service each academic year at Duquesne University. Eligible service activities may include participation in student life programs, business school organizations, honor societies, fraternal groups, or tutoring initiatives.

Scholarship recipients may demonstrate all or some of the following criteria:

- Have applied, been accepted, or are enrolled in the School of Business
- Have demonstrated community service while in high school
- Preference for students majoring in accounting
- Demonstrate financial need

For more information about the Stephanie Lynn Garbe Endowed Scholarship Fund, contact the Office of Financial Aid via email at faoffice@duq.edu or by calling (412) 396-6607.

Honoring a Teaching Legacy with the Vashishta Bhaskar Endowed Scholarship

For more than 30 years, finance professor Vashishta Bhaskar shaped the academic journeys of generations of Duquesne business students. In 2025, he made the incredibly generous decision to support future students in perpetuity by establishing the **Vashishta Bhaskar Endowed Scholarship**.



Bhaskar retired in 2021 after many years of distinguished service at Duquesne. Known for his student-centered approach, he emphasized the importance of connecting finance theory to real-world applications. His Futures and Options course, in particular, became a cornerstone of the curriculum and served as the genesis for what is now the Student Managed Investment Fund (SMIF) program. Beyond the classroom, Bhaskar remained deeply engaged with his former students, cultivating relationships that extended long after graduation and into their professional lives.

"I became a professor by pure luck after reading an ad posting to teach futures and options in the WSJ Midwest Edition back in 1976 – taking that risk was one of the most rewarding decisions of my life", said Bhaskar. "As a professor, I helped my students cultivate their passions, sparked their interest in the finance field, and inspired them to discover themselves. They came in as naïve and curious kids and grew into confident young professionals ready to better society. This scholarship will create generational transformation for those in need."

The **Vashishta Bhaskar Endowed Scholarship** is designed to recruit and retain talented School of Business students who demonstrate academic merit and financial need. Preference considerations are given to first-generation finance majors and/or business students. The scholarship can be renewed for up to four years for students who maintain good academic standing. This endowment reflects Bhaskar's lifelong belief that access to education can be transformative, especially for those facing financial or socio-economic barriers.

Already, alumni whose lives and careers were influenced by Bhaskar have stepped forward to support the scholarship, viewing it as a meaningful way to honor a professor who made a lasting impact on their personal and professional development.

The independent study and thesis work I did with Bhaskar were pivotal in my finance career at PNC. The energy and enthusiasm that Bhaskar brought to the finance program at Duquesne were invaluable to me, and I am certain, to many other graduates.

—Randy King (MBA'87), Executive VP, PNC (retired)

The **Vashishta Bhaskar Endowed Scholarship** stands as both a tribute to a legendary educator and a powerful investment in the next generation of business leaders. Through the collective generosity of alumni, friends, and former students, the fund will continue to open doors for deserving students—mirroring the encouragement and opportunity Bhaskar offered so many throughout his career.

Mary Jo Dressel (MBA '86) Establishes Two Endowed Scholarships to Honor Her Parents' Legacy



Left to Right: Joseph A. Dressel, Mary Jo Dressel, and Irene Piatak Dressel

Mary Jo Dressel and the School of Business announce the creation of two endowed scholarships to honor the legacy of her parents, Irene Piatak Dressel and Joseph A. Dressel.

Inspired by the values they instilled in their children, a strong work ethic, commitment to education, and deep devotion to faith and family, Dressel hopes these funds will support future generations of business students.

My parents instilled in me and my siblings the values of the Catholic faith, a strong work ethic, a deep commitment to family, and a belief in the importance of education.

— Mary Jo Dressel

The **Irene Piatak Dressel Endowed Scholarship** will support students enrolled in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program. Named for the matriarch of the Dressel family, the scholarship honors Irene's devotion to lifelong learning and service. Remembered for her kindness, faith, and deep love of music, Irene expressed her devotion to God by sharing her gift by singing and playing the organ at Mass.

Acts of service were central to how Irene lived her faith. Dressel recalls that *"in the second grade, my mom laid down a challenge that shaped the rest of my life: school was to be taken seriously, and I was expected to strive for meaningful achievement."* Irene passed away at 92, having lived a faith-based life defined by purpose, generosity, and community involvement.

The **Joseph A. Dressel Endowed Scholarship** honors Dressel's father and Irene's husband, Joseph A. Dressel, a 1949 graduate of the business school. This undergraduate scholarship will assist students pursuing a bachelor's degree in business. Joseph's life was marked by academic excellence, service to the country, and distinguished professional achievement. After serving honorably in the U.S. Army during World War II, he earned his Bachelor of Science in Accounting before embarking on a successful career as a certified public accountant and a respected professional at the U.S. Treasury's Internal Revenue Service. Known for his sharp mind and passion for history, he remained active in his field well into retirement.

Throughout her decision to create these funds, Dressel emphasized her desire to pass on the values her parents embodied. *"The scholarships created in my parents' honor are my way of encouraging others to pursue excellence in their education while keeping my mom and dad's memories alive. By supporting future business students, I hope to help them reach their academic goals and perhaps find inspiration in my parents' stories and the values they lived by."*

These endowed scholarships serve as a lasting tribute to two remarkable individuals whose integrity, service, and dedication to learning continue to inspire all who hear their story.

Prospective MBA students interested in the **Irene Piatak Dressel Endowed Scholarship** should contact the School of Business graduate admissions team at grad-bus@duq.edu. Undergraduate students interested in applying for the **Joseph A. Dressel Endowed Scholarship** should contact the Office of Financial Aid via email at faoffice@duq.edu or by calling (412) 396-6607.

To learn more about supporting or establishing an endowed scholarship in the School of Business, please contact a member of our Advancement team.

Your generosity can help create meaningful opportunities for future generations of business leaders.



Adam Viers, Assistant Dean of Advancement
viersa@duq.edu • (412) 396-1322



Amanda McQuillan, Gift Officer
mcquillana@duq.edu • (412) 396-3009

Ally Financial Relationship Accelerates Student and Alumni Success

For the past three years, **Ally Financial** has collaborated with the School of Business to advance student success, boost experiential learning, and create meaningful career pathways.

What began as a focused effort to expand recruiting in the Pittsburgh region quickly revealed a strong alignment between Ally's talent needs and Duquesne's mission. According to **Luke Frawley, Director of Business Development at Ally**, that initial effort has evolved into a dynamic corporate-university relationship that has already launched more than 10 Duquesne students into internships, full-time roles, and the company's highly competitive talent development programs.

Ally's Gold-Tier sponsorship of the **School's Center for Leadership in Professional Selling (CLPS)** has deepened the company's presence on campus and created valuable opportunities for students to interact directly with industry professionals. From mentoring sessions and networking events to leading course-embedded projects and live role-play coaching, Ally representatives are a regular presence in Rockwell Hall.

As the co-host of the School's annual **Steel City Sales Challenge (SCSC)**, Ally plays a central role in one of the School's flagship experiential learning competitions. The SCSC is a two-day, virtual two-round competition with sales role-play and elevator pitch tracks, open to undergraduate students from universities across the country.

Ally believes that by engaging students early, long before the job application process, they are building relationships that prepare students for today's competitive sales environment. A clear example of how Ally's three-year relationship has been a win-win is the number of Duquesne students Ally has hired for internships and meaningful professional roles.

Frawley shared that this year alone, half of Ally's local intern cohort came from Duquesne. That momentum has translated into even greater opportunity. Two students, **Connor Williams** and **Briana Russell**, have secured coveted spots in **Ally's Auto Finance Accelerated Talent Development Program (Auto DRIVE)**, the company's premier entry-level, two-year rotational program.



Luke Frawley hosting mock interviews with Business students in the CLPS sim lab.

This achievement underscores the depth of Ally's investment in Duquesne's talented business students and the career pathways this collaboration continues to create. Each year, only 5–10 candidates nationwide are selected, most of whom are sourced from Ally's intern pool. This year marks the first time students from a single institution have earned spots in the same cohort.

Frawley praised both Williams and Russell as *"incredibly driven, motivated to do well, strong performers, and natural leaders who connect well with people."*

Their success underscores the strength of the School of Business's preparation for students in technical and relationship-building skills, professionalism, and communication that employers like Ally value.



From Classroom Connections to Career Launch: Briana Russell's Story

For **Briana Russell**, the journey to **Ally's prestigious Auto DRIVE program** began in her junior year, when she first met Ally representatives during a round table classroom discussion. She reconnected with them at the Spring Career Fair and later at a campus sporting event.

Those important interactions led to a phone call from Luke Frawley, who encouraged her to apply for an internship that she ultimately received. During the following summer, Russell interned with Ally on the consumer underwriting team. In this role, she negotiated deals over the phone, reviewed loan applications, and completed an independent research project, which she presented to the company leadership at the end of the program.

"My experience with Ally Financial showed me what it looks like when a company truly invests in developing its people," Russell said. *"During my internship, I was trusted with meaningful work and surrounded by leaders who were committed to helping me grow."*

After completing the internship, Russell remained connected with the company, returning to campus career fairs to represent Ally and introduce the company to other Duquesne students.

Her dedication and performance ultimately led to her selection for **Auto DRIVE**, a highly competitive rotational program designed to develop future leaders in the auto finance industry. The program allows participants to gain experience across three critical areas of the business within two years, accelerating their development while building deep industry knowledge.

For Russell, the opportunity represents both a professional challenge and a launching point for an exciting career. *"Being selected for the Auto DRIVE rotational program is an incredible opportunity, and I'm excited to continue*



Left to right: Ally Interns Briana Russell (Duq), Aaron Myers, Jared Swisher, Ryan Pityk (Ally - Duq relationship Co-lead), Conner Williams (Duq), Olivia Habash (Duq), Grant McKnight at a Veteran's Employee Resource Group volunteer event.

learning from and contributing to a company that values innovation, community, and long-term development," shared Russell.

Following graduation, Russell will relocate to Georgia, where she will begin the program at Ally's Lawrenceville office, just north of Atlanta.

Russell credits the School for this exciting career development, sharing, *"The School of Business gave me the exposure as a student to network with business professionals. From guest speakers in class to the career fair to networking events, I had casual yet impactful conversations with Ally's employees, building a stronger relationship with each encounter."*

Her journey from classroom discussions to internship opportunities and now a national leadership program illustrates how corporate relationships can transform potential into opportunity. It's a powerful example of the **Business of Difference Making®** in action, where collaborations with companies like Ally create real pathways for student success.

7th Annual Duquesne New Venture Challenge



Five innovative startups have been selected as finalists in the **2025-2026 Duquesne New Venture Challenge (DNVC)**, the School's annual business plan competition. Now in its seventh year, the DNVC has gained national recognition for advancing innovation and helping emerging founders refine their ideas, receive mentorship from experienced business leaders and present their ventures to industry experts.

The five finalist teams include:

- **Accelowave Technologies, Inc.** – Revolutionary solutions designed to enhance the quality of life for individuals with swallowing disorders.
- **HeadStrait Labs** – Medical device company redefining how patients with suspected central nervous system injuries are stabilized and monitored during emergency.
- **Peachy Day** – Integrative migraine care app with AI-powered health tracking, wellness coaching and neurologist telehealth.
- **SafeSock** – Sensor-lined foot sleeve that continuously delivers haptic biofeedback for patients who have undergone lower-limb surgery.
- **TrainingU*** – Web-based marketplace where younger athletes can find and book one-on-one, personalized and affordable training sessions with NCAA athletes.

(*Denotes a team that includes Duquesne students or alumni.)

Finalists will submit an executive summary, full business plan, and slide presentation before presenting their ventures to a live panel of distinguished judges. To prepare for the final round, teams will receive access to **Bob's Launch Pad**, the School's makerspace within the **Center for Excellence in Entrepreneurship**, along with 15 hours of mentoring from the **Duquesne University Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** and complimentary access to LivePlan®, a leading business planning platform.

More than \$41,000 in cash prizes will be awarded, with the top three teams also receiving legal services through the **Thomas R. Kline School of Law** and consulting support through the **SBDC**.

Winners will be announced at the DNVC Awards Reception later this spring in Rockwell Hall on Duquesne University's campus.

Hosted annually by the Palumbo-Donahue School of Business, the DNVC is a three-stage national business plan competition open to startups less than four years old, providing entrepreneurs with mentorship, resources, and a platform to showcase innovative ventures. To learn more about the DNVC, contact Staci Offutt at offutts@duq.edu.

The competition is supported by **Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC.**



4th Annual Supply Chain Management Case Competition

The School hosted the **4th Annual Supply Chain Management Case Competition**, where student teams from 11 regional universities competed to solve a real-world business challenge presented by **Howmet Aerospace**. The case focused on tariff-related supply chain strategy, requiring teams to develop and present recommendations to a panel of industry judges.

Industry professionals from organizations including MSA Safety, Fastenal, Kraft Heinz, and Armada Supply Chain Solutions served as judges, evaluating the teams' strategic recommendations and presentations.



Congratulations to Duquesne students (left to right) Romeo Jaramillo, Benjamin Irwin, Jonathan Maier, and Max Nicolussi on placing 2nd.



3rd Annual Data for Difference Making Challenge



The School hosted the **3rd Annual Data for Difference Making Challenge (DDMC)** in partnership with Dollar Bank and Excelitas in October 2025.

Graduate students representing Duquesne's 10 colleges and schools worked in teams throughout the five-day challenge, applying their creativity, analytical skills, and problem-solving abilities to develop thoughtful and viable solutions grounded in data.

The DDMC continues to highlight the School's commitment to experiential learning by giving students the opportunity to collaborate across disciplines while tackling real-world challenges through analytics and strategic thinking.

9th Annual Steel City Sales Challenge

Undergraduate students from universities across the country competed in the **9th Annual Steel City Sales Challenge (SCSC)**, a two-day virtual competition designed to showcase the next generation of sales talent while connecting students with leading employers. Held on October 23-24, 2025, the competition featured two tracks: a sales role-play competition and an elevator pitch challenge.

Presented by the School's **Center for Leadership in Professional Selling** in partnership with **Ally Financial**, the event drew a record-breaking 167 competitors representing 17 universities nationwide. Students competed for more than \$15,000 in prize money while demonstrating the professional selling skills that today's employers seek.



Congratulations to Alexandra Martorana (left) for placing 2nd in the Elevator Pitch and to Akir Deng (right) for being a finalist in the Role-Play competition.



Difference-Making Experiential Learning Opportunities

At the School of Business, students learn by doing. Working with industry professionals, they tackle real business challenges through project-based experiences embedded across the curriculum—from their first cornerstone course to their final capstone. Along the way, class projects and co-curricular competitions provide dozens of opportunities each year for students to put their knowledge into action and become difference makers.

Cornerstone: First Year Innovation Experience REAL-WORLD LEARNING STARTS ON DAY ONE

Each fall, the School launches the academic year with its cornerstone course, **BUAD 103: First Year Innovation Experience (FYIE)**. As a required course for all first-year business students, FYIE immerses students immediately in experiential learning, challenging them to work both individually and in teams to address a real-world business problem.

For the 7th consecutive year, **EY** served as the corporate partner for the course. This year's challenge asked students to develop ideas that would help improve the working world for Generation Z. Teams focused on four key themes: AI and emerging technologies; social impact and company mission; professional development and continuous learning; and employee well-being and recognition.

Throughout the semester, student teams worked with professional mentors to develop and refine their ideas. The top five teams, whose ideas showed creativity and impact, presented their solutions to EY.

The FYIE continues to serve as a powerful introduction to Duquesne Business, demonstrating from the very first semester how students apply classroom learning to meaningful, real-world challenges in partnership with leading organizations.



Congratulations to the 1st place team, Sullivan Hoffman (left) and Kaylie Baumgart (right), who proposed a personal finance podcast designed to improve financial literacy among young professionals.



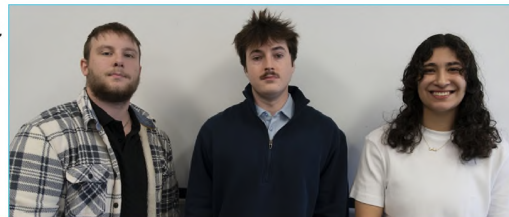
Course-Embedded Project: Digital Marketing DIGITAL MARKETING AND ANALYTICS MAJOR

Students in Dr. Christina Kuchmaner's **MKTG 472: Digital Marketing** course gained hands-on experience developing marketing campaigns through a course-embedded partnership with **Level Agency**. The project challenged students to apply digital marketing concepts learned in the classroom to a real-world business scenario, working as agency-style teams to design strategic campaigns for a local comedy club.

Throughout the semester, student teams researched target audiences and developed integrated marketing strategies to increase ticket sales and brand awareness. Their campaigns incorporated a range of digital tactics, including website design and optimization, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, social media strategy, paid advertising, influencer partnerships, and high-converting landing page creation.

Teams presented their final strategies to Connor Thorpe, Media Manager at Level Agency, and Martin Black, Director, Corporate Relations and Community Partnerships at the School of Business, who evaluated the presentations based on creativity, strategic thinking, and the effectiveness of the proposed marketing solutions.

Left to Right: Bryan Hecht, Luke Masters, and Laila Kronemer, 1st Place Team



Capstone: Strategic Management

Offered in both the Fall and Spring semesters, **MGMT 499W: Strategic Management Capstone** is the culminating capstone taken by all undergraduate students. This course challenges seniors to integrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout their business education to address complex, real-world business challenges.

Fall 2025: Wesco Course-Embedded Project

Students demonstrated their strategic thinking and innovation during the annual capstone competition, where teams presented new business opportunities for Wesco.

Working in teams, students analyzed emerging trends in AI security systems and IoT technologies, identifying new market opportunities and proposing strategic initiatives for Wesco to explore. The 1st place team's solution was to partner with the airline industry to develop drive-through scanning technology for commercial and military aircraft.



Left to Right: 1st place team Sam Bennett, Michael Barsotti, Ryan Dimitroff, Sophia Ginther, Jonah Nizami, and Samantha Hahka.



Spring 2026: U.S. Steel Course-Embedded Project

Kevin Lewis (B'08, MBA '11), Executive Vice President, CFO and Head of Tubular Solutions, and Michael Jones, CPA, Senior Director of Corporate FP&A, launched the Spring 2026 capstone project in January.

During the Spring semester, 200 seniors working in 40 teams will develop strategic recommendations related to Nippon Steel's acquisition of U.S. Steel, including the development of a new electric-arc mill. The top four teams will present their solutions to U.S. Steel leadership.



Left to Right: Kevin Lewis and Michael Jones kicking off the Spring capstone project.



Partnerships and Projects that Transform Students

The following lists, while not exhaustive, provide illustrative examples of the range of course-embedded corporate projects offered. Logos included are official corporate partners in the School.

FALL 2025 UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

ACCT 310: Accounting Information Systems

Students completed an applied accounting information systems project in partnership with the Institute of Internal Auditors and Pennsylvania Association of Internal Auditors. They analyzed real-world scenarios and developed solutions aligned with internal audit and information systems practices. (Faculty: Alex Schreiber)

ACCT 412: Intro to Income Tax Accounting

Students prepared complete federal income tax returns using unique real-world datasets and official IRS forms for Duquesne University. They completed an in-depth tax research project that culminated in a professional memo and presentation to practicing accountants and alumni. (Faculty: Dr. Bryan Menk)

BUBA 285: Foundations of Business Analytics

Students partnered with Kraft Heinz to complete a business analytics project focused on applying analytical tools to real organizational data. They interpreted datasets, identified insights, and developed data-driven recommendations aligned with business objectives. (Faculty: Dr. Matt Drake)



ECON 484W: Advanced Econometrics

Students participated in the Econometrics Challenge, where they applied advanced econometric methods to real-world data and presented their findings in a competitive format. Board members from the Economic Club of Pittsburgh served as judges and evaluated student presentations based on analytical rigor and practical application. (Faculty: Dr. Risa Kumazawa)

ENTR 376: Entrepreneurship Fundamentals

Students conducted a due diligence project for Hugh and Honey evaluating a potential acquisition opportunity. They analyzed business viability, assessed risks, and provided structured recommendations based on entrepreneurial and financial evaluation principles. (Faculty: Dr. Peter Gianiodis)

ISYS 380: User Experience Design

Students partnered with Carried Away Outfitters to conduct user experience research and design improvements. They applied UX methodologies to evaluate customer interactions, identify usability challenges, and propose design solutions aligned with business goals. (Faculty: Dr. Karoly Bozan)

SUMMER 2025 GRADUATE PROJECTS

ISYS 631: Business Analytics Capstone

Students collaborated with Dollar Bank on a real-world analytics initiative. They gathered and analyzed data over a 12-week period, applied business analytics tools, and developed data-driven recommendations. (Faculty: Dr. William Spangler)



MGMT 548: Capstone Project

Students partnered with the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission to analyze organizational challenges and provide actionable recommendations. The project required applied research, structured analysis, and professional deliverables aligned with client objectives. (Faculty: Michael Corcoran)

MGMT 712: Sustainable Business Practicum Project

Students worked in teams to reposition MassMutual Pittsburgh from a traditional life insurance provider to a comprehensive financial planning firm. They evaluated the company's brand position, assessed competitive benchmarks, and developed strategic recommendations to support long-term growth and relevance. (Faculty: Christine Hughes)



ISYS 489W: Information Systems Capstone

Students independently sourced small-business or business-unit clients and conducted consulting-style AI readiness assessments. They documented workflows, identified opportunities for AI-assisted improvements, defined measurable KPIs, and developed implementation roadmaps that considered feasibility and ethical implications. (Faculty: Dr. Karoly Bozan)

ISYS 612: Data Querying

Students examined the long-term decline in U.S. banks for Dollar Bank and evaluated its impact on underserved and under-banked populations. They conducted research and data analysis to assess industry trends and developed recommendations aimed at improving access and financial inclusion. (Faculty: Dr. Jacqueline Pike Gerber and Dr. Karen Donovan)



MKTG 373: Sales Fundamentals

Students partnered with Penske Truck Leasing to design and execute realistic sales role-play scenarios. Through simulated client meetings and structured feedback, students applied professional sales techniques in a real-world context. (Faculty: Andrea DiBernardo)



Rental
Leasing
Logistics

MKTG 474: Data-Driven Marketing

Students analyzed Pitt Ohio's business data to identify growth opportunities and performance optimization strategies. They delivered strategic marketing recommendations supported by quantitative analysis and data-driven insights. (Faculty: Patricia Rote)

SCMG 375: Supply Chain Process Improvement

Students partnered with Eos Energy Systems to analyze supply chain processes and identify operational improvement opportunities. They evaluated current workflows and proposed efficiency-enhancing recommendations supported by structured analysis. (Faculty: Dr. Mike Sherwin)

SCMG 499W: Strategic Supply Chain Management

Students completed a supply chain strategy project with Howmet Aerospace, applying operations and supply chain frameworks to develop metrics-driven recommendations. The project emphasized analytical rigor, performance measurement, and actionable implementation planning. (Faculty: Dr. Ryan Atkins)



FALL 2025 GRADUATE PROJECTS

MGMT 548: Capstone Project

Students partnered with Heidelberg Materials to analyze a real organizational challenge and deliver structured recommendations. The capstone project required integration of business concepts, analytical reasoning, and professional client communication. (Faculty: Michael Corcoran)

MGMT 722: Sustainable Business Practicum Project II

- Students created a structured training and onboarding plan that addressed both general professional competencies and organization-specific skills from Arete QIS.
- Students conducted a comparative market analysis for a targeted product category for Reclamation Factory by evaluating competitors, assessing market positioning, and identifying strategic growth opportunities supported by research.
- Students identified high-potential market segments for a new product offering for Beyond Reach Labs. They evaluated customer needs, market size, and strategic fit before presenting targeted recommendations and go-to-market considerations. (Faculty: Staci Offutt)

Connecting Students with Industry

In Fall 2025, students collaborated with faculty, staff, and business leaders to host networking events connected to a variety of industries, facilitating relationship-building as well as internship and job opportunities.

ACCOUNTING CONNECT

September 10, 2025

Students explored internship and career opportunities at the **Annual Accounting Connect** networking event, meeting with representatives from Baker Tilly, BDO, Deloitte, EY, PNC, Protiviti, PwC, and Schneider Downs.

Networking events like these enable Duquesne's accounting students to secure rewarding internships and job placements before graduation.

The event was organized by student leaders from **Beta Alpha Psi** and the **Student Accounting Association**, including Brenden Bills, Michael Barsotti, Sara Duclos, and Camden Manahan, pictured below.



Left to Right: Brenden Bills, Michael Barsotti, Sara Duclos, and Camden Manahan; Students and industry partners at Accounting Connect

FINANCE AND ECON CONNECT

October 15, 2025

The **Business Economics Student Association**, **Asset Management Group @ Duquesne**, and the **Financial Management Association** hosted the School's inaugural **Finance and Econ Connect** networking event.

The event brought together undergraduate and graduate students with representatives from 13 companies, creating valuable opportunities for professional networking and industry engagement.

Student leaders Dominic Coury, Ashlei Applegarth, and Joseph Nichol, pictured below, played key roles in organizing the event.



Left to Right: Dominic Coury, Ashlei Applegarth, and Joseph Nichol; Students and industry partners at Finance and Econ Connect

INFORMATION SYSTEMS & SUPPLY CHAIN DIRECT

October 1, 2025

Students connected with professionals from 20 leading companies during **Information Systems & Supply Chain Direct**. The event highlights the importance of professional networking and industry engagement.

This annual networking event was planned and co-hosted by the **Association for Information Systems (AIS)** student chapter and the **Duquesne Supply Chain Council (DSCC)**.

The event is generously sponsored by **MSA**.



Left to Right: Sasha Keizler, DSCC President, Case Competition, and Kayla St. Cin, AIS President; Students and industry partners at IS & SC Direct Connect

MARKETING MIX-ER

October 22, 2025

The semester concluded with the **Marketing Mix-er**, a networking event co-hosted by **Duquesne's American Marketing Association** student chapter, **Duquesne University Sales Team**, and the **Sports Marketing Association**.

Students connected with professionals from 17 companies while exploring career paths in digital marketing, sales, and sports marketing.

The event was organized by student leaders Keri Oswald, Gia Montini, and Kaleb Tkacs pictured below.



Left to Right: Keri Oswald, Gia Montini, and Kaleb Tkacs; Students and industry partners at the Marketing Mix-er

Interested in participating in the School's networking events? Contact:

Adam Viers, Assistant Dean for Advancement at viersa@duq.edu or (412) 396-1322

Martin Black, Director, Corporate Relations at blackm1@duq.edu or (412) 396-1972

14th Annual Accounting CPE Conference

The 2025 Accounting CPE Conference, hosted by the Accounting faculty of the Palumbo-Donahue School of Business at Duquesne University, brought together over 250 accounting and finance professionals for a full day of professional development, industry insight, and networking.

The annual event provides high-quality Continuing Professional Education (CPE) while supporting graduate students in the Master of Accountancy (MAcc) program. Since the conference launched in 2012, it has raised more than \$220,000 in scholarships.

The 2025 program featured expert speakers addressing timely topics across the profession, including supply chain resilience, generational wealth planning, tax law updates, accounting standards, cybersecurity, and the evolving state of the accounting profession. Highlights included the keynote Annual Economic Outlook delivered by Gus Faucher, Chief Economist at PNC, as well as sessions led by executives from RGP, Waldron Private Wealth, BDO, FASB, PICPA, and Duquesne University.

The conference also hosted a panel discussion on AI and the ethical issues facing accountants and auditors, moderated by Dr. David Wasieleski and featuring senior leaders from Highmark, U.S. Steel, and EY. Recognized as an outstanding example of university outreach, the event continues to serve as a premier regional forum where professionals gain valuable insights, earn CPE credits, and connect with peers while supporting the next generation of accounting leaders.



CPE Conference Attendees in the Power Center at Duquesne University



Left to Right: Dr. Dean McFarlin, Duquesne; Gus Faucher, PNC Bank; Susan Cosper, FASB; and Bob Kollar, Duquesne

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE 14th ANNUAL CPE CONFERENCE SPONSORS



DECA DISTRICT III CAREER DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE December 3, 2025

More than 400 students from 10 high schools gathered at Duquesne for the DECA District III Career Development Conference. Hosted for the fourth consecutive year by the Duquesne University Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the School of Business, the event introduced high school students to real-world business learning through competitive events, workshops, and networking opportunities.

Students explored career pathways in marketing, finance, hospitality, and management while connecting with industry professionals and experiencing Duquesne's dynamic academic environment. The conference underscores the School's commitment to promoting experiential learning and inspiring the next generation of business leaders.



High school students at the 4th annual DECA Conference.

MEET THE FIRM NIGHT January 29, 2026

Duquesne's Center for Leadership in Professional Selling hosted its annual Meet the Firm Night, bringing together students and employers for an evening of networking and career exploration. Students learned about internship opportunities, full-time roles, and career paths in sales and business.

Participating employers included Airgas, Ally Financial, Dollar Bank, Fastenal, Federated Hermes, First Commonwealth Bank, Kraft Heinz, Level Agency, MassMutual, Penske Logistics, American Eagle Outfitters, and Wesco.



Duquesne business students and corporate partners connect at Meet the Firm night.

EDUCATION FOR DIFFERENCE MAKERS

NEW PATHWAYS. IN-DEMAND SKILLS. REAL-WORLD RESULTS.

At Duquesne University's Palumbo-Donahue School of Business, we are shaping the future of business. Our newest programs reflect our commitment to preparing purpose-driven, difference-making leaders for the global business landscape.

REAL ESTATE

Launching in Fall 2026

Undergraduate Major and Minor

Certificate for Non-Business Students

- Designed for students who want to shape skylines, transform communities and drive economic impact
- Grounded in our academic strengths
- Gain real-world knowledge and skills in property development and management, real estate finance, investment analysis, project management, marketing, sales, and more

Program Details
duq.edu/realestate



FINANCIAL PLANNING

Launched in Fall 2025

Undergraduate Major and Minor

Provides foundation to sit for the CFP® Board Certification Exam

- Designed to set students apart with a unique blend of technical and practical experience
- Gain wealth management expertise through the Student Managed Investment Funds (SMIF) program
- Develop skills in financial and risk management as well as estate, insurance, and tax planning

Program Details
duq.edu/cfp



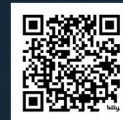
FLEX MBA


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- Advance your career with a flexible, streamlined format designed for working professionals
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Program Details
duq.edu/flexmba



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