The Carlson Funds Enterprise
Real funds, real students, real results
Making the jump from college to a career in the financial sector can be an eye-opening experience. Even the brightest graduates often find themselves facing a steep learning curve.

The Carlson Funds Enterprise (CFE) is designed to make that curve a little easier to climb—and provide financial industry businesses with employees who can step in and make immediate contributions. The program mixes academic rigor with a unique experiential learning component. CFE students manage approximately $40 million from leading financial services firms.

Located in one of the country’s leading financial centers, the Carlson School provides students with a built-in advantage to network and develop relationships with area investment professionals.

The experience is akin to running a real investment fund. Students gain tangible lessons in a range of areas:

- investing money
- researching and analyzing companies for the portfolio
- meeting with company management
- presenting investment proposals

The bottom line: CFE graduates are ready to hit the ground running.
History and Focus
Founded in 1998, the CFE thoroughly prepares Carlson School MBA students and exceptional undergraduate seniors for finance careers. By operating as a “real” investment management firm, the program provides students with a unique mix of hands-on, experiential learning. Over the course of a rigorous 15-month period, students manage real investment initiatives towards a goal of exceeding the respective benchmark return.

More than 400 CFE alumni work in investment management, corporate finance, investment and commercial banking, private equity, and investment research on the buy and sell side, locally and nationally.

With approximately $40 million in assets from outside institutional investors, the Funds Enterprise is one of the largest student-managed funds in the United States.
Program Rigor

Student managed, professionally guided, the CFE creates a hands-on learning environment, immersing students in strategic and financial analysis of real companies. Guided by two investment industry professionals and two academic advisors, students manage all aspects of the funds, including analysis of securities, trading, compliance, marketing, and client reporting.

In addition to fund management, CFE students connect with finance industry professionals and travel to their firms for first-hand insight into how their academic studies are used in the workplace.

Coaching is another critical aspect of the experience. At the beginning of the program, each student is assigned a dedicated mentor (a financial professional) who evaluates the student’s investment proposals and provides guidance on his or her inquiries and career goals. The mentors also serve on the investment committee that evaluates and votes upon the student-recommended stocks and bonds for approval in the portfolio.

The Carlson Funds consist of two funds managed by students.

- Carlson Growth Fund (consists of 20-25 small cap stocks)
- Carlson Fixed Income Fund (consists of investment grade corporate and treasury obligations)

We have hired a half-dozen CFE graduates over the years. They are consistently well prepared and able to contribute immediately. That latter point is extremely important to us, as it typically takes new hires a while to get up to speed.

We’ve also worked with students while they are in the program. I’ve been equally impressed by them. They all have a keen interest in the investment sector and a remarkable eagerness to learn.

—Mark L. Simenstad, CFA
Head of Fixed Income Funds Investment Division, Thrivent Asset Management, Minneapolis

Carlson School Growth Fund
Performance since fund inception
Carlson Funds Enterprise Fellowship Fund

The CFE Fellowship Fund allows the CFE and the Carlson School to attract and recruit high-caliber students by providing two to three partial scholarships to MBA students each year. The Fellowship provides select MBA students with early admission into the CFE program and pairs these students with a CFE mentor in their first year. Additional benefits include:

- Connections to the CFE program during the student’s first semester
- Early exposure to portfolio management
- Opportunities for additional corporate site visits
- Invitations to exclusive partnership events

Early involvement of our fellowship students allows them to assist in coaching incoming students about business roles, portfolio guidelines, and program rigor—all of which helps ease their transition into the program.

The Fellowship Fund is primarily funded through contributions made by alumni and local community members. With additional support, the CFE would like to extend fellowships to more students.

CFA Partnership

In 2009, the Carlson School became one of the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Institute’s Program Partners.

As a Program Partner, the University of Minnesota covers a significant portion of the CFA Program curriculum and conforms to the CFA Institute Code of Ethics. The CFE Program prepares students to sit for the CFA exam, and many CFE students attain CFA designation while they are in the CFE Program.

We contacted the Carlson School when we were looking for a new analyst. One of the people we interviewed was Maergrethe Haines, an undergraduate. We were so impressed that we literally wanted to hire her on the spot. It was obvious that she had received an exceptional education, and that she was extremely intelligent. She also had been trained on the same analytic systems that we use. That allowed her to step in and contribute immediately, and she continues to exceed our expectations. It’s extremely rare to find someone of her caliber—which speaks volumes about the education that Carlson Funds Enterprise provides.

—Philip L. Hildebrandt, CFA
CEO, Segall Bryant & Hamill, Chicago

For more information, please contact:

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