New Dean Jamie Prenkert is ready to harness the many opportunities he sees at the Carlson School.
Welcome, Class of 2027!

Nearly 1,000 new undergraduate students joined the Carlson School this fall. The class includes 700 incoming first-year students and 250 transfer students. After move-in August 28-29, students participated in the annual Welcome Week activities, including taking the Block M class photo at Huntington Bank Stadium, Convocation ceremony at Northrop Auditorium, and College Day celebrations. Here, first-year students in matching T-shirts are all smiles as they ride from Northrop to the Carlson School where they will be welcomed with a “hype tunnel” of cheering students, faculty, and staff before an official welcome from Dean Jamie Prenkert, the Undergraduate Program, and Business Board – Undergraduate Student Government.

Altogether, the incoming class of students (undergraduate, graduate, and PhD) totals almost 1,500, the largest and most diverse class in school history. Across 18 graduate programs, nearly 600 new students from 30+ countries are enrolled.

During several orientation sessions, including a new combined experience for MBA and MS students, the energy and enthusiasm of these new students were powerful. In his welcoming remarks to each program, Dean Prenkert encouraged students to shape their own course and take advantage of all the school has to offer, including world-class faculty, unmatched experiential learning opportunities locally and globally, and a strong alumni network of more than 60,000 in 100+ countries.
LEADERSHIP

28  Sustaining History
A Carlson School alumni couple runs a history-making vineyard and winery in Oregon.

20  Succession
After a seven-year transition plan, fourth-generation Red Wing Shoe Co. CEO Allison Gettings, ‘17 MBA, takes the family business by the laces.

10  Jamie Prenkert Aims High
New Dean Jamie Prenkert is ready to harness the many opportunities he sees at the Carlson School.

24  The Secret Lab Influencing Med Tech – By Design
How the Carlson School’s Medical Industry Leadership Institute (MILI) Valuation Lab is changing the game.

DISCOVER

3  Start-Up News
6  Syllabus in 60
7  3 People, 3 Questions

ENGAGE

35  News & Notes
36  Giving
37  Executive Spotlight
39  Force for Good
40  Alumni Happenings
42  Class Notes
48  5 Things I’ve Learned

FOCUS

U of M Interim President Has Deep Ties to Carlson School

One of the last times Jeff Ettinger was on the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus, there was a food fight.

Before becoming interim president of the University in June, Ettinger co-taught MKTG 6090: Challenges in Agribusiness—nicknamed “Food Fight”—with Professor Mark Bergen.

The course, taught in Fall 2017 and 2018, examined critical issues facing the industry with Ettinger providing tangible, real-time analysis as a former Hormel Foods executive.

“Co-teaching with him was one of my favorite and most exciting learning experiences I have had the opportunity to be part of during my career,” Bergen says. “He was interested in making a real difference in students’ lives, and willing to do what it took to do the class right.”

Ettinger reflected on the course fondly, saying, “[Mark is] an energetic, talented and respected member of the Carlson School team. It was such a joy to work with Mark in the classroom in highly interactive sessions with great students.”

Top: Interim President Jeff Ettinger’s official portrait.
Bottom: Ettinger (left) and Professor Mark Bergen pose for a photo in 2017 when they co-taught MKTG 6090 Challenge in Agribusiness, nicknamed “Food Fight.”

Professor Mark Bergen

The Board of Regents selected Ettinger for the interim president role following Joan T.A. Gabel’s departure for the University of Pittsburgh. Most recently, Ettinger had been the chair of The Hormel Foundation Board of Directors—a position from which he’s taking a leave of absence while leading the U of M. The Hormel Foundation is one of Minnesota’s largest community foundations and grant makers.

From 2005-2016, Ettinger was CEO of the Hormel Foods Corporation, responsible for a $9 billion annual budget and 20,000 employees. He became CEO after 16 years with the company in roles ranging from corporate attorney, marketing manager, treasurer, and president of the Jennie-O Turkey Store. A candidate for U.S. Congress in Minnesota’s First District in 2002, Ettinger has also served on the boards for a number of public and private companies.

Ettinger’s time with the Carlson School came through the Executive Leadership Fellows Program, which invites highly accomplished leaders from the public, private, or nonprofit sectors to enhance the school’s academic environment.

Ettinger has also been a guest lecturer in Carlson School courses and at other universities, in addition to co-teaching with Bergen.

As interim president, Ettinger plans to use the strategic plan in place, MPact 2025, to better serve students, increase financial stewardship, increase sustainability, and positively impact the state during his tenure.

“Co-teaching with him was one of my favorite and most exciting learning experiences I have had the opportunity to be part of during my career. He was interested in making a real difference in students’ lives, and willing to do what it took to do the class right.”

Jamie Prenkert, Dean
Remembering Professor Emeritus Mike Houston

A dedicated leader with a passion for instilling a global business mindset in students, Mike Houston played an instrumental role in expanding the Carlson School’s footprint, both locally and internationally. Houston died April 10, following his battle with brain cancer.

In 1986, Houston joined the Carlson School as the Marketing Department chair. He would go on to serve in multiple leadership roles, including as the associate dean of faculty and research, founding academic director of the Carlson Brand Enterprise, Ecolab-Pierson M. Grieve chair in business mindset, and internationally.

Houston always cited the Carlson School’s global education initiatives as one of its key strengths. He led the Carlson Global Institute (CGI) and helped usher in the school’s international experience requirement for all students in 2008.

In addition, Houston served as academic director of the Warsaw and Vienna Executive MBA programs, which expanded access to the Carlson School’s world-class education. For his dedication to CGI, he received the University of Minnesota Global Engagement Award in 2012.

He earned his bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Zeke Jackson Named Tomato Can Loving Cup Award Winner

For his commitment to academic excellence, leadership, and community service, Zeke Jackson was named the winner of the 2023 Tomato Can Loving Cup Award, the most prestigious award the Carlson School bestows on an undergraduate student.

“College has been an incredible journey of personal and professional growth. Receiving this award feels like validation that I’m asking the right questions and working on the right problems.”

Zeke Jackson

Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program.

The award is the oldest given at the Carlson School. It was awarded for the 95th time this spring, which, per the engraving on its side, is “presented annually to that person who in the course of the year has rendered the most distinctive service to the school.”

By winning the award, Jackson is eligible for a half-tuition scholarship to the Carlson School Full-Time MBA program, following two years of professional work experience.

“College has been an incredible journey of personal and professional growth. Receiving this award feels like validation that I’m asking the right questions and working on the right problems.”

Zeke Jackson

Analytics U Takes Data On a Thrill Ride At Mall of America

The twists and turns of amusement park rides gave high school students an action-packed introduction to the power of data science during the Carlson School’s Analytics U program this summer. The camp is a weekend pathway program aimed at those underrepresented in STEM fields.

“I just want to make a positive impact on animal adoption and build a loving community for the dogs and their owners.”

Tracy Keeling

Rescuing and Rehoming Retired Racing Greyhounds

After reading up on the breed’s unique characteristics and considering the lifestyle change, she welcomed her first greyhound, Buddy, into her life. The joy and fulfillment of this adoption journey did not stop there. Within a year and a half, they welcomed another greyhound, Pearl, into their family, proving that adopting greyhounds can be addictive—like potato chips,” Keeling jokes.

Keeling’s passion for greyhounds didn’t stop at adopting. She soon became actively involved in GPA’s meet-and-greet events. Gradually, her commitment deepened and she became the organization’s president.

“This really was the perfect dog for me,” she says. “And I became incredibly passionate about GPA’s mission and helping lead the organization. I just want to make a positive impact on animal adoption and build a loving community for the dogs and their owners.”

As GPA’s involvement with international greyhound rescues grew, Keeling spearheaded efforts to bring in retired racing greyhounds from Ireland and Australia, ensuring more dogs found loving forever homes. Over the years, the organization has successfully rescued and rehomed countless dogs, contributing to the end of greyhound racing.

“After lunch even though it’s a very slow, chill ride, so we were like, ‘I wonder if the other teams experienced that,’” describes Aneesa Dahir, a senior at St. Louis Park High School. “[Looking at the data], we were really surprised. The Pepsi coaster had a big decline after lunch even though it’s the most popular ride.”

Phil MacDonald, the mall’s director of data analytics, business intelligence, and application development, says he hopes the experience encourages students to imagine new career possibilities.

Students went to Nickelodeon Universe at Mall of America and collected data by tracking the rides they rode. Teams then analyzed the numbers and presented their findings to the mall’s data scientists. The winning team noticed what they called “The Lunch Effect.”

“After lunch, we rode rides like the Carousel, which is a very slow, chill ride, so we were like, ‘I wonder if the other teams experienced that,’” describes Aneesa Dahir, a senior at St. Louis Park High School. “[Looking at the data], we were...
Courses at the Carlson School cover a wide range of topics. Here’s a 60-second breakdown of one of the many classes leaving an impact on students.

### BA 1021 Design Your Life

This course allows students to customize their college experience to get the most out of it. Using a process rooted in Design Thinking, a framework developed by Stanford University, the course equips students with tools to create and test a journey that best aligns with their lives and personalities.

The course is designed to help students develop skills that will help them make thoughtful choices about classes, internships, student groups, and, more generally, how to spend their energy.

92 percent of students surveyed after the class found it helped them expand their idea of what is possible in college, as well as process and reflect on the transition to college.

Nearly 84 percent said they felt more comfortable sharing their personal thoughts about their hopes, dreams, fears, and goals.

In a post-class survey, one student shared, “I think the curriculum was highly inclusive, allowing students to talk about their lives and personalities.”

### TAKEAWAYS

The course, required for all students and taken in their first year, was developed as part of the Undergraduate Program’s redesign, which launched in Fall 2022. The revamped curriculum was honored with a 2023 Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSBB) Innovations That Inspire award.

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### Illustration:

Robert Neubecker

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### 3 PEOPLE, 3 QUESTIONS

#### 1. What are you reading?

Dharshini Anugu, current MHRIR student

I just finished Trevor Noah’s Born a Crime, which is a humorous and poignant autobiography about his upbringing in apartheid-era South Africa. The book serves as a reminder that, even in the darkest of times, humor and love can be powerful tools for survival and growth.

Carla Pavone, Lecturer, Strategic Management & Entrepreneurship

I just finished re-reading When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi. It is a phenomenal autobiography about a neurosurgeon diagnosed with lung cancer. It’s a book I find myself returning to every couple of years. It follows Kalanithi’s journey battling mortality and serves as a reminder that each day is not promised. I absolutely love Kalanithi’s writing style and how he wrestles with life’s many unanswered questions. It is definitely a must-read and puts into perspective what’s important in life.

#### 2. What is your favorite website?

Adenike Afolabi, Current MHRIR student

My favorite website has to be Pinterest. I would like to think I’m a relatively organized person and Pinterest makes it so easy to create various boards for all my different interests. I have boards for my dream home, future travel plans, go-to easy recipes, and so much more! I can get lost on the site for hours!

Dharshini Anugu, current MHRIR student

Another embarrassing admission: I LOVE Instagram! Besides celebrities, practical info about useful tech (@fortgoodcode) and Excel (@thecheatsheets), fitness tips (@gettowinfitness and @humble_hustle__life), photography (@dguttenfelder), and indulging in silliness (@alliwongrewoked). And yes, I’m a sucker for Instagram ads, too.

#### 3. What is your dream job?

Carla Pavone, Lecturer, Strategic Management & Entrepreneurship

I’ve had multiple dream jobs and now I have my dream job. The challenge was to juggle work with my roles as a mom, wife, sister, daughter, and friend. When I led MN-Corps, I was on an unending field trip learning about world-changing inventions by brilliant scientists. It was a joy to educate them about business to help commercialize their innovations. Today, in my “soft” retirement, I continue to teach Carlson School students and Midwest scientists and have more time to devote to the people I love.
Can AI Help You Land a Job?

BY GENE REBECK

ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence tools can make job seeking easier—if you know how to use them.

Just four months ago, Lakshit Bajaj, ‘23 MSBA, joined New Jersey–based software and data analytics company Astria as a decision sciences project leader. While he credits his hiring primarily to his training and degree, Bajaj also received crucial help from artificial intelligence. Specifically, an AI-driven chatbot that has exploded on the scene since its launch in November of 2022.

To call ChatGPT a “chatbot” understates how astonishing its capabilities are. By “conversing” with it online through “prompts” that specify what you’re seeking, you not only can get answers and information—you also can have it help you write just about anything, even magazine articles (not that we did). Bajaj says he used ChatGPT to improve the existing language in his cover letters and résumés. “You can give it a prompt and ask it to fix the grammar or make it sound more professional or more enthusiastic,” he says.

There are other, similar AI-powered technologies out there, such as Google Bard and YouChat. But ChatGPT has rapidly emerged as a widely used tool for job seekers such as Bajaj.

“We have seen students use ChatGPT for everything from résumé and cover letter [support], searching for jobs to apply for, answers for potential interview questions,” says Maggie Tomas, executive director of the Carlson School’s Business Career Center (CBCC). This year, she says, “our team has tried to soak up as much knowledge as possible that’s out there.” The goal? “Give students best practices for using ChatGPT and things to avoid—because we know that they’re going to use it,” she says.

It isn’t just recent grads who can benefit from ChatGPT’s ever-evolving powers. But despite some of the scary predictions about AI, at this point, at least, it can’t replace the human factor—including those attributes that make you distinctive as a professional and a colleague. With that in mind, here are some of the benefits and pitfalls of using ChatGPT in the job search.

**Benefits**

The technology is quickly improving. One reason why ChatGPT has boomed: The more people use it, the more it learns and the better it gets. And AI isn’t completely new: For several years, the CBCC has been using a digital tool called VMock, which uses AI to review and evaluate résumés. For instance, Tomas notes, it can help determine how “compelling” résumés are. It can help overcome writer’s block. Cover letters “can feel like the heaviest thing for students to write,” Tomas says. Using ChatGPT speeds up the writing process, so there’s less time spent staring at a blank page and more time fine-tuning your message. As Bajaj discovered, ChatGPT can help come up with usable phrases for specific positions and employers. “You can also train it in the way you want your cover letter to look,” he says.

Bajaj trained ChatGPT to create a version of his cover letter’s opening paragraph that expressed why he was interested in the company and how he could best use his skills. He believes the final product was better than what he had on his own. You can specify your search more easily. People have long been using Google for locating and investigating potential employers. But compared with that search engine, Tomas says working with ChatGPT “is like having a conversation.”

As the user and the chatbot interact, “it will continue to filter. Whereas you might type a new query into Google, it will erasure what you typed in before,” Bajaj says using ChatGPT is “like talking with a teacher or a friend. And you can ask clarifying questions about the links it gives.”

**Pitfalls**

“The output is only as good as the input,” says Will O’Brien, the CBCC’s associate director. Simply asking for “a good cover letter” won’t get you very far. ChatGPT needs specific prompts to deliver the best results.

ChatGPT doesn’t provide an authentic voice. It’s artificial intelligence, after all. Ask it to generate even a highly specified cover letter, and “it will come up with something that doesn’t quite sound human—or it sounds like someone else wrote it,” Tomas says. Bajaj noticed this himself, finding that in ChatGPT-generated text, he had to modify the language to make it sound more like himself. That said, he says he found it didn’t take long to make those fixes.

ChatGPT can’t be used on its own for doing research. For one thing, the information it gathers from its digital sources isn’t always reliable. “You can’t take [ChatGPT] as a source of truth,” Bajaj says. You need to cross-check. “We have heard worst-case scenarios from recruiters where a student had ChatGPT write a résumé,” Tomas says. “Then the hiring manager asked questions about what was on the résumé and the student wasn’t able to answer them very well. We won’t let that happen to our students.”

In other words, AI should always be supplemented with non-AI resources. O’Brien advises job seekers to “leverage AI tools.” For example they could ask ChatGPT to search for Carlson School alumni working at a specific company. Then, “they can pop over to LinkedIn and search for those names” to build connections.

Like AI in general, O’Brien and his colleagues in career guidance and coaching are still learning—about ChatGPT and how to help job seekers make the best use of it. One thing it (probably) will never be able to do: take the place of a career counselor. Or, for that matter, of a job seeker. Despite some of the scary predictions about AI, it can’t replace the human factor—including those attributes that make you distinctive as a professional and a colleague.
Jamie Prenkert was immersed in a meeting on his first full day as the Carlson School of Management’s new dean this past July when he heard a knock on the conference room door. He turned toward the door’s frosted glass window and immediately recognized the surprise guest. “I saw the shadow of Goldy’s big head and I laughed out loud,” he recalls of the moment.

“This is the right place, and the right time.”

By Erin Peterson

Jamie Prenkert was immersed in a meeting on his first full day as the Carlson School of Management’s new dean this past July when he heard a knock on the conference room door. He turned toward the door’s frosted glass window and immediately recognized the surprise guest. “I saw the shadow of Goldy’s big head and I laughed out loud,” he recalls of the moment.

Portraits by Nate Ryan
The meeting adjourned, and during the next half hour, Prenkert gamely posed for photos with Goldy, including one where he hoisted the mascot onto his back. “It was manic in the best possible way,” he says. Prenkert will likely be featured in plenty of photo ops in the coming months, but few may serve as a better metaphor than this one. After all, Prenkert is a man who has spent his entire career finding ways to elevate the people, the programs, and the ideas around him. Perhaps it’s no surprise that he found a way to lift even Goldy to a higher level.

**OUTSIDE VOICE**

Prenkert steps into a role that Professor Sri Zaheer held for more than 11 years. (Zaheer has transitioned back to a faculty role after more than 11 years. (Zaheer has

business community nothing short of incredible and praises the school’s innovative undergraduate curriculum. Coming in as an external leader—Prenkert was most recently executive associate dean at Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business—he knows he will have to lean on different strengths to excel in his new role. There is no question he has a long track record of success. He turned heads while earning a political science degree at Anderson University, where professors at the small liberal arts school in Indiana urged him to think big about his next steps. He did, earning admission to Harvard Law School, where he graduated magna cum laude.

Prenkert went on to spend three years as a senior trial attorney for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Indianapolis, where he honed skills that would later prove useful in his academic roles. “My fellow attorneys always laughed at me, because they all hated the research and writing,” he says. “But I was volunteering to do it.”

Prenkert realized that the academic world was a better fit for those specific strengths, and in 2002, he joined the Kelley School as an assistant professor of business law. He quickly racked up accolades and achievements: He coauthored a top business textbook, *Business Law: The Global, Ethical, and Digital Environment*, which is now in its 18th edition. He won four teaching awards and a handful of national awards for his research. And during his 20-year tenure at the school, he methodically ascended from assistant professor to executive associate dean.

When the opening for the dean’s position at the Carlson School crossed his desk last year, he felt confident that he could use the formidable skillset he’d built to lead an already-strong school to even higher levels.

**FUELING EXCELLENCE**

Prenkert’s résumé is chock full of accomplishments and awards, and the Carlson School search committee took note of the ways he made the most of the opportunities he saw for the Kelley School: he was instrumental in helping the school build perhaps the most renowned business law and ethics department in the country, and he played a key role in the launch of wildly popular short-term international trip programming for undergraduate students. Colleagues credit Prenkert for developing a teaching professor rank for instructional faculty, and he has been a champion of and leader for many of Kelley’s diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

These successes were the result of Prenkert’s ability to focus not on his own achievements, but to support the efforts of many others. “One of the things that has really fed me as I have moved into administrative roles is helping other people be the most excellent that they can be. I want to find ways to encourage that, to support that, and to recognize that.”

**OUTSIDE VOICE**

The sentiments are echoed by the College of Science and Engineering Andrews Alleyne, who led the search committee for the position. “It is clear that [Prenkert] genuinely cares about organizations and the people therein,” says Alleyne. “That type of ‘servant leadership’ is well suited to maximize the significant talents of the outstanding faculty and staff within the Carlson School.”

Prenkert’s wife, Deb, adds that these qualities aren’t just professional ones. She has known him since high school, and says his desire to support

Josh Perry, the Kelley School’s executive associate dean for academic programs who calls Prenkert “a mentor and guide,” expects that the Carlson School will thrive under Prenkert’s leadership. “Jamie brings many qualities to a leadership role, but at the top of the list are humility and a sincere desire to do the right thing,” Perry says. “He is reliable, prepared, thoughtful, and the kindest person you will ever meet.”

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**DEAN JAMIE PRENKERT**
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Josh Perry, Kelley School’s Executive Associate Dean for Academic Programs

GET TO KNOW THE DEAN: THIS OR THAT?

We asked Prenkert to weigh in on a few lighter matters.

- LinkedIn or TikTok
- Tennis or pickleball
- Phone call or email
- Introvert or extrovert
- The Fabulmans or Everything Everywhere All at Once
- Straight stitch or blind stitch
- Coffee or Diet Coke
- Optimist or pessimist
- Post or quart
- Pineapple on pizza or no pineapple on pizza

1. Tennis. Nonetheless, I think pickleball is really fun. (But I’d absolutely deny I ever said that to my tennis friends)
2. Prenkert, who says he might have tried to write a screenplay if he hadn’t gone into academia, was happy to weigh in on the Oscar-nominated movies. “I want a movie that is completely out there and totally ambiguous,” he says.
3. “My mom owned a sewing machine and fabric store when I was growing up, so when I was young, I learned to sew. In [junior high] I was named Junior Fashion Review Champion at the Elkhart County Fair for the dress pants and shirt that I made myself.”
4. “I like ‘realist’ better. Can I say realist?” Prenkert, who says he might have tried to write a screenplay if he hadn’t gone into academia, was happy to weigh in on the Oscar-nominated movies. “I want a movie that is completely out there and totally ambiguous,” he says.
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MENTORSHIP

MENTORS WHO MAKE US

EXPLORING THE MANY WAYS FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENT LEADERS MAKE AN IMPACT ON THOSE ATTENDING THE CARLSON SCHOOL.

BY WADE RUFPARD
ILLUSTRATION BY NEIL WEBB
The challenges of college are difficult to navigate alone. Within the Carlson School, a culture of mentorship thrives, fostering an environment where students are not just set up for success but molded into principled, compassionate leaders.

Here, mentors take many forms—from the world-class researcher guiding the next generation of talent to the friendly upperclassman showing new students the ropes. These stories and more highlight the indelible mark of powerful mentorship.

BUILDING A SUPPORT SYSTEM

In her first semester at the Carlson School in the fall of 2020, Nini Dang, ’23 BSB, joined Carlson THRIVE, a program for first-year students who are first-generation or from historically underrepresented groups to help them transition to college. The program provides each student with a mentor and Dang’s was then-sophomore Michael Abdon, ’22 BSB. Abdon, who graduated in three years, started college at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when most classes and activities were done online. “I struggled a lot that first year,” she recalls. “It’s a person person, so having everything virtual really wore me out. But when I met Michael and started talking to him, I felt like I had known him for the longest time.”

Abdon’s positivity helped Dang find her footing at the Carlson School—not just with academics. “I remember one time I forgot my credit card and I was stark inside a parking garage,” Dang says. “I called Michael and within five minutes, he was there to help me.” The two checked in with each other throughout their time at the school, and Dang says Abdon was always there to support and help her in ways big and small. In fact, Dang says he served as her “byte man,” as she navigated college, including when she ran for leadership positions in the business fraternity Delta Sigma Pi. “Nini is one of the most amazing people I’ve ever met,” Abdon says. “Her energy was infectious from the first time I met her. She had so much ambition and so many ideas on how to leave the Carlson School, her fraternity, and the University in a better place than when she got here.”

That sense of paying it forward continues to drive Abdon. Since graduating, he’s now teaching English as a second language in Latin and South America. “This sense of mentorship and giving back has always been so important to me,” he says. “I always want to be the person who uplifts others.”

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Michael Abdon, ’22 BSB

“When I met Michael and started talking to him, I felt like I had known him for the longest time.”

Nini Dang, ’23 BSB

Joshua Austin, senior academic advisor

FINDING BELONGING

Malka’ Day, ’18 BSB, also found the transition into the University and the Carlson School difficult. The first person in his family to graduate high school and attend college, Day walked through the halls and did not see many students who looked like him. “A lot of times I was the only Black person in my class,” Day says. “It was a tough transition. Luckily, I found Jontue.”

That is Jontue Austin, senior academic advisor in the Undergraduate Program. The two men quickly bonded. “He was more than a career coach for me,” Day says. “He was the closest thing to myself that I saw at the school, especially in the first year. He was very helpful in helping me transition into college socially. I’m not sure other people would have helped me in the ways Jontue did.”

Austin’s guidance continued throughout Day’s time at the Carlson School. In particular, recommending classes to take, programs to get involved in, and connections to make to support Day’s goal of entering the investment banking field. “Malka was one of the first students I had the pleasure of mentoring as an academic advisor,” Austin recalls. “He is so smart and so driven. I did my best to give him the resources to succeed and reach his goals. Day graduated and worked in the finance industry before pivoting and attending a UCLAD graduate program for computer science. He now works as a software engineer at Netflix. Austin, of course, wrote a letter of recommendation to help him get in the master’s program.”

“Jontue has always been there for me,” he says. “We still catch up every few months. I’m not sure where my academic or professional career would be without his mentorship and support.”

LEARNING THE TRADE

Derek Dukart, ’17 BSB, jumped at the chance to join the David S. Kidwell Funds Enterprise. “When I got to college, I wanted to take as rigorous of coursework as possible,” he says. Being part of the Funds Enterprise as an underclassman was a rare opportunity to soak up insights from real-world finance professionals. Working alongside graduate students, Dukart and peers managed a $50 million investment portfolio—one of the largest student-managed investment fund in the country. “It was great to engage with MBA students, learn from a more mature audience, and see firsthand how finance careers can develop.”

“It was great to engage with MBA students, learn from a more mature audience, and see firsthand how finance careers can develop.”

Derek Dukart, ’17 BSB

Susanna Gibbons, managing director of David S. Kidwell Funds Enterprise

“The research connection

The bond between a doctoral student and their advisor is built over years of data collection, analysis, and seemingly never-ending revisions. Christina Jeong, ’23 PhD, experienced this firsthand with her advisor Jason Chan, associate professor of Information & Decision Sciences. After coming to the Carlson School from South Korea, Jeong developed a connection with Chan over a shared interest in his research, which focuses on business and policy insights on emerging internet phenomena and social outcomes. The two worked on three research papers together—two working papers and one that is under review by an academic journal. “The relationship between a PhD student and a faculty member is much different than that of master’s students or undergraduates,” Chan says. “You’re seeing each other almost every day and you’re working together very closely on things like research. You really get to know each other very well.”

For Jeong, this was instrumental in developing her career. “Jason’s mentorship meant a lot to me,” she says. “I learned a lot from him about how to approach research and approach being a professor. I couldn’t have done it without him.”

When Jeong began applying for faculty positions, Chan proved to be a big help. “Interviews for faculty members can be really tough,” Chan says. “So we would walk through how to keep your composure and how to answer questions in a confident way.”

The coaching paid off. This fall, Jeong is starting at the University of Hawai’i as an assistant professor.

“Jontue was more than a career coach for me. He was the closest thing to myself that I saw at the school, especially in the first year.”

Malka’ Day, ’18 BSB
After a seven-year transition plan, fourth-generation Red Wing Shoe Co. CEO Allison Gettings, ’17 MBA takes the family business by the laces.
Her life is streamlined for efficiency: She opens her Full Focus paper planner and therein lies her day’s priorities, notes, and don’t-miss—she says this is to eliminate distractions and checking her phone during meetings. It’s an understatement to say she has a lot of these: Her Outlook calendar is a sea of pale red overlapping boxes. In late June, her next opening is, optimistically, a slot in August. October is already very busy, she notes. She laughs and shrugs, not in apathy, but cheerful recognition of her job description.

It’s the life of the newly minted CEO, just getting settled in her sixth month on the job. “The first 100 days, the first six months, you do a lot of listening and learning,” says Mark Urdahl, her predecessor as the former CEO of Red Wing Shoe Co. “I told her, ‘That will be important information for you, but also instill confidence [in employees] you’re listening to their ideas.’”

The onslaught doesn’t seem to rattle Gettings, 41, who is intensely focused on conversations when she’s in them, her eyes trained on her conversational partners, telegraphing a quiet confidence despite her humble affect. Some says she might be born for it.

THE FAMILY BUSINESS

After all, her family has owned the company since 1919. Gettings, who is a married mother of two and the first woman to take the seat, is the fourth generation to walk in these tall boots. She follows her great-grandfather, JR Sweasy; grandfather, WD Sweasy; and father, JW “Bill” Sweasy, ’76 BIB, who remains chair of the board. Despite growing up in and around the HQ, writing on white boards and stepping in on summer afternoons to say hello between trips to the too-many, her father “very intentionally” never pressured her, or her brother, to join the family business. She first attended college for psychology and neuropsychology, but realized that working in a lab didn’t suit her disposition, which she says is guided toward collaboration, travel, the human element. However, mixing business and family was, of course, more complex than it seems from the outside. “Family businesses can be tricky,” she acknowledges. “The people that you are working with on a day-to-day basis—you may also be calling them tomorrow to babysit your kids. How you navigate that is a challenge for everybody I know in a family business.”

Gettings says how those who led the company previously—by simply being good to people and never treating them like a number—has long influenced her. She says her father counseled: “Remember, you’ll see them at the grocery store.”

So, when she finally told her dad she was interested in running the company someday, he was moved. She tears up, reliving the moment. “But it wasn’t a given.” Sweasy told Urdahl his daughter would have to earn it, same as anyone else. Urdahl says she was part of a seven-year succession plan that included 30 different checkpoints and a cohort of other CEO candidates while exposing her to every angle of the company. One such requirement was to earn a Carlson Executive MBA (CEMBA) degree. She enrolled in the Carroll College of St. Joseph’s University in 2015, balancing schoolwork with a six-month-old child, in the midst of launching Red Wing’s women’s Heritage line, and with a lot on her mind. She says, seemingly undaunted by the challenges of leading an organization. Plus, she adds, laughing, “I’m in a way better place now than I was then.”

She notes the CEMBA program organized her educational life, “which made going back to school at such a hectic time possible—and, crucially, broadened her thinking.” She had views from being around the [Red Wing Shoe Company] business, but that’s not the same as expanding your mind and understanding all the different business perspectives,” she says of the experience, which left her with a cohort of women friends who still meet regularly to talk shop. Gettings says the entire seven-year plan benefits her now. “I’ve had an [atypical] career path because I bounced around from one department to another department so frequently,” she explains. “The skills and experience I got from one part of the organization, leveraged[d] in the next area and [again] a more holistic view.”

What struck Urdahl was her ability to balance her strengths with those of her employees. “I told her, ‘Every room you walk into there’s someone who knows more than you do, but what you bring to the table is strategy, vision, and people development,’” he says. “She’s got the ability to be able to do that.”

THE POWER OF PEOPLE

Now, leading a business with 2,200 employees, offices on six continents, 700 retailers, and manufacturing plants around the world, Gettings is bringing to bear her talent for building culture and making transformational change. “Without fail, every single day employees tell me—I had six today—that what they’re most excited about me stepping into this role is they know how much I care,” she explains. “It’s not because I know my finances so well, it’s not because of my focus on executive excellence. It’s not because, boy, I really know how to make a shoe or I understand the finer matters more is how I relate to people.”

This includes touching her’s already started to implement, such as improving the mothers’ room at the HQ by adding a sink, and making space by making sure of her own womanhood visible within the company—in the past, she’d end a meeting by announcing the needed a break to pump. It also includes maintaining the company’s legacy in town by using all the different business perspectives, she says of the best way to show it to me. All of these little pieces make up why Red Wing is so special.”

LOOKING AHEAD

As CEO, Gettings knows she is entering a brave new world. It’s not exactly easy running a global business today. She ticks through a list of new factors without batting an eyelash—economic shifts including inflation, post-pandemic uncertainty, eroding trust in brands and government, the artificial intelligence explosion, and different expectations from the rising Gen Z consumer—just to name a few.

“And it’s all happening in the blink of the eye,” Gettings says matter-of-factly, while drawing on her experience in the business and the classroom. “We have to keep a beat on the consumer as we eat, sleep, and breathe. And we have to be able to make hard decisions on where to focus and re-energize our brand. We also can’t just count on organic incremental growth by investing in our business the same way we have in the past... if we want to grow, which we do.”

Gettings says challenges have tested the company before and it’s always come out a step ahead. “We’ve been down this road before. We’ve already been through pandemics and two World Wars—and we’ve survived, and thrived,” she says. “Legacy can tie you down because it becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but there’s a way to honor heritage that becomes too precious to change, but
The goal was simple, yet audacious: “Marshal students from diverse disciplines to scrutinize, evaluate, and advance groundbreaking medical technologies,” says Carlson School Professor Stephen Parente. Achieving the goal has required more perseverance than anyone expected. But, 15 years, five cities, four countries, and hundreds of projects later, the results for students and health care companies are exceeding anyone’s expectations.

Parente is an economist by training with deep expertise in health finance and policy. His career has consistently focused on one overarching problem: “Healthcare innovation is at a crossroads, and it’s critical to bridge disciplines to maximize potential breakthroughs,” says Parente, who is also the associate dean of global programs.

With the Carlson School nestled in Minnesota’s Medical Alley, a global hub for medical device development, Parente saw an opportunity for his students and these companies.

The result: The Carlson School’s Medical Industry Leadership Institute (MILI) Valuation Lab.
The short version is that students engage with prominent healthcare and technology organizations, using top-notch collaboration and sharp analysis skills to judge whether a company’s fresh concept is market-ready. It may sound familiar, but there are small, important changes that make the Val Lab, as it is popularly known, unique. One is by using interdisciplinary teams, combining perspectives from nine different schools at the University of Minnesota. “We have full-time students, part-time students, business, engineering, and medical students, and more,” explains Jessica Haupt, MILI’s managing director. “This rich diversity cultivates a fertile ground for out-of-the-box thinking and a truly innovative approach to addressing medical industry challenges.”

Students, who may take the two-credit, graduate-level elective course multiple times throughout their degree program, sign a non-disclosure agreement for what they’ll learn. That’s because they gain insider access to cutting-edge tech, aiding global powerhouse companies in deciding if a new device or technology is worth their investment—or the world’s. That life-changing medical intervention? It might just be the market only after Val Lab students sifted through the data and context, giving it the green light.

The lab allows students to examine technology from a kaleidoscopic vantage point and learn the industry’s intricacies. The course is thoughtfully structured to encapsulate the complex journey of evaluating a medical technology project. It begins with a deep dive into each case, allowing students to grasp the technology’s premise and potential impact fully. From there, they conduct thorough research and analysis, evaluating the project’s potential from every angle—technical feasibility, market viability, financial implications, and legal considerations.

A microscope for the medical device investment as a leader on the corporate M&A team, following roles in strategy and M&A for the neurostimulation business and the European region. His unique experience and pragmatic decision-making, honed in the Val Lab, helped him navigate the complexities of this rapidly evolving field with ease and efficiency.

“Every skill I acquired at MILI didn’t just translate to my future employment, they defined my approach,” Gilbertson emphasizes. “Whether evaluating a potential investment or contemplating a new strategic initiative, I do it with the comprehensive and in-depth understanding I cultivated at the MILI Lab.”

**IT BENEFITS WITH A DEEP DIVE INTO EACH CASE, ALLOWING STUDENTS TO GRASP THE TECHNOLOGY’S PREMISE AND POTENTIAL IMPACT FULLY. FROM THERE, THEY CONDUCT THOROUGH RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS, EVALUATING THE PROJECT’S POTENTIAL FROM EVERY ANGLE—TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY, MARKET VIABILITY, FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS, AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS.**

**DAN’S DEVELOPMENT**

Dan Gilbertson, ’12 MBA, a sales marketing professional with an international mergers and acquisitions (M&A) background from the automotive manufacturing industry, had a vision to pivot into the medical device sector. “I went all in on the MILI Valuation Lab.” Gilbertson says after taking the Val Lab three times. “The real-world experience of evaluating actual medical devices for investment was incredible as I worked to enter the industry.”

Gilbertson recalls working on a new cardiac device, assessing its market viability, potential societal impact, and healthcare policy implications. This comprehensive lens proved transformative, instilling a deep understanding of what is needed to bring a successful medical product to market.

Today, Gilbertson works for Medtronic at the forefront of the medical device investment as a leader on the corporate M&A team, following roles in strategy and M&A for the neurostimulation business and the European region. His unique experience and pragmatic decision-making, honed in the Val Lab, helped him navigate the complexities of this rapidly evolving field with ease and efficiency.

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**ARCHANA’S ASCENT**

Archana Desai, ’11 MBA, began her journey by fostering a deep appreciation for mission-driven organizations, particularly those dedicated to improving patient lives, through her work in finance at companies such as GE Healthcare. However, she yearned for growth and a broader understanding of the medical industry. Enrolling in the MILI Valuation Lab was not merely an academic pursuit for Desai; but a significant leap toward adding a holistic understanding of the medical industry to her toolkit. “What you’re doing in that lab is not just looking at your silo,” she says. “It’s a hands-on approach to multidisciplinary evaluation.”

Today, Desai brings this lens to her role as director of strategy at Image-Guided Therapy Devices at Philips. She focuses on creating holistic solutions for patients. “I wanted to be able to grasp the technology’s premise and potential impact fully. From there, they conduct thorough research and analysis, evaluating the project’s potential from every angle—technical feasibility, market viability, financial implications, and legal considerations.”

**BETH’S BREAKTHROUGH**

Beth Lindborg, ’12 MBA, started her professional career as a research scientist after graduating from the University of Minnesota’s Molecular, Cellular, Developmental Biology and Genetics Program. As her career progressed, Lindborg recognized the value an MBA could provide in bringing scientific innovations to patients and was naturally drawn to the MILI Valuation Lab.

“IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT I HAD THE CHANCE TO COLLABORATE WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH A WIDE RANGE OF PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERTISE.”

Lindborg took the project-based course several times to obtain more exposure to different medical technologies and understand the challenges each poses. “It was the first time that I had the chance to collaborate with individuals with a wide range of professional backgrounds and expertise,” Lindborg says. “This gave me different viewpoints and perspectives I wouldn’t have gained without taking the course.”

As the CEO of Sarcio, Lindborg has utilized the full range of expertise, experiences, and network from the MILI program. “At Sarcio, we are working to bring a completely new regenerative treatment to people suffering from osteoarthritis. MILI helped equip me with some of the tools and knowledge I need to progress the company.”
A Carlson School alumni couple runs a history-making vineyard and winery in Oregon.
It features two distinct areas: a 28-acre vineyard and winery is situated to the east and south; forest, creek, and wetland—including a 20-foot waterfall—make up the north and west. Mark Björnson, ’86 BSB, ’92 MBA, often walks along an old logging trail next to King’s Creek, absorbing the land’s history via moss-covered rocks, Douglas Fir trees, and dozens of native plants. While checking on the cedar trees he planted to diversify the forest, Mark stops when he notices lemon balm on the trailside. He has no idea how it got here.

Given the fertile soil in this part of the state, it’s no surprise things like to grow. Oregon’s Willamette Valley is one of the most productive agricultural lands in North America. It took shape over millennia. About 15 million years ago, vast lava flows created the volcanic soils that now comprise Björnson Vineyard. Relatively recently, about 15,000 years ago, the Missoula (Montana) Floods contributed the sedimentary soils at lower elevations in the valley. Experts at Western Oregon University say that roughly 40 times during a 2,500-year period, an ice dam on glacial Lake Missoula ruptured, sending water rushing down the Columbia River. The Willamette Valley flooded each time, leaving behind volcanic and glacial soils that, combined with an ideal climate, allowed crops to flourish on the valley floor.

Today, this history is underground, but not forgotten: It resurfaces in hazelnuts, Christmas trees, nursery plants, and many more crops. Mark and his wife, Pattie Björnson (née Knight), ’86 BSB, say their grapevines, the roots of which extend down 20 to 25 feet, pull water from the fractured bedrock beneath the rich volcanic soil. At the Björnsons’ second vineyard, Pamar, Mark recently found granite and gneiss rocks, brought in on ice floes by those floods, on the lower parts of the vineyard.

For the Björnsons, respecting the history of their land and sustaining it are priorities. They are certified Salmon-Safe and sustainable by Low Input Viticulture and Enology (L.I.V.E.). They use solar power and electric vehicles. They practice sustainable farming across more than 50 acres of plantings. These actions, and more, live out the first part of the Björnsons trinitary mission statement: “Care for the land.”
In the 1990s and early 2000s, the Björnsons focused on their corporate careers while raising four children in Minnetonka. But, the vineyard was never far from their minds. On a drive home in 2000, Pattie remembers telling Mark, "You have got to quit telling people that we’re going to move to Oregon, buy land, and plant a vineyard." Everybody thinks you’re crazy," Mark’s immediate reply was, "Well, I don’t care what they think."

By 2005, Mark was president of the west region for United Health Group’s Medicare Advantage product and the family of six moved to Portland. The hunt for land, and knowledge, was on.

PLANING AND PLANTING

What the Björnson dream had in optimism, it lacked in understanding of what it takes to run a successful vineyard, so they added to their business education and experience by enrolling in the Wine Studies program at Chemeketa Community College in Salem. There, they learned about viticulture, farming, winemaking, and more while gaining hands-on experience in five of the school’s working vineyard.

During their studies, they made friends with fellow winemakers and found land that checked all the boxes. The old timber farm property had potential for a vineyard with four soil types and elevations ranging from 440 to 560 feet. It also offered a stunning view of Mount Hood and Mount Jefferson in the Cascade Range with the hills of Oregon wine country stretching out in the foreground. After removing hundreds of trees and at least 1,000 tons of rock, planting began in Fall 2006 and covers four blocks, each named for one of their children. The vines grow pinot noir, chardonnay, auxerrois, and gamay noir grape varieties.

"We didn’t quite realize—I’m not sure anybody really knew—just how great this property would be for producing tremendous grapes and wine," admits Mark now.

BUILDING A BUSINESS

Not everyone could consider starting a vineyard and winery as a side hustle—they describe it as "all-consuming"—but that’s how the Björnsons did it. "The most important point is to keep the day job," says Pattie. "It’s very capital intensive," adds Mark, who only last year left his full-time role at Catholic Health Initiatives.

With support from Pattie’s parents to help with their children, the Björnsons built a three-part business: growing grapes, making wine (manufacturing), and selling both (retail). The business school fundamentals they learned played a key role. "We did a lot of short-term planning and long-term planning and budgeting," says Pattie.

After three years learning winemaking from Ben Casteel at nearby Bethel Heights Winery. The pair describe working together, sarcastically, as being a "seamless team" that "always gets along beautifully." More seriously, they’re aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Mark is the farmer and viticulturist—argosy—and is especially busy during the fall harvest. That’s when Pattie’s job as winemaker picks up. She’s also serving as CEO. "They complement each other really well," says Nancy Morris, general manager of Björnson Vineyard. "They’re kind, respectful, good listeners, and will help you problem-solve. It’s a family here [for staff]."

A few more anecdotes to the many vineyards across the Willamette Valley, a community the Björnsons say welcomed them with open arms, is until recently collaborative, and believes that “a rising tide lifts all boats.” Both Mark and Pattie now serve as board members in nonprofit organizations supporting the region.

MAKING HISTORY

The Björnsons share a deep dedication to the land and make exceptional wine, and enjoy the journey.

"Our message is: ‘We’re taking care of the land, make exceptional wine, and enjoy the journey.’

“We didn’t quite realize—I’m not sure anybody really knew—just how great this property would be for producing tremendous grapes and wine," admits Mark now.

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Advancing Excellence with Our New Dean, Jamie Prenkert

What an exciting time it is for our Carlson School community! This summer, we welcomed a new dean, Jamie Prenkert, who has eagerly jumped into this community of students, faculty, staff, alumni, benefactors, and friends, and has begun building on the legacy of Carlson School distinction. Since our founding more than 100 years ago, we have been a powerhouse in developing business leaders and talent. We have educated and inspired leaders who have shaped the economy in the state of Minnesota, across the country, and beyond. Our faculty have introduced management concepts and innovative practices to the global business community. Additionally, our programs and outreach have ensured that the benefits of the research, innovation, and education happening here have an impact locally and worldwide.

Dean Prenkert has spent these early months meeting and listening to internal and external stakeholders, learning more about the unique qualities that set us apart, and observing how our alumni are critical contributors in the regional headquarters economy and are leading the way in an ever-changing global business environment. He is using these insights to identify opportunities to raise our profile even further. Having observed Dean Prenkert’s enthusiasm for the school, and to the continued excellence of the Carlson School.

I am excited about our path forward together and to raise our profile even further. Having observed Dean Prenkert’s enthusiasm for the school, and the support of our faculty, staff, alumni, benefactors, and friends.

Sincerely,

Jess Kowal
Assistant Dean for Institutional Advancement

Leadership skills and training have long been integral to a Carlson School education, and the latest numbers show our alumni capitalizing on those skills in their professional lives and service to the Carlson School.

One Big Number

Companies on the current Fortune 500, S&P 500, or Forbes Largest Private Companies rankings represented on the Carlson School Board of Advisors.

17

More Numbers

12+
Number of Fortune 1000 companies with Carlson School graduates in the CED, CFO, or CTO role, making the Carlson School one of the top public business schools in the country for this metric.

400+
Alumni currently sharing their time and talents with their alma mater through service on Carlson School advisory boards and alumni councils.

New Scholarship Aims to Support Changing Circumstances

Memories of business school dreams put on hold serve as the inspiration for one of the Carlson School’s newest endowed scholarships. Awarded for the first time this fall, the scholarship aims to help students keep their academic goals on track. Carol*, the benefactor, vividly remembers the financial challenges she experienced while attending the University of Minnesota “B-School” in the mid-1950s. An active student with a love of numbers, she became the president of Phi Delta, a now-defunct business sorority, while funding her own education.

“After several years, I ran out of money and left school before completing my degree,” Carol says. “Then life got busy with my growing family. Eventually, I finished my accounting degree elsewhere because it was less expensive. My goal in establishing this scholarship is to make it possible for students to stay at the Carlson School and complete their studies.”

The scholarship aims to support upper-division (sophomore standing or higher) undergraduates. While many students with financial need earn scholarships starting their first year, changing circumstances may lead students to seek funding in subsequent years. Decreased financial support from family, the need to reduce work hours to pursue extracurricular and experiential learning opportunities, or the desire to focus more intently on academics are all reasons cited by students when applying for upper-division scholarships, which may be awarded on merit in addition to need.

Recently, Carol was back on campus—and inside the Carlson School—for the first time in many years. She brought her son, Brad, a fellow UMN alumnus with a degree in Civil Engineering, and also a donor to his mother’s scholarship, to celebrate her meaningful gift to the school.

*Last name withheld by request

Philanthropy Powers Dedicated Alumni Career Coaching

Support for Carlson School alumni continues after graduation through lifelong career coaching. The school recently doubled down on this commitment by hiring a career coach dedicated to the alumni population, made possible through a philanthropic investment from the Carlson Family Foundation Supporting Organization. This generous gift recognizes the great value of supporting alumni beyond their time as students.

Nicole Centanni brings 20 years of experience serving diverse student populations as a career exploration and development specialist. Most recently, she taught a career counseling course for graduate students.

Alumni will now see more career-related programming, and individual support for their professional journeys with career exploration, job search strategies, networking, résumé review, interview preparation, offer evaluation, and negotiation advice. Request an individual coaching appointment with Nicole at z.umn.edu/alumnioaching.
Diversifying the Investment Industry

BY WADE RUPARD

New undergraduate scholarship aims to fill the gaps.

For decades, there has been a lack of diversity throughout the finance and accounting sectors. Still today, the financial planning industry remains 83 percent white and 76 percent male, according to the Certified Financial Planner Board. A new undergraduate scholarship at the Carlson School is the latest effort aiming to close that gap.

Mairs & Power, a St. Paul–based investment advisory firm, established the scholarship this year to support those working toward finance and accounting degrees, with a preference toward women and students of color.

It builds on a similar scholarship already offered for MBA students. “We value diversity and we recruit for that,” says Mark Henneman, ’90 MBA, chairman and CEO of the 91-year-old firm. “But when we look around, historically, there has been a lack of diverse candidates. Our hope is that this scholarship will raise awareness of Mairs & Power, as well as the investment industry in general.”

Henneman, who came to Mairs & Power in 2004 from U.S. Bancorp, points to a common experience for those who desperately want to make change, knowing women add value to the conversation. “We have found that it can be hard to get into this industry unless you learn more about it, you know people in it, or you have strong experience,” Lee says. “So this is our way of opening that door a little wider.”

As a Carlson School graduate himself, Henneman sees how those from the school can benefit Mairs & Power and the industry at large. “The Carlson School is a great school and we want its students to be curious, incredibly smart, and focused,” he says. “We’re excited to support them in their journey to hopefully joining the investment community.”

A Culture of Philanthropy

BY WADE RUPARD

New student board gives back to the Carlson School.

Senior Jasmine Nguyen joined the board last year. Hailing from the Washington, D.C., area, Nguyen chose to attend the Carlson School in large part because of the scholarship support she received. “I wouldn’t be able to attend the Carlson School if I had not earned that scholarship,” Nguyen says. “So I looked at the Institutional Advancement Student Board as a way to give back and gain a greater appreciation of how much of our experience as students happens because of donors.”

During its first year, board members organized and encouraged student involvement in events and activities that foster a lasting awareness and appreciation of philanthropy at the Carlson School. That includes Gopher Gratitude, Give to the Max Day, and FanWelcome. In addition, they educated fellow students throughout the year about how philanthropy affects their student experience and what philanthropy makes possible at the Carlson School. They planned, managed, and solicited peers for gifts, sent letters to alumni and donors, and held an annual gift campaign.

“Our goal is to support our students and create an avenue for people to get involved and give back while they’re still at the school.”

GIVING

EXECUTIVE SPOTLIGHT

Adapting Through the Decades

BY WADE RUPARD

Mark Jordahl ‘94 MBA

Over his 40-year career in banking, Mark Jordahl, ’94 MBA, saw the industry change dramatically.

Jordahl leaves a lengthy career as he retires from his role at U.S. Bank, where he’s worked since 2001. Under his leadership as president of wealth management, the bank launched a digital investing platform and ventured into new markets, among other initiatives. He spoke to the Carlson School about his career and what advice he would give those entering the workforce.

As you look back, what are you most proud of?

When you go through retirement, you do get kind of reflective. You spend a fair amount of time on this question: With the kind of positions I’ve had, commercial success isn’t optional, so you start with the pride around the commercial result. But I take pride in feeling like we went about things the right way. At the end of the day, you want to look back on what you did in life and feel like you did something meaningful, and I did that. And I did that with people that I admire and respect.

What are some of the biggest changes you’ve seen in the financial sector during your career?

I remember the days before Microsoft Excel, there was a thing called Lotus 1-2-3, which was one of the earliest forms of spreadsheets. And I thought, ‘How are any of these older people going to keep up with somebody that knows these tools?’ The kinds of tools that we have available to us have continued to grow and expand on a mind-boggling scale. So one bit of advice I have for anyone starting their career is to be a lifelong learner because I’m going to guess the changes that I saw in my career are going to pale in comparison to the change that recent graduates will see in theirs.

Do you have any other advice for Carlson School students?

Be curious, continue to learn, and be worthy of trust. Your career will have peaks and valleys, always be learning something new and exercise good judgment.
Cheerleader for the Carlson School

Craig Schmidt gives back as much as he can to the school he loves.

BY WADE RUPARD

The first time Craig Schmidt, ’03 BSB, walked into the Carlson School building, he felt like he had made it.

“I remember getting this ‘shock and awe’ feeling that I was attending this gem of a university and this gem of a school,” he recalls. “It’s one of the most elite business schools in the country, and I couldn’t believe I was here.”

Since that moment, Schmidt has been one of the school’s biggest advocates. After serving as the Alumni Board president for the past three years, Schmidt’s term ended in July. Throughout his tenure, the board and the school went through major changes—the board grew to 30 members, supported the school in navigating the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, helped launch the annual MBA Reunion event, established a Give to the Max Day match program for the board, and began a new subcommittee on diversity, equity, and inclusion, among many others.

“I think we were able to accomplish a lot of important things and leave the Carlson School in a great spot going forward,” he says.

Serving as Alumni Board president was one example. In a long line of ways Schmidt has given back to the school since he arrived at the Carlson School as a transfer student from the University of Minnesota Morris.

“My dad was a Gopher and was the first one in my family to attend college; I was the second,” he says. “I knew I wanted to study business and the Carlson School was always high on my list because of the family legacy.”

He landed a job at Deloitte after graduation. From the coursework to the career services, he says he felt the Carlson School set him up to succeed in his career.

“It’s imperative that all Carlson School graduates take a step back and realize how fortunate we all are,” he says. “Not only were we accepted into the U, but we were selected into the Carlson School from thousands of other students that apply. We should be grateful and thankful for all of that. So it was important for me to give back to help the school maintain its status as one of the best public business schools in the country.”

Schmidt began giving back immediately. He started as a mentor, joined the GOLD (Gophers of the Last Decade) Board, then the Alumni Board.

“I thought it would be tremendous to find bigger ways to give back and make a bigger impact,” he explains. “I thought I owed it to the school because of the success I’ve had in my career. It all has roots back to the Carlson School.”

Now working as the head of global regulatory reporting at Citibank, Schmidt has also used his financial resources to support the Carlson School’s Dean’s Excellence Fund, which is used to address the highest priorities and pressing needs to bolster the school’s core strengths.

Though he’s stepping away from the Alumni Board, Schmidt plans to continue to find ways to be a cheerleader for the Carlson School in any way possible.

“Having the Carlson School on your résumé, that’s forever,” he says. “I take great pride in the school and being a Gopher. It was important for me to pay it forward however I can for future generations.”

“Craig has made a lasting impact on the Carlson School. His dedication and leadership helped us navigate unprecedented challenges during his tenure.”

Sarah Oehler, senior director for alumni relations and annual giving

Scholarships help provide opportunities for students to attend a leading business school and gain skills, leadership experience, and connections to help them use business as a force for good. Philanthropy from alumni and friends of the Carlson School makes a positive impact, extending far beyond the campus.

“My family is in the United States today because 50-plus years ago, my grandmother received a microloan for a small business in India to weave and sell fabric.”

Maitri Ajmera

“Craig has made a lasting impact on the Carlson School. His dedication and leadership helped us navigate unprecedented challenges during his tenure.”

Sarah Oehler, senior director for alumni relations and annual giving

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“Craig has made a lasting impact on the Carlson School. His dedication and leadership helped us navigate unprecedented challenges during his tenure.”

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“I’m grateful for the support of the Carlson School’s benefactors as I pursue my education. Not having to worry as much about paying for school has given me the ability to focus on being impactful and leaving behind a legacy at the Carlson School, including in my work on Carlson Business Board—Undergraduate Student Government. Ever since I started as a first-year student, I knew that the Carlson School was the right place for me and I’m incredibly thankful for my time here.”

Maitri Ajmera

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Maitri Ajmera
Every event brings new insights, experiences, and connections for alumni and friends of the Carlson School. Here are some highlights:

### MBA Reunion Weekend
MBA alumni and friends celebrated their reunion this May with a weekend of reconnecting and reminiscing. On Friday, keynote speaker Annie Young-Scrivner, '03 MBA, CEO of Weave, inspired the audience with a presentation on the importance of transformative leadership. On Saturday, attendees heard a memorable presentation on transformative leadership from Roxie Wen, '02 MBA, CFO at Invitae Corp., and presentations from favorite faculty. The celebration closed out with campus tours and a reception at Huntington Bank Stadium. Success for the two-day event isn’t possible without the many alumni reunion committee volunteers giving of their time and talent—thank you!

### Scholarship Reception
Nearly 150 benefactors and scholars came together to meet, mingle, and network at the largest scholarship reception to date. The room at McNamara Alumni Center was filled with laughter, stories of transformative Carlson School experiences from both alumni and current students, and heartwarming expressions of gratitude. Philanthropic support accounts for more than $6.5 million in scholarship funding annually.

### Congratulations, Class of 2023!
We celebrated Class of 2023 graduates this spring and welcomed a new class of alumni into the Carlson School alumni network with various events and festivities. For the first time, the University of Minnesota held University-wide commencement ceremonies and stage crossing events. The Carlson School gave the traditional alumni mug as a graduation gift, graduates from Carlson School China and Vienna Executive MBA and the Medical Industry MBA-China programs traveled to campus to celebrate, and more. Welcome to the alumni family, Class of 2023!

### Community Events: Juneteenth and Twin Cities Pride
Thanks to partnership through the University of Minnesota community, the Carlson School was involved in both the University’s Juneteenth Celebration and Twin Cities Pride. The Carlson School’s Center for Inclusive Excellence was a sponsor of the second annual Juneteenth Celebration on June 17, which began with a commemorative march and was followed by a community festival. The next weekend, volunteers from Carlson Alumni Pride gave their time at the University of Minnesota booth at the Twin Cities Pride festival. Learn more about Carlson Alumni Pride at z.umn.edu/carlsonpride.

### Carlson School Across the Country—And Beyond!
The Carlson School is coming your way! Last month, John Hartmann, '84 BSB, and his wife, Beth Hartmann, hosted an alumni event in Chicago headlined by Dean Jamie Prenkert, and we’re just getting started. Meet Dean Prenkert and connect with Carlson School alumni in your area at the following upcoming events:
- November 7 – Seattle
- November 9 – San Francisco
- November 13 – New York City

### Alumni Happenings
1st Tuesday with Lili Hall
Lili Hall, CEO of Minneapolis-based creative agency KNOCK, led an inspiring 1st Tuesday Speaker Series in June. Hall shared her story as a woman, person of color, and business owner, overcoming cancer while still leading her company, and becoming an advocate and mentor for up-and-coming entrepreneurs. Hall works closely with the Gary S. Holmes Center for Entrepreneurship to give back to the community that served her as she grew her business.


Dean Jamie Prenkert will be our 1st Tuesday Speaker on December 5. Learn more about the 1st Tuesday Speaker Series at z.umn.edu/1stTuesday.

### Alumni & GOLD Boards
Carlson School Alumni Board and Gophers of the Last Decade (GOLD) Board held joint meetings this spring for the first time ever. Board members were able to meet each other in person—many for the first time. Volunteers completing their terms were honored the evening before at a celebratory dinner. Thank you, volunteers, for your service to the Carlson School!
Let your classmates know what you’ve been up to since graduation. Submit a Class Note for publication in the alumni magazine:
carlsonschool.umn.edu/Share.

1960s
Tom Teresi, ’64 BSB, started a new role as treasurer of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Twin Cities. Tom’s son Mike Teresi, ’80 BSB, and grandson Jeffrey Teresi, ’05 BSB, are also Carlson School graduates.

Tom Watson, ’68 BSB, is a long-serving city council member and former mayor of North Oaks, Minn.

1980s
Lisa Erickson, ’85 BSB, is now chief financial officer at Medica.

Gary Mohelen, ’85 BSB, started a new role as senior implementation consultant-climate initiatives at Wells Fargo.

Gregg Prest, ’85 BSB, recently relocated to Morris, Minn. to become the CEO/COO of Joe Riley Construction.

Rick Nelson, ’86 MBA, retired from the Star Tribune last year after a 24-year career as the newspaper’s restaurant critic and food writer. He is co-author of The Great Minnesota Cookie Block, a James Beard Award, winner, and actively shares his foodie finds on social media.

Larry Morgan, ’87 MHRIR, received the Friend of the Profession award from the Minnesota Society of CPAs for his work in assisting members with human resources issues over the past 10 years. He was awarded the Lifetime Recognition Award from the Twin Cities Compensation Network earlier for his contributions to the compensation profession. Morgan has also served on the Carlson School’s MHRIR Alumni Board.

1990s
Auli Rivi, ’90 MBA, is the CEO and director of Lucky Motor Corporation Limited. He was recently selected as one of the Top 100 Performing CEOs in Pakistan.

Brett Reynolds, ’91 BSB, ’99 MBA, was appointed chief financial officer at EndoGastric Solutions Incorporated.

Joel Becker, ’94 MBA, was appointed as president & CEO of NeuPrePace, Inc.

Sholom Blake, ’94 BSB, was appointed trustee at Blundin Foundation.

Reva Chambis, ’94 BSB, was reappointed as a member of the Metropolitan Council. Chambis is also the founder and president of Northwest Community Building, which aims to educate voters and increase civic engagement.

Bill Gould, ’96 BSB, ’06 MBA, was appointed president and chief operating officer at Trustmark.

Joy Lindsay, ’99 MBA, was named the University of Minnesota 2023 Entrepreneur of the Year. Lindsay, a co-founder of two of the country’s first women-founded venture capital firms, is being recognized for her outstanding contributions to entrepreneurship. The award was presented at the Founders Day event hosted by the Carlson School. Lindsay’s current role as a managing partner at Sofia Fund, a Minneapolis-based angel firm, showcases her ongoing commitment to supporting innovative ventures.

2000s
Rita Gronberg, ’00 BSB, started a new role as a reactor at RE/MAX Results.

Lenny Krol, ’00 BSB, started a new role as head of professional services, Americas for Check Point Software Technologies.

Dirk De Clercq, ’02 PhD, earned a Goodman School of Business Award for Excellence in Teaching from Brock University.

Kevin Gish, ’02 MBA, is the administrator of the Bomdji Veterans Home in Minnesota. Gish will lead the home, opening this fall, and team of over 160 employees to provide excellent care for veterans.

Zachary McGillis, ’02 BSB, ’09 MBA, started a new role as a business broker at Sunbelt Business Advisors of Minnesota.

Sue Sun-La Savage, ’02 MHRIR, started a new role as chief human resources officer at Hycon Motors.

Kevin Ballinger, ’03 MBA, was appointed to the board of directors at Shockwave.

Jim Sheets, ’07 BSB, is now group president of Centura Health, a multi-state health system.

Danny Judd, ’09 MBA, is now senior vice president of enterprise finance at Best Buy.

Carla Haugen, ’09 MBA, is now vice president of corporate development at Target.

Rita Gronberg, ’00 BSB, started a new role as chief growth officer for Evers’ Judicial Advisory Committee.

Tanya Webster, ’02 BSB, ’09 MBA, started a new role as director of sales at TopRank Marketing.

Ryan Arnhold, ’06 MHRIR, started a new role as director of sales at TopRank Marketing.

Dwayne Allen, ’06 MBA, is now chief information officer at Forum.

George MacRae, ’06 MBA, is now chief information officer at CommerceNet.

Jennifer Frisch, ’06 MHRIR, started a new role as chief people officer at HYCON.

Sholom Blake, ’94 BSB, was appointed to the board of directors at Schwartz.

Brad Pogalski, ’06 MBA, is now vice president of finance at Donaldson, a promotion from finance director.

Raj Purmessur, ’06 BSB, is now managing director and global head of alternative fund services product development at J.P. Morgan.

Kathryn Montbriand, ’06 BSB, founded two businesses: Montbriand Services, which offers fractional chief of staff support, and Live and Loved, which helps people tap into their personal stories for both career and personal use.

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Maureen Arboagast, '08 MBA, started a new role as director of data & analytics at Second Harvest Heartland.

J. Michael Edwards-Toope, ’08 BSB, started a new role as an account executive at Emergent Software.

Frederik Ellisson, ’08 MBA, is now director of strategic accounts at Neogen Corporation following their merger with 3M Food Safety in September.

Matthew Frauenshuh, ’08 MBA, CEO of Fourteen Foods, successfully acquired the Dairy Queen Isolated in Lafayette, Tennessee. Fourteen Foods now owns and operates more than 240 Dairy Queen Grill & Chill restaurants in 13 states, employing more than 5,000 employees.

Adam Morgan, ’08 MBA, was appointed chairman of the board at Horon Therapeutics.

Dr. Janine Sanders Jones, ’08 PhD, was appointed associate dean for faculty scholarship, teaching, and service excellence at the University of St. Thomas Opus College of Business.

Anna (Kinnard) Picchetti, ’09 MBA, was recently announced as the new vice president of marketing & strategy for Uponor North America. She is also a member of the company’s senior management committee.

Amaza Reitmeier, ’09 MBA, is now vice president and general manager of brain modulation at Medtronic.

Andrew Rose, ’09 MBA, is now information technology supervisor at Hennepin County, a promotion from senior project manager.

Toni (Toborgi) Tornell, ’09 BSB, is now vice president of corporate finance & controller at United Language Group, a promotion from controller.

2010s

Yashodhan Dhone, ’10 MBA, started a new role as business and innovations director at Kaiser Permanente.

Matthew Hanzlik, ’10 BSB, started a new role as director, global people strategy and HR chief of staff at Converse, which is owned by Nike.

John Rozanski, ’10 BSB, started a new role as chief growth officer at Mission Driven Meat and Seafood.

Bill Haspert, ’11 MBA, CEO of Foodstrot Media Group, purchased the company from investors Miles Lais Corp. In March 2023, Foodstrot Media is a provider of online company stores and branded merchandise.

Amina Kanwar, ’11 BSB, is now the accounting manager at Northern Tool + Equipment.

Jesse Ng, ’11 MBA, started a new role as an actuarial consultant with Optum.

Jenny Wada, ’11 MBA, started a new role as senior vice president of investment banking at H.S. Sims.

Erik Carlsen, ’12 MBA, started a new role as senior vice president of sales at Meriplex.

Noah Gilbertson, ’12 BSB, started a new role as head of solution strategy, payers at Qualtechics.

Alina Hagness, ’12 MBA, ’14 PhD, started a new role as senior associate at BDO.

Samuel Kemp, ’13 MBA, started a new role as a startup mentor at Minnesota Emerging Software Advisory.

Jchua Sletten, ’13 MBA, is now vice president of corporate development and strategy at Lakeland Industries.

Erik Greene, ’14 MBA, started a new role as co-founder at 0-Works, an internal venture studio within General Mills, where teams work as start-ups to identify new market opportunities.

Jacquelin Grimes, ’14 MBA, is now the principal product manager at Donaldson.

Thomas Seeba, ’14 MBA, started a new role as director of strategy at Capital One.

Erik Dady, ’15 MBA, chief marketing officer at Bremer Bank, was appointed to the board of directors at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts.

Meghan Stiling, ’15 MBA, was honored as a 2023 Notable Woman in STEM by Twin Cities Business and recognized with a 2023 Women in Business award from the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal. Stiling has been a leader on technology solutions and strategy at multiple companies in the Twin Cities, where her expertise has made a significant impact on the technology industry and business community.

Jennifer Sargent, ’12 MBA, was appointed to the board of directors at Minnesota Milk Bank for Babies.

Chuan Van Schoonvede, ’12 BSB, was appointed director at Eller Advisory Group LLC.

Qurat-ul-Ain Tarig, ’12 MBA, started a new role as a senior associate at BDO.

Zach Brauer, ’17 MBA, was appointed finance partner in the life science division at Googles Ventures.

Marcel Chinon, ’17 MBA, started a new role as a senior product manager at Blue Diamond Growers.

Juhyun Kwon, ’17 MBA, is now senior manager of commercial model development at Albertsons Media Collective.

Kristen Reisman, ’17 MBA, started a new role as a product manager at Wall Cornwell Medicine.

Whitney Heber, ’15 MBA, started a new role as senior marketing manager at Schwan’s Company.

Keith Lawrence, ’15 MBA, started a new role as tax lead at Under Armour.

Justin Schilz, ’15 BSB, started a new role as general manager at Otter.

Guvinder Singh Kahlon, ’15 MBA, was appointed vice president and general manager at Stratasys.

Logan Falc, ’16 MBA, is now finance manager at Pentair.

Emily Hennig, ’16 MBA, started a new role as a product owner at AIRCare Health.

Shelby Banks, ’17 MBA, started a new role as brand manager for EGO POWER at Orono North America Inc.

Jennifer Sanders, ’23 MBA, started a new role as associate director of MBS.

Katherine Knoll, ’23 MBA, started a new role as a strategic accounts manager at Neogen.

Jenna Tuite, ’23 MBA, started a new role as a business initiatives manager at Group, a promotion from controller.

Evan Motz, ’23 MBA, started a new role as a partner at Moody’s.

Erik Greene, ’23 MBA, started a new role as a senior manager of financial services at Neogen.

Jenny Wada, ’23 MBA, started a new role as head of solution strategy, payers at Qualtechics.

Alina Hagness, ’23 MBA, ’24 PhD, started a new role as a senior associate at BDO.

Samuel Kemp, ’24 MBA, started a new role as a startup mentor at Minnesota Emerging Software Advisory.

Jchua Sletten, ’24 MBA, is now vice president of corporate development and strategy at Lakeland Industries.

Erik Greene, ’24 MBA, started a new role as co-founder at 0-Works, an internal venture studio within General Mills, where teams work as start-ups to identify new market opportunities.

Jacquelin Grimes, ’24 MBA, is now the principal product manager at Donaldson.

Thomas Seeba, ’24 MBA, started a new role as director of strategy at Capital One.

Erik Dady, ’25 MBA, chief marketing officer at Bremer Bank, was appointed to the board of directors at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts.

Matthew Burundt, ’18 MBA, ’23 MSF, started a new role as an investment research quantitative analyst at Ameriprise Financial.

Hanna Okhrimchuk, ’18 BSB, is now the project manager at Dragons Lake.

Billie Pitzer, ’18 MBA, started a new role as senior manager of owned brand innovation engine at Target.

Harpeet Sandhuwalia, ’18 MBA, is now vice president of digital products at the Star Tribune.

Katherine Spicuzza, ’18 BSB, started a new role as an internal audit manager at UnitedHealth Group.

Holly Williams, ’18 MBA, started a new role as a functional engineer at Kimberly-Clark.

Tricia Wright, ’18 MBA, started a new role as the executive director of Onward Eden Prairie.

Steven Kibaya, ’19 MBA, started a new role as vice president of Integrated risk management at Wings Financial Credit Union.

Alex Lumsden, ’19 MBA, started a new position as a master scheduler at GE Healthcare.

Dana Steinman, ’19 MBA, started a new role as a data analyst at Cargil.

Aanik Lohani, ’20 MBA, is an exceptional talent in the world of pickleball. This past spring, he finished 7th in the Professional Pickleball Association Indoor National Championships, and is ranked in the top 50 nationally. Lohani credits his ability to balance his professional and personal pursuits to the education and experience he gained during his time at the Carlson School. He maintains a full-time job as a data engineer for U.S. Bank while pursuing his passion for pickleball, and his rise in the pro scene is demonstrated in his talent and hard work.

With the generosity of my scholarship benefactors, I can focus on exploring my passions and future careers through classes and experiences without worrying about the financial burden.

Irine Kurian

26 BSB
IN MEMORIAM

William Alan “Bill” Hodder, founding member of the Carlson School’s Board of Overseers and respected Twin Cities business leader, died in July 2023. He chaired the board for six years, and helped to strengthen the ties between the school and the regional business community. “What a giant of a man and a gem he was!” noted Sri Zaheer, community. “What a giant of a man and a gem he was!”

1950s

1960s
Lawrence Michelek, ’64 BSB, died in August 2022.
Thomas Bracher, ’69 BSB, died in February 2023.

1970s
Dr. Clyde Neu, ’73, died in April 2023.

2000s
Kylie Burkhardt, ’20 MBA, started a new role as senior vice president of strategy of the Dallas Mavericks. Burkhardt also recently won a Tony award as a co-producer of the show Parade.

Taylor Fay, ’21 MBA, was appointed as chief operating officer at FORD Technologies.
Han Zhou, ’21 MBA, is now a business development advisor at Cargill.

Carlson School degree. The Stifling Dark is a one-vs-

supply chain planning phase, thanks to Geenen’s program at Medline Industries.

Haley Nordstrom, ’22 BSB, started a new role in the rotational assignment at Kraus-Anderson Realty and appointed director of development.

Stefan Michno, ’22 MBA, was appointed as chief operating officer at Magnifi Financial.

A new role as senior vice president, ’23 MBA, started a new position as vice president of sales and marketing at Athian.

Jeremy Geenen, ’21 MSSCM, and business partners, launched a board game company in 2020. His game, The Stifling Dark, which was successfully funded on Kickstarter, is currently in the manufacturing and supply chain planning phase, thanks to Geenen’s Carlson School degree. The Stifling Dark is a one-vs-

many horror board game where an adversary takes on investigators to prevent them from escaping. The game is expected to be released in early 2024.

RECOGNITION
Welcome Incoming Carlson School Alumni Board Members:
John Jones, ’18 MBA
Luis Moreno, ’21 MBA
Clark Olson, ’04 BSB
Charlie Schaller, ’08 BSB
Welcome Incoming Carlson School Gophers of the Last Decade (GOLD) Board Members:
Kristen Ho, ’22 BSB
Chris Keverda, ’22 BSB
Maria Morande, ’22 BSB
Cozy Morton, ’18 BSB
Haley Nordstrom, ’22 BSB
Thomson Thamsir, ’19 MBA

CLASS NOTES
Irene Fernando
Hennepin County Commissioner Irene Fernando, ‘07 BSB, says you can call her Commish! Fernando moved from Carson, California, to attend the Carlson School in 2003. She received her Master of Education from the U of M and is currently a PhD candidate. Fernando is the youngest woman to serve on the Hennepin County Board, the first Filipino American elected in Minnesota, and the first board chair of color since the county’s founding in 1852.

1. Believe in what’s possible.
Our systems are not broken; they do not work for all of us because they were not designed for all of us. To redesign systems in compassionate and evidence-informed ways, we must believe in what’s possible. Future solutions that creatively and comprehensively address the scale of need in our communities can only be imagined from a place of optimism and possibility.

2. Remain unavering in your values.
I launched my campaign in 2017 with three promises: to advocate for those who are marginalized or structurally disenfranchised, to partner across all layers of government to advance our most complex issues, and to expand who sees themselves in the story of leadership and politics. In our increasingly complex and intensifying world, it is necessary to be unavering in why you lead, how you embody your values, and who benefits from your leadership.

3. Study the system to make it better.
In order to change or improve something, we must understand how it currently works. Through genuine curiosity, deep listening, and cultivating a dynamic relationship with yourself as a leader and the systems around you, it is possible to maneuver within systems to change the trajectory of what’s possible for people who have been overlooked, underserved, or mistreated by systems.

4. Empower youth.
At age 17 in 2003, I co-founded a youth leadership organization with Gopher freshmen called Students Today Leaders Forever (STLF). Together, we learned that leadership is about action, not positions or titles. During my 11 years with STLF, nearly 23,000 participants contributed 318,000 community service hours across the country through leadership programs led by youth and for youth. This instilled in me the belief that today is always the right time to invest in our next generation of leaders. I love hosting youth tours of the county boardroom and my office, and I give out Future Elected: Commish-In-Training stickers.

5. Bet on yourself.
Never assume that decision-makers are advocating for your values—and even if they are—do not assume that they are inherently smarter than you. You have meaningful questions, skills, perspectives, and insights today that can transform communities for the better. Achieving change is driven by belief, empowerment, studying, and dedication, which demands that you bet on yourself, your values, and your vision for the world.

“Future solutions that creatively and comprehensively address the scale of need in our communities can only be imagined from a place of optimism and possibility.”

From 1968 to 1972, the then-called School of Business Administration hosted the Business Equality for American Minorities (BEAM) Small Business Management class, which aimed to elevate community members’ management and entrepreneurship skills.
Get Involved

SUPPORT STUDENTS IN A VARIETY OF WAYS

Speak in a class • Sponsor an experiential learning project
Be a mentor • Hire

Sign Up at z.umn.edu/carlsonvolunteer