Business Building Named Massry Center for Business

Massry Fellows Autumn Henry ’16 and Ethan Schek ’16
Dear School of Business Alumni and Friends:

These are exciting times for the School of Business. On September 17, our $64 million School of Business building was officially named the Massry Center for Business in honor of the Massry family’s $5.25 million gift to the School of Business. The Massry Center for Business, which opened in August 2013, has been ranked as the fourth most beautiful business school building in the world, higher than new facilities at most of America’s leading research universities, such as Duke University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cornell University, Columbia University, New York University, University of California-Berkeley, University of Texas at Austin and the University of Michigan. A distinctive feature of this facility is that it is perhaps the most student-friendly business school building in the world.

As successful entrepreneurs who are dedicated to improving the community in which they live, the Massrys are shining examples for all of our students. I am delighted that their legacy will live on through the naming of the Massry Center for Business. In this issue, we describe how the Massry gift has already benefitted the School of Business. In addition to ensuring that our building remains a state-of-the-art resource, the gift will be used to fund the Massry Lecture Series, the Massry Community Fellows Program, conferences and visiting faculty to enrich the academic experience of School of Business students and enhance public engagement.

We are also enhancing the student experience by hiring new faculty. This issue highlights our recent expansion of the faculty, with each of our five academic departments (accounting, finance, management, marketing and information technology management) adding new professors in the past two years. By the end of this academic year, we will have hired 13 new faculty members since 2013. These new faculty bring fresh ideas, new tools, global perspectives and strong enthusiasm for world-class teaching, research and public engagement. They have bolstered our existing strengths in accounting, finance, human resource management and information technology management. More importantly, these new faculty members are helping us develop new strengths in technological and social entrepreneurship and in the exciting new field of digital forensics.

Many of our new faculty members are actively seeking research grants, which will significantly enhance our funded research portfolio and help us develop our new research centers in social entrepreneurship (the Center for Advancement and Understanding of Social Enterprises or CAUSE, directed by Professor Paul Miesing) and digital forensics (Forensics, Analytics, Complexity, Energy, Transportation & Security or FACETS, directed by Professor Sanjay Goel). Our new faculty members also have a broad interdisciplinary perspective. For instance, several of our newly appointed faculty members have joint appointments with other schools on campus, a first for the School of Business. These include joint appointments with the School of Criminal Justice, the RNA Institute in the College of Arts and Sciences (an interdisciplinary research group that does drug discovery), Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, and the new College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (formerly called the College of Computing and Information).

In the coming months, you will hear more about a variety of initiatives designed to promote technological and social entrepreneurship on campus, as well as several new academic programs. Thanks for your support of the School of Business.

Dr. Donald S. Siegel
Dean, School of Business
The recently created Center for Advancement & Understanding of Social Enterprises sponsored the Forum on Social and Economic Development this summer, connecting social work leaders from Cuba, Russia and Peru with entrepreneurs and business consultants to address social and economic development.
CFA Institute Recognition

The University at Albany was recently named a “University Recognition Program” by the CFA Institute, joining institutions such as the University of Notre Dame, Villanova University and the University of Miami. This acknowledges that the University at Albany Financial Analyst Honors Program curriculum is closely tied to professional practice and is well-suited to preparing students to sit for the chartered financial analyst examination, the first step in obtaining the globally respected investment credential.

In related news, for the fourth year, finance students participated in the CFA Research Challenge. Associate Professor David Smith served as their faculty adviser and fellow faculty member Mary Wladkowski accompanied the group to the New York City headquarters of the New York Society of Security Analysts to provide faculty support. Wladkowski, a CFA, former portfolio manager and current co-adviser to the UASBIG student-managed investment fund, noted the students’ sense of awe as they presented to the investment community. She said, “It was the sense of ‘this is what it will be like to present to institutional investors and portfolio managers.’ It was a peek at what their career experience might be like.”

Dr. David Smith Honored as Torch Night Professor

Graduating seniors are invited to nominate a faculty member who impacted their academic and personal success. This spring, Associate Professor David Smith was chosen as the 2015 Faculty/Student Engagement Award winner and Torch Night Professor. Andrew Ginsburg ’16, ’17, a dual major in accounting and business with a concentration in the Financial Analyst Honors Program recommended Dr. Smith.

Ginsburg said, “Professor Smith is a once-in-a-lifetime professor! He ensures that his students are ready for the work world ahead and puts forth so much effort and time into improving the quality of the program.”

Smith said, “It is immensely gratifying to be chosen as Torch Night Professor. I am thrilled that UAlbany students are taking the initiative to recognize their faculty. A number of my School of Business colleagues are equally deserving and contribute to a culture of student engagement that becomes stronger every year.”

Presidential Initiatives Fund for Research and Scholarship

A top priority of University at Albany President Robert Jones is growing the university’s research portfolio. To support this objective, he established the Presidential Initiatives Fund for Research and Scholarship with an allocation of $500,000 to stimulate cutting-edge research that will enhance UAlbany faculty’s ability to compete for large-scale, interdisciplinary extramural awards and raise the national and international profile of the university.

Recipients of the first round of awards were Associate Professor of Management Janet Marler and Professor of Finance Hany Shawky, who are collaborating on “A Multi-level Study of Advanced Human Resource Data Analytics, Firm Productivity and Employee Well Being.”
Every member of the Financial Analyst Honors Program class of 2015 made a contribution to the school. Guillermo Dilone ’15 and Ryan Stern ’15, co-presidents of the University at Albany School of Business Investment Group, coordinated the effort. Dilone said, “Our senior class recognizes that our keen commitment post-graduation is a primary driver in consistently enhancing our program, which has been so beneficial to us.”

In a meeting of the UASBIG executive board this spring, the group contemplated their terrific job offers and wondered how they could thank the program and leave their mark on the university. Stern said, “We wanted to show our appreciation to the finance faculty who work relentlessly to educate, mentor and support our development day in and day out.”

The FAH students made the gift in recognition of the extensive alumni support that they received and the high cost of the Bloomberg terminals on which they do their work. Dilone said, “The 100 percent participation was crucial in setting a benchmark and standard for future students and alumni. We understand that the incremental success and growth of the Financial Analyst Honors Program will depend upon alumni contributions and participation.”

Alumni have stepped up as well. In 2015, nearly one-quarter of all FAH graduates (from the first graduating class in 2004 to the present) made a gift to the School of Business.
Alumni Awards Recognize Four Business School Alumni

The University at Albany Alumni Association Excellence Awards recognize outstanding achievements and service. This year, four graduates of the School of Business were honored.

Bruce Davis ’73, ’75, CEO of Digimarc, received the Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award. Davis graduated from UAlbany with dual degrees in accounting and psychology and an M.A. in criminal justice.

Grace Barkus Vogel ’77 was awarded an Excellence in Alumni Service Award for bringing the study of financial market regulation to the University at Albany, as a founding member of the University Advisory Council for Financial Market Regulation and for student mentoring. Vogel is a managing director at PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The Excellence in Business Award went to Dean C. Backer ’88, managing director and partner at Goldman Sachs, who is a member of the Dean’s Advisory Board, established the Dean C. Backer Scholarship and mentors UAlbany students at Goldman.

Matthew P. Reiner ’93, principal, chief investment officer and co-portfolio manager of the Adirondack Small Cap Fund, is a founding member of the advisory board of the University at Albany Center for Institutional Investment Management, serves on the advisory board of the student-run University at Albany School of Business Investment Group and regularly mentors students. He was honored with an Excellence in Alumni Service Award.

DSP Golf Open Funds 20 Years of Scholarships

The Delta Sigma Pi Open grew exponentially this spring, registering 80 players and earning $5,000 for the DSP Open Scholarship fund, pushing their overall total to $10,000 over the four years since its inception. Co-founder Colin Gerner ’14, ’15 said, “Twenty years of $500 scholarships are guaranteed with the hope that this tournament has officially taken off and can move toward annual awards of $1,000 for decades to come. I truly can’t explain to you how proud and humbled I am of this little tournament that has flourished and will support rising seniors for the indefinite future!”

Mark your calendar for the Fifth Annual DSP Open
Friday, April 29, 2016
Just five years ago, 27 students received 23 School of Business scholarships. In 2015, 45 scholarships were granted to 65 students, more than doubling the number of students who benefit from alumni generosity.

NEW THIS YEAR

**The Samuels Family Achievement Scholarship** funded by Steven ’85 and Judy ’86 Samuels for an academically successful student, preferably from an ethnic or racial background underrepresented in the School of Business.

**The Donald E. Boyce III, ’06, ’08 Business & Financial Market Regulation Scholarship** funded by Don Boyce, for a student who demonstrates academic excellence, preferably one majoring in financial market regulation.

**The Stacy J. Kanter ’79 and Eric M. Kornblau Undergraduate Scholarship** for a first-generation college student.

**Amy M. Knapp ’97 Scholarship** for a deserving freshman from Wyoming County. (See profile on Amy Knapp on page 14.)

**Shirley S. Philips ’67, ’70 Scholarship** for a business student with financial need.

Joan Solotar ’86 with the 2015 recipient of the Solotar Family Scholarship, Sarah Watson ’16. Watson joined the School of Business straight from high school in the Direct Admit program and will graduate with an accounting degree this spring, just three years after she started. Solotar created the scholarship in 2013. She is a senior managing director at Blackstone who has been honored with the Excellence in Business Award by the University at Albany Alumni Association.
What’s in a name? Everything. Athletics now has the Tom & Mary Casey Stadium and the SEFCU arena (the latter facilitated by SEFCU president and CEO, School of Business alumnus Michael Castellana ’84, ’92). The College of Arts and Sciences has the Boor Sculpture Studio. The School of Public Health named the Edward S. and Frances Gildea George Education Center in 1997 and the Massry Conference Center 10 years later. Now, the School of Business has a named building: the Massry Center for Business.

The Massry Family
In December 2014, the business-savvy Massry family (profiled in the spring 2015 issue of this magazine) made a gift of $5.25 million to the university and the School of Business. On September 17, the building was named in honor of the family and their long-standing support of the university. The Massrys boast a robust history of support for the University at Albany, having donated gifts totaling more than $6.2 million.

“As successful entrepreneurs who are dedicated to improving the community in which they live, the Massrys are shining examples for all of our students,” said School of Business Dean Donald Siegel. “I am delighted that their legacy will live on through the naming of the Massry Center for Business.”

University at Albany President Robert J. Jones said, “We are honored that the Massrys have chosen UAlbany as the recipient of their largest gift to date to any single institution. It means they have endorsed the direction in which we are going, and I could not be more proud of that endorsement. I know they are very careful to make investments that will have a broad impact – and I believe we earned their investment by showing the right kind of impact on our students, our faculty and the Capital Region.”

The Gift in Action
The Massry family has done more than name a building. Through their generosity, they are contributing to the life of the university. Their gift ensures that the new School of Business building remains a state-of-the-art resource. It will also fund the Massry Community Fellows Program, the Massry Lecture Series, conferences, and visiting faculty to enrich the academic experience of School of Business students.

The funds were immediately put to use. This spring, the Massry Lecture Series brought to campus Benjamin Lawsky, who at the time served as New York’s Superintendent of the Department of Financial Services. This summer, two students and two nonprofit organizations benefited from the Massry Community Fellows Program. (Pictured on our cover are Massry fellows Ethan Schek ’16 and Autumn Henry ’16. Read about them on Page 8.)

The Unveiling
Many dignitaries were on hand for the event announcing the building naming, including Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, who proclaimed Massry Family Day in the city of Albany. She said, “With this gift, they have made one of the top-ranked business schools in the nation significantly stronger, which cannot help but make our city stronger too.”
University at Albany Foundation President George Hearst was also on hand for the celebration. He said, “I firmly believe this gift will transform the landscape of Albany and the Capital Region community in ways that will shape our future business leaders.”

Two special moments came at the end of the program, one from a student and another from the Massry patriarch. Najwa Zarook ’15, ’16 said, "As a UAlbany student who has thrived on opportunities created by the likes of the Massry family, I feel as though they are personally ensuring my ability to reach my fullest potential, and for that I am grateful.”

When Morris Massry joined his son Norman at the podium, he said, “As the building was going up, I always thought maybe someday it would be named after the Massry family, and sure enough it is.”

After the drape concealing the sign was removed, purple and gold balloons were released and the School of Business Building had a name: The Massry Center for Business.
Autumn Henry ’16 was in a quandary this spring. The public health major had lined up work as a summer school substitute teacher, but hoped to intern with Radix, an urban environmental educational center located in Albany’s South End. As a two-person nonprofit, Radix could not afford to pay her. Henry could not afford to work unpaid. Just in time, a professor’s email advised her of the Massry Community Fellows Program; Henry applied and won one of two summer stipends. The Massry program allowed her to forgo the teaching gig to spend the summer at Radix, writing grants and learning about urban farming.

The internship taught Henry that she enjoys research and grant writing but not farming. She set a goal of earning as much through grants as she earned through the program: $5,000. She continues her work into the fall semester, unpaid.

Most School of Business students complete an internship before graduation and most get paid. That is not the case for other disciplines. Many students cannot afford to spend a summer or a semester without earning a paycheck. For them, obtaining experience may require juggling an unpaid internship and a job.

On the other hand, business students rarely pursue nonprofit organizations, where internship funding is typically nonexistent. Business major Ethan Schek ’16, had the opportunity to intern with the Sidney Albert Albany Jewish Community Center but, like Henry, needed to earn enough money for living expenses.

This is Schek’s first internship. He previously spent his summers working at a water park but as graduation approached, he sought experience in his field. The JCC marketing internship met his needs. He learned about the internship and the Massry fellowship through Deirdre Sweeney, the director of the School of Business Office of Career Services, who oversees the program.

Schek has learned from the experience. He said, “In school you learn about the things that relate to corporate America. I now have a grasp of how nonprofits work. It is a completely different entity.”

The Massry Community Fellows Program is one of the initiatives funded through a $5.25 million gift from the Massry family, the largest gift ever made to the University at Albany. It is a collaboration between the university’s Office of Career Services and the School of Business Office of Career Services. Students arrange their own internships and apply for the fellowship which pays the award at the conclusion of the summer.

According to Noah Simon, director of the University at Albany Office of Career Services, there are many benefits to the fellowship. He said, “It will drive student interest, encouraging them to see the value in nonprofits. It integrates our students into the community and keeps students in the area by forming connections. It also increases UAlbany’s positive engagement in the community.”

Sweeney noted that 20 minutes after the Massry gift was announced, the phone started ringing. Nonprofits were interested. She said, “The program supports students and the community. It will encourage more business students to look at nonprofits.”

The Massry Fellowship may encourage others to fund internships for nonprofits. Sweeney said, “We hope that this is a trend. I am optimistic that UAlbany alumni will consider funding similar internship programs, possibly downstate or in other areas.”
Involvement in research at the School of Business is not limited to faculty. Undergraduate and graduate students regularly engage in high-quality research.

**FINANCIAL ANALYST HONORS PROGRAM**

A research thesis is required of all seniors in the Financial Analyst Honors Program. They may choose topics from a professor-generated list or develop their own. Associate Professor David Smith said, “Fewer than half the students use ours. Many students read intensively in finance during the summer, record ideas that come to them and propose the ideas to their professors who help form them into testable hypotheses. Some of the very best thesis projects have come from this process.”

FAH student research is often selected for inclusion in the prestigious Economics Scholars Program for Undergraduate Research, held at the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas each spring.

**MBA**

Graduate students in the newly created MBA concentration in finance will write a thesis, as will those studying marketing and entrepreneurship. Student topics are approved by a faculty adviser. Associate Dean Hany Shawky, architect of the revamped program, said, “The topic will be one that advances the student’s understanding of the practice in that industry. The research thesis is expected to include a literature survey, data, hypothesis testing and findings.” Students will present their work to an audience of faculty, students and alumni.

An annual research forum presents the final projects of working professionals in the Evening MBA Program. 2016 will mark the 15-year anniversary of the forum. Students choose a topic in management, marketing, nanotechnology, new-venture development, finance, information technology management or tax.

This spring, Anthony Califano’s project, “Cloud Defense: How Cloud Computing Can Help Secure the Smart Grid Against Distributed Denial of Service Attacks,” was chosen for a presentation at the New York State Cyber Security Conference 10th Annual Symposium on Information Assurance. Califano ’15, digital media business manager for the New York State Office of the State Comptroller, submitted his paper at the urging of MBA grad Ersin Dincelli ’12, a doctoral student working under ITM Chair Sanjay Goel.

**OPPORTUNITIES EXIST FRESHMAN TO SENIOR YEAR**

All students accepted into UAlbany’s Honors College participate in research and complete a thesis under the direction of a professor. This year, School of Business honor student Courtney Stern ’15 worked with Accounting Chair Ingrid Fisher, Richard Pino ’15 with Assistant Professor Dennis Caplan and Morgan Rosh ’15 with Marketing Chair Suraj Commuri.

Individual professors also involve students in their research. Students help lecturer and Director of Accounting Programs, Mark Hughes, gather and analyze data. Hughes also involves freshmen in the Living Learning Community he leads, World of Accounting, in the annual Informatics Ph.D. Research Conference.

As part of a SUNY-sponsored undergraduate research initiative, Assistant Professor Yuan Hong is supervising the work of two students who are developing privacy-preserving techniques for cyber-physical systems, such as smart grid and intelligent transportation systems. Each student is expected to finish one research paper and submit a report to SUNY.
students create new opportunities

Establish Clubs in Information Technology and Digital Forensics

Members of the executive boards of ISACA and the Digital Forensics Association

*Front row:* DFA Co-President Jesus Nunez-Arenas, ISACA Secretary Tony Breuning, DFA Co-President Rosa Bautista, ISACA Treasurer Marielle Gonzales, DFA Secretary Aneeda Rahaman, ISACA President Dominick Foti

*Back row:* DFA Vice President and ISACA External Relations Chair Wayne McKellar, DFA Treasurer Miguel Nunez, DFA Faculty Adviser Dr. Justin Giboney, ISACA Community Service Chair Isaac Dallas, ISACA Faculty Adviser Dr. Sanjay Goel, ISACA Vice President Jason Wolbrom
Last fall, Jesus Nunez-Arenas ‘17 and Rosa Bautista ‘16 were on a similar quest. Nunez-Arenas had begun classes in the newly created bachelor’s degree in digital forensics and was hoping to join a club that built on his major. Bautista found digital forensics as a freshman, when she was assigned to a work-study position doing research with ITM professor Sanjay Goel. She enrolled in the trailblazing program in digital forensics and sought a club that connected people with an interest in cyber security. Bautista and Nunez-Arenas found common ground as the Digital Forensics Association was born.

This fall, the pair share the presidency of the DFA. The group has been approved by the student association as an official university club and by the School of Business Deans Leadership Council. Their first project was participation in Relay for Life, a major fundraising event at UAlbany. The DFA has a core of students enrolled in the digital forensics major and has attracted students from a variety of disciplines, including criminal justice, psychology and political science, as well as business majors. They have grown to 25 members.

As the second year of the undergraduate degree in digital forensics began, the group’s first order of business was to prepare fellow students for the universitywide career fair. A program on career professionalism offered suggestions on how to make the most of limited time with a recruiter, using buzzwords and incorporating pertinent technical skills into the conversation.

Included in the DFA plans are campuswide scavenger hunts using crime scene investigation techniques they learned in class and hack-a-thons. Nunez-Arenas explained that a hack-a-thon does not necessarily involve hacking. He said, “It’s a 24 hour event that involves creating applications.”

Bautista and Nunez-Arenas stressed the inclusive nature of the club. Nunez-Arenas said, “Our goal is to promote careers in information technology to women, minorities, LGBTQ and the younger generation.” Though those of us who graduated years ago assume that all students are tech-savvy, it is not the case. Nunez-Arenas, originally a criminal justice major, said, “In high school I did not think about computers. I had no idea what we could do.”

Bautista, who will begin work in technology risk advisory for EY after graduation, said, “As we get the organization off the ground, we are building connections with other campus groups, people who have a stake in cyber security. The field is so new and so necessary.”

Wayne McKeller ’16 is vice president of the Digital Forensics Association and also sits on the executive board of ISACA, an information technology club that also launched last fall. Like the finance-oriented University at Albany School of Business Investment Club, ISACA has an application process. There is room for 30 in the group and 90 applied for those spaces. Because they limit membership, ISACA is not eligible for student association funding.

According to McKeller, the groups complement each other. He said, “The two clubs differ in that ISACA aims to teach students real-world technologies and skills that are being used in the workforce. We use professionals to speak to students and teach them whatever skill allows them to excel at their particular job. DFA works to spread awareness about the career possibilities within digital forensics and also serves to build digital forensics and information security technical skill sets for our members.

ISACA president Dominick Foti, a dual major in accounting and business with a concentration in ITM, said the group would like more alumni speakers. Noting that the vice president of the club is in the Financial Analyst Honors Program, Foti said, “We are looking for alumni to present on information technology even if they do not work in the field. For instance, how does IT work with your job?” He plans to provide members with opportunities to connect with companies ranging from large consulting firms to boutique security companies. Recent ISACA speakers include Anthony D’Alessandro ’07, talent acquisition manager for Twitter and the Global IT Head for General Electric Chris Catalano MBA ’12.

In the spring, ISACA hopes to give back to the community by developing information technology consulting teams to assist nonprofits and startups. Services would be donated or offered at a minimal cost.

If you are interested in speaking on how information technology affects your work, ISACA would like to hear from you.

The Digital Forensics Association would like to tap into the network of alumni working in multiple areas of technology to develop mentoring relationships and to sponsor events.
“As you sit here today, know that the most important time to focus on a brand is when it’s being launched. That’s when the buzz is most important. Today you are standing in front of a clean whiteboard ready to create your brand. If you define it with passion, confidence, preparedness, humor, humility and appreciation, if you support it with patience and flexibility, and if you go the extra yard when called for, your chances of success will increase immeasurably. Your brand is your reputation, it’s what you stand for, it’s what you embody and it’s what others will define you by. In every walk of life, always contemplate the possible implications of your decisions and actions on your brand.

UAlbany has given you the skill set to succeed in the workplace and in life. Now it’s up to you to mold them into a successful brand and sell it. Good luck to you on this exciting journey, and congratulations to you, the Class of 2015.”

Excerpt from commencement address by Michael Weilheimer ’83, vice president at Eaton Vance

“The single most inspirational and the single most influential person in my life is my mother. About 10 years ago she brought me and my siblings to New York City from Sierra Leone, West Africa, after we lost my father to cancer. With no college degree, just a high-school education, my mother worked 16 hours a day, six days of the week.

We lived in a disadvantaged neighborhood that was dominated by crime. We lived in a one bedroom apartment; my mother and my sister shared a bedroom, my brothers and I occupied the living room. After analyzing our living situation, I came to the conclusion that my mother had done her very best, and that it was now left to me and my siblings to improve the family’s socio-economic status.

That was when I chose education. That was when I chose this great institution. A school with great faculty members, a great alumni network and absolutely great student organizations.

The University at Albany has changed my life. The University at Albany has changed our lives.”

Excerpt from commencement address by graduating senior Lassamy Sesay ’15
THE CLASS OF 2015
Amy Knapp ’97
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
CORSAIR CAPITAL

Early in her career, one of Amy Knapp’s audit clients told her they were looking for a chief financial officer. Knapp offered to spread the word. But the client, Corsair Capital, said they actually wanted her. At the age of 25, Knapp became a CFO.

Accepting the position with Corsair, then a small team within J.P. Morgan, was not an easy decision for Knapp. After dabbling in language classes, she settled on a degree in accounting for its clear professional path and the opportunity for a linear career with a big six firm. Knapp said, “With a big firm, you get into the current and off you go. For many reasons, this decision meant stepping out of the current.”

It was a long way from her hometown of Perry, New York, population 6,000, in Western New York. Knapp had chosen the University of Albany because it was a big school in a city and not too close to home, pushing herself out of her comfort zone, a theme that has repeated itself throughout her career. Her very first visit to New York City was for an interview for an internship with Coopers & Lybrand. She made the trip alone, navigated the city and got the job. After Coopers, she moved to J.P. Morgan where her work in private equity brought her the opportunity to “step out of the current” once again and make her own way.

When Corsair spun off from J.P. Morgan in 2006, their staff numbered nine, and they managed private equity assets of $1 billion. Today Corsair employs nearly 50 people and manages assets of more than $5.5 billion, with offices in New York and London. Knapp not only continued her work as CFO but also became the chief operating officer.

Along the way, Knapp earned an MBA from the New York University Stern School of Business. She lives in Manhattan with her partner, Kevin, and 7-year-old daughter, Naomi.

Knapp recently joined the School of Business Dean’s Advisory Board and created a scholarship for freshmen from Wyoming County. She said, “My roots are strong and important to me. It was a great opportunity for me to give back to the area I grew up in and to the University at Albany at the same time. The school painted a very clear picture of the path an accounting degree could open up for me. By providing a scholarship to a qualifying freshman from my hometown, I hope to make that path clearer a little sooner for high-school students who may be looking for concrete ideas and opportunities for their educational and professional development.”

Her advice to the award recipient and other students? Don’t underestimate your potential and be prepared to work hard. She said, “UAlbany provides a ton of tools, but assume that you will have to work for your success.” Knapp also advises students to take risks, as she did, when opportunities present themselves.
John Stevens MBA ’95
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
INFINIGY

In 1996, the wireless industry was brand-new. Cell phones were shaped like bricks and used mostly in cars. As John Stevens, an engineer, considered career options, he was told, “Wireless is a fad,” and knew instantly that the evolving field was where he wanted to be. Stevens said, “I liked it because it was new. We had no idea what would happen.”

After earning a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering at the University of Colorado Boulder in 1987, Stevens took a job at Clough Harbour to meet the requirements for an engineering license, concurrently earning an MBA through the evening program at the University at Albany. He immediately connected with the working professionals studying business. Stevens took a course with doctoral students in the ITM program. He said, “It totally blew me away. After that, I wanted a Ph.D., but had no money and had to work.”

Equipped with engineering credentials and an MBA, Stevens started his career in the wireless industry – a technical job at Sprint. Within one year he was promoted into management. When Sprint launched its commercial market, Stevens played a major role as director of engineering and operations. Stevens’s excitement with Sprint came to a screeching halt when the company grew from spunky innovator to a bureaucracy. Stevens said, “I knew that I would struggle in the corporate setting.”

Stevens jumped to Sprint vendor, SBA Communications. He said, “I moved from a slow-moving train to a fast-moving train.” He was there when the company went public in 1999 and when the Internet bubble burst in 2001. He said, “Our company originally had the discipline to not do bad deals, but I was part of the problem as I aggressively pushed for stretching our M&A portfolio.” The stock price rocketed from $9 to $57 per share during his tenure as chief technology officer. After the collapse, shares were worth 19 cents. Stevens noted that SBA survived and is now successful. He said, “It was time for me to go. I outlived my usefulness.” He called it one of his “spectacular failures,” noting that every entrepreneur has them.

In 2002, he went out on his own to create Infinigy, a wireless service that designs and builds telecommunication networks. They owe their success to a strong customer focus. As Stevens put it, “We are a service company that happens to do engineering. We design and build the ugly towers.” He started with one office in Atlanta and soon opened another in Albany, New York. The company has grown from $450,000 to $13 million in revenue and has added offices in New Jersey, Colorado and California.

Stevens regularly takes on new projects with Infinigy, having recently spent six months in Myanmar creating their first wireless network, and is always ready for something new. The entrepreneur recently sold 70 percent of Infinigy to a public company and has agreed to stay on as CEO for four years.

Along the way, Stevens discovered some things about himself. He said, “I’m not a great engineer, but I like running a company,” adding, “You have to gamble everything to be successful.” His advice to student entrepreneurs, besides being willing to take risks, is to work for someone else before starting their own businesses so that they can see how the world works.

Stevens grew up in Canajoharie. He lives with his wife Kimberly, a former teacher, and his youngest daughter, Tess, in Rexford, New York. His daughter Maggie attends the Savannah College of Art and Design for interior design and son Ethan attends the University of Colorado for biochemistry. Upon retirement, Stevens plans to hike the length of the Appalachian Trail. He raises funds for Warriors4Wireless, which trains veterans for jobs in the wireless industry.
New Professors: Cyber Security, Entrepreneurship and Marketing

BILL WALES
Standish Professor of Entrepreneurship Management/Entrepreneurship
“We are not simply going to talk about entrepreneurship, we are going to learn about value creation by doing it. I expect students to be ready to dive in and experiment with their ideas and to be up to the challenge of building and starting something meaningful.”

• Ph.D. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, management with a specialization in entrepreneurship
• M.S. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, industrial and management engineering
• B.S. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, information technology
• Research interests: Corporate entrepreneurship, firm-level strategic behavior, social entrepreneurship

VICTORIA KISEKKA
Information Technology Management/Digital Forensics
“I was attracted to UAlbany by the diversity of students and faculty. I feel at home here and see myself being here long-term. I appreciate the strong emphasis on the student, ensuring that they learn and have the careers that they are trained for.”

• Ph.D. University at Buffalo, management science and systems
• M.S. Drexel University, information systems
• B.S. Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, computer science
• Research interests: Information assurance, organizational resilience, healthcare information technologies and disaster response and recovery

IOANNIS KAREKLAS ’03
Marketing
“I am an alum! Returning to UAlbany truly feels like returning home. My degrees from UAlbany opened many doors for me, and I want to give back to the school that gave me so much.”

• Ph.D. University of Connecticut, business administration with a concentration in marketing
• MBA Binghamton University, concentration in marketing
• B.S. University at Albany, business with a concentration in marketing/B.A. communication
• Research interests: Advertising effectiveness, sensory perception, and public policy issues related to pro-social behaviors

STEPHANIE BLACK
Management/Entrepreneurship
“My goal in life is to always improve my village. Although I am but one individual, I believe that it is important for each of us to try to improve the world around us and strive to make a difference in the lives of others. I hope to impact the lives of others through my research as well as my teaching.”

• Ph.D. University of Texas at San Antonio, management
• MBA/MIM Thunderbird School of Global Management, international business
• B.A. Southern Methodist University, foreign languages, history and business
• Research interests: Social networks, innovation, institutional environments, dynamic capabilities and entrepreneurship

Assistant Professor Ioannis Kareklas ’03, Assistant Professor Victoria Kisekka and Associate Professor Bill Wales.
Introducing High-School Students to Accounting

School of Business staff and alumni introduced more than 25 minority high-school juniors to campus life and the accounting profession through Career Opportunities in the Accounting Profession, sponsored by the New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants. The School of Business is one of 11 college campuses in New York State to offer the three-day residential program. Here COAP students are on a site visit to The Bonadio Group.

Richard Burton Esq. ’86 published “Employees Gone Wild” and “Godsent,” the latter optioned as a major motion picture by Imprint Entertainment.

Caleb J. Cornelius ’09, was named associate vice president of student business services for Broward College in Fort Lauderdale.

Michael Glaser BS ’94 was named firmwide chair of the corporate group for Perkins Coie LLP.

Sunil Mahabeer, C.P.M. ’02 was named vice president of global sourcing for Barclays Capital.

Sharmaine Moseley ’93, MBA ’13 was named executive director of the City of San Diego Citizens’ Review Board on Police Practices.

CONNECTIONS

Promoted?
Send your name, graduation year, new title, employer and city to businessalumniupdate@albany.edu to be included in a future issue.
Graduate accounting programs celebrate commencement at a reception in May.