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# MARRIOTT

ALUMNI MAGAZINE



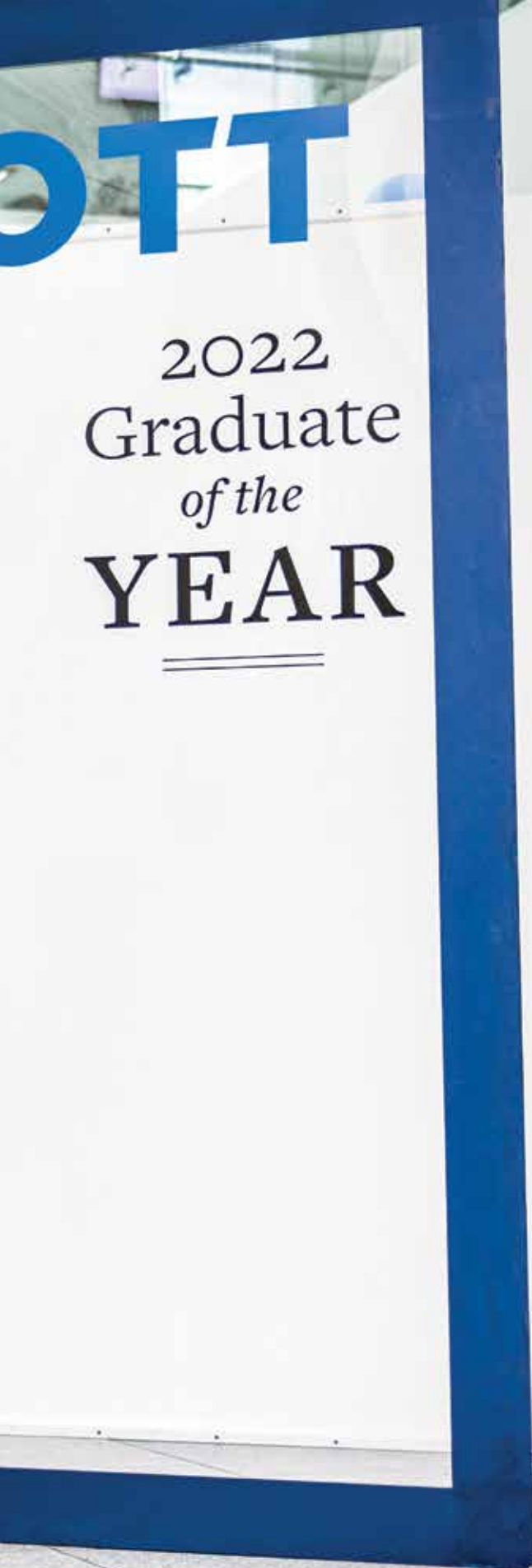
SUMMER 2022

# MARRIO

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

SPRING 2022





# MARRIOTT

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ISSUE Summer 2022

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**PUBLISHER** Brigitte C. Madrian  
**MANAGING EDITOR** Andrew P. Cuthbert  
**EDITOR** Kellene Ricks Adams  
**ART DIRECTOR** Jon G. Woidka  
**COPY EDITOR** Krista Holmes Hanby  
**ASSISTANT EDITOR** Shirleen M. Saunders

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS, EDITORS,  
DESIGNERS, & PHOTOGRAPHERS**

Michelle Baughan  
Bethany Benham  
Sarah Calvert  
Robert G. Gardner  
Kaylee Hepburn  
Todd Hollingshead  
Karly Lay  
Chadwick Little  
Marissa Lundeen  
Ashley McBride  
Mike Miller  
Zachary A. Miller  
Eden Nielsen  
Angela Ricks

**MAGAZINE DESIGN** BYU Brand & Creative

---

**ALL COMMUNICATION SHOULD BE SENT TO**

*Marriott Alumni Magazine*

490 Tanner Building

Brigham Young University

Provo, UT 84602

**PHONE:** 801-422-7696

**EMAIL:** [marriottmag@byu.edu](mailto:marriottmag@byu.edu)

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◀ A BYU MARRIOTT GRAD POSES WITH ONE OF SEVERAL PHOTO OPS SET UP IN THE ATRIUM OF THE TANNER BUILDING. FOLLOWING THE LIFTING OF COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS, ALMOST 1,400 MEMBERS OF THE BYU MARRIOTT CLASS OF 2022 PARTICIPATED IN THE FIRST IN-PERSON GRADUATION CEREMONIES SINCE 2019. PHOTO COURTESY OF BYU PHOTO.

It sounds like a glorified 401(k). • My roommate is literally *always* studying econ. I've never seen him sleep. • Ughhhhhhhh, stairs. • Is stress decorating something I should be concerned about? • Man, have you ever read *King Lear*? That dude is a beast. Um, actually he's pretty messed up. • I have \$60K from summer sales that is pretty liquid. • Dating her is turning out to be pretty expensive. • Good luck on the test! You too. Oh wait, you aren't in my class. Never mind. • That lecture blew my brain. • I can finish the outline in 20 minutes, tops. • Welcome to my hourly existential crisis. • When do you graduate? At this point, I have no idea. • Oh, today is a Friday Tuesday. I thought it was a Tuesday Tuesday. • They gave me a mentor, and it really helped. • I am great at hypotheticals. I run into issues when it gets real. • I wonder how many people have fallen down these stairs. • When I am in charge, I am rendering cover letters obsolete. • I'd rather sell an organ than study for the GRE again. • (Pointing to a toddler in the Tanner) He's a little young to be in college, don't you think? • Just Slack me because I never respond to texts. Slack just hits different. • This building is most definitely fireproof; the whole thing is like solid granite. • I need to reevaluate my life. • They should offer popcorn during lecture series. • Saying it's a joke doesn't make it a joke. • Girl, why are you worried? You literally aced the practice questions. • And then he told me he reads his scriptures for five hours every Sunday. • E-commerce stresses me out. • I keep getting job offers unrelated to my major. • Sometimes I just want to sleep. Like all the time. • Dude, I ate cereal with water instead of milk—and that will wreck you. • Accounting pickup lines just haven't worked out for me. • So, cryptocurrency is like Kohl's Cash. • I decided I don't want to make any career decisions, so I applied to grad school. • I wonder how many calories I burn studying econ. • Have you noticed how many people check themselves out in the reflection of the windows here? • The easiest way to explain the assignment is that you are basically playing data Jenga. • It's definitely better to study on campus; my apartment has too many snacks. • I know if I sit down and focus it will make sense. • I've heard the CPA exam isn't taxing at all. Get it? It's a joke. • It was very wise advice. I'm just not at that place right now. • Sometimes I just really want a beard.

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Cover illustration by Jon Krause









# THE NIL GAME: A NEW DAY FOR COLLEGIATE ATHLETES

*Take a look at new NCAA name, image, and likeness guidelines and how BYU is coaching athletes to compete on the NIL playing field.*



**LIKE MANY PEOPLE HER AGE,** Shaylee Gonzales thought it would be fun to post YouTube videos documenting her vacations and good times while she was in high school. When TikTok, the short-form video app, hit the United States, Gonzales found a whole new way to have fun and share her creativity: through snappy dance and basketball videos. And people responded—first following her accounts by thousands and eventually by hundreds of thousands.

Gonzales's social media following was boosted by her success on the court once she joined the BYU women's basketball team. During 2018–19, as a freshman, Gonzales led the Cougars in scoring, helped BYU win a West Coast Conference title, and was named to the All-Conference First Team. Although a torn ACL caused her to miss the next season, in 2020–21 she stepped right back in, earning the title of West Coast Conference Co-Player of the Year. This season, she averaged a career-best 18 points per game and led the Cougars to their highest ranking in program history.

**BY JORDAN  
CHRISTIANSEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY BYU PHOTO**



But while most other social media personalities were getting paid for their views, Gonzales and her fellow collegiate athletes around the country were not. The reason? The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the governing body for most of American college athletics, had proclaimed “amateurism” as the law of the land. Article 12 in the NCAA bylaws forbade college athletes to earn “such compensation . . . for value or utility that the student-athlete may have for the employer because of the publicity, reputation, fame, or personal following that he or she has obtained because of athletics ability” or “to advertise, recommend, or promote directly the sale or use of a commercial product or service of any kind.”

In summary, the NCAA prohibited Gonzales and other student-athletes from using their name, image, or likeness (NIL) to make money. Violations of this rule would lead to penalties such as player suspension, loss of NCAA eligibility, and sanctions against the offender’s university.

So despite amassing more than 420,000 followers across her social media channels, Gonzales couldn’t collect a cent. She also couldn’t sign with an organization to create branded content despite having companies constantly reaching out to partner with her.

That all changed on July 1, 2021, when after more than 100 years of amateurism, the NCAA begrudgingly agreed to let collegiate athletes profit off of NIL—changing the game for Gonzales, her fellow BYU athletes, and every college athletic department in the nation.

## Life Before

To understand the magnitude of the wave that has crashed over collegiate athletics, let’s take a brief look at the fight over paying student-athletes, which has been going on for more than a century.

Since the first college football game took place between Rutgers and Princeton in 1869, the popularity of intercollegiate athletics has swept across the country. As a result, the coin of the realm for universities has become, well, coins. As money poured in from spectators, schools sought to entice top athletes to compete for them—and then kept a large share of the profit for themselves. In line with the money-driven tactics of early collegiate sports, bribes were offered to players,

*“When I heard they were going to change the rule, I was super excited because I had built that following and could make some good money from it.”*



and massive stadiums were built, including the 70,000-seat Yale Bowl in 1914.

In 1906, as various accusations of cheating escalated, the NCAA was created to regulate college sports and to codify regulations behind athletic activities at universities. From the start, the NCAA preached amateurism, ostensibly to maintain the high-brow ideal that college students play merely for the love of sport and should be held distinct from professionals.

At first the NCAA went so far as to prevent universities from offering athletic scholarships, but in 1950 students were finally allowed to receive financial awards based solely on athletic ability. These awards typically included money for tuition, room, board, fees, and required books.

Not only were universities regulated in what they could offer, but student-athletes were also prevented from financially benefiting in any way from their status as athletes. In fact, even the term *student-athlete* was half a public-relations ploy, half a legal term to avoid paying collegiate athletes. After Ray Dennison died from a head injury in 1955 while playing college football at Fort Lewis A&M (now Fort Lewis College), his wife filed for workers’ compensation death benefits. In response, the NCAA coined the term *student-athlete* to support the idea that these were students merely engaging in

an extracurricular activity. The Colorado Supreme Court agreed, as have other courts over the ensuing decades.

Meanwhile, as college students trained and competed, coaches’ salaries climbed, ticket sales grew, and universities became famous (or infamous) both for their academic reputations and also for how well their athletic teams performed.

But the real kicker came in the Supreme Court case *NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*. Prior to this ruling, radio and television rights fees added to university coffers, but the NCAA regulated how often universities’ football games would be shown on television each season. A group of universities rebelled against this rule in 1984, filing a suit claiming the NCAA’s actions were a restraint of trade. The Supreme Court agreed.

As a result, television now provides the bulk of revenue for the NCAA, collegiate athletic conferences, and university athletics. For example, in 2021 media rights for the NCAA men’s basketball tournament totaled about \$850 million, and by 2025 that number is projected to reach \$1 billion. The Southeastern Conference (SEC), one of the top football conferences in the nation, signed a deal with ABC in 2020 in which the company will pay the conference and its members \$300 million a year for ABC to become the exclusive home of SEC football and men’s



basketball. This deal is on top of an additional contract that gives ABC the rights to air more than 1,900 SEC games each year on ESPN and the SEC Network. Even more incredibly, those contracts will likely be reworked for increased value when Oklahoma and Texas join the conference sometime in the next few years.

The surge in broadcast revenue led to athletic departments reporting revenues of \$14.4 billion to the US Department of Education in 2019, a figure almost triple the \$4.9 billion reported in 2004.

Such high cash flow could not be ignored, especially when paired with stories of students scrimping by to pay for meals and stories of the NCAA's heavy-handedness in punishing rule breakers. In 2014, for example, Georgia running back and future NFL Pro Bowl player Todd Gurley was suspended by the NCAA for four games because he received \$3,000 in exchange for signing autographs on memorabilia.

### **A New Age**

As college athletics became a multibillion-dollar business, universities could still only offer athletes tuition, books, and room and board. And between the NCAA regulating athletes' ability to make money and the high demands placed on athletes, many students went hungry or worked graveyard shifts to make ends meet. While typical students try to fit work in between classes and studying, much of that free time for athletes is taken up with practices, meetings, and travel, leaving little time to earn cash. And if student-athletes aren't receiving scholarship help, their situation is even worse.

Thanks in large part to an increasing drumbeat from fans, the media, and the athletes themselves claiming that the NCAA, universities, coaches, and others were all reaping huge financial gains from college athletics while the athletes themselves received comparatively nothing, the NCAA leadership council finally allowed universities to expand the benefits given to their athletes. Scholarships could now include funds that met the federal definition of cost of attendance established at each school. This decision allowed more money to be provided to help cover additional academic expenses outside of tuition, fees, and books, including

transportation. Universities were allowed to provide more meals and snacks as well.

Emboldened but not satisfied, advocates pressed on. Finally, a one-two punch knocked out the NCAA's stranglehold on athletes' name, image, and likeness. The first jab came in September 2019 when California passed legislation prohibiting its colleges and universities from punishing athletes who accepted endorsement money. Other states quickly followed suit.

Then on June 21, 2020, the knock out punch came when the United States Supreme Court ruled in a unanimous 9–0 decision that NCAA restrictions on “education-related benefits” violated antitrust law. In the majority decision, Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote, “Nowhere else in America can businesses get away with agreeing not to pay their workers a fair market rate on the theory that their product is defined by not paying their workers a fair market rate. . . . The NCAA is not above the law.” While the decision did not directly

deal with NIL, the NCAA could see which way the ball was rolling.

Just nine days later, on June 30, 2020, the NCAA adopted a temporary rule change allowing NIL activity with minimal guidelines. The next day, student-athletes were signing on the dotted line.

### **NIL at BYU**

For Gonzales, the change opened an array of opportunities. With the help of her business-minded parents, she picked up deals with companies such as Mountain America Credit Union and vintage clothing store Thrifthood, the latter of which capitalizes on her long-held love of fashion.

“When I heard they were going to change the rule, I was super excited because I had built that following and could make some good money from it,” she says. “As college athletes, we don't have time for jobs, so doing social media is a great way to make extra money.”

Indeed, one video featuring Gonzales and her teammates dancing—punctuated with a dunk by center Sara Hamson—has garnered upward of 5 million views. Another video from the early stages of the pandemic featuring women's basketball assistant coach Ray Stewart collected more than 700,000 views.

“We're in such a unique position as college athletes,” Gonzales says. “People love to see behind the scenes to know what you're doing. And a lot of people feel connected—when they turn around and watch the games, they love my team too.”



“Shaylee has such a phenomenal following, and now she can maximize her potential,” says Gary Veron, BYU’s associate athletic director for student-athlete experience. “It alleviates a lot of financial stress and makes her feel better about being at BYU. She benefits BYU, and BYU benefits her. We enhance our brand, and she gets what she deserves.”

The speedy demise of the NCAA’s NIL restrictions has created a mess of a response by schools. With guidance from the NCAA at a minimum, schools’ main guidelines have come from state law, and every state is different from the others. In fact, Utah is one of a few states to have no NIL law whatsoever. Due to this disorganization, student-athletes have often been left to fend for themselves while schools have tried to sort through the chaos.

BYU, however, was ready for this change. Months before NIL rules were relaxed, Veron, BYU football coach Kalani Sitake, and other members of the football staff had discussed at length ways they could bring in and develop their players—not just on the field but in every phase of life. Ultimately, they decided to establish a new program. They called it Built4Life.

### **Built4Life**

According to the program’s website, “Built4Life is a program designed to support student-athletes in developing critical life skills, facilitating appropriate professional engagement, making classroom success directly relevant to future opportunities, and preparing them for life beyond college athletics, all while they have opportunities to monetize their own name, image, and likeness. Built4Life is a comprehensive development program focused through four main pillars: Learn, Brand, Work, and Love.”

Built4Life started slowly, and it initially included only football players in the spring of 2021. However, by the time the Supreme Court announced its decision and the NCAA dropped its regulations two weeks later, all BYU student-athletes had valuable resources and a place to turn for help.

“We want to help our student-athletes be their best selves by maximizing their time at BYU so they can achieve their goals hereafter,” Veron says. “They collect classroom and real-world experiences, develop hard and soft

skills, become financially literate, and get connected with the brightest entrepreneurs in the valley.”

Veron and his office staff help ensure that all NIL deals signed by BYU athletes are compliant with NCAA and BYU regulations and are mutually beneficial to both sides. But Veron’s team also strives to provide student-athletes with a gamut of resources, such as how to start a nonprofit, how to file taxes, and how to take advantage of the Utah economy, which *US News & World Report* ranks the best in the nation.

“I think the reason why [Built4Life] has taken off in popularity is that it does encompass NIL, but in my mind that’s just a piece of the pie,” Veron says. “We could still accomplish 85 percent of what Built4Life is all about even if you take out NIL.”

To help facilitate their vision to provide as much support as possible for BYU athletes, representatives from the athletic department approached BYU Marriott School of Business dean Brigitte Madrian and received her blessing to start a new course for student-athletes. The class is cotaught by Veron and David Hart, BYU’s faculty athletic representative and an associate professor in the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics at BYU

Marriott. Hart says the course is “an executive lecture series on steroids.”

In the class, student-athletes hear from top industry leaders, develop a personal brand plan, and participate in service activities. The course teaches entrepreneurial concepts, explores case studies, and features insights from business leaders, including Derek Miller, president and CEO of the Salt Lake Chamber and Downtown Alliance and an MPA alum, and Blake Modersitzki, general partner at Pelion Venture Partners and a member of the BYU Marriott National Advisory Council.

“What we’re trying to accomplish is about your personal brand,” Hart says. “For example, you’re a student-athlete and have people approaching you and asking you to hashtag and this and that. You’ve now altered your social media presence. Is that who you want to represent? Is that how you want to portray yourself to the world professionally?”

“At the same time, your personal brand is much more than what you’re going to hashtag,” he continues. “We want these student-athletes to think more carefully about what all of that means put together. Getting them to think about what their brand is now and what that means for the long term is really what the class is about.”



**TYLER BATTY**



**JAREN HALL**







*“I think BYU was already ahead of the game, and now they not only offer opportunities through NIL, but they’re doing it for everybody. It speaks to the BYU network and how people care. And it will only get better.”*

### **Lessons That Last**

Tyler Batty, a BYU football defensive lineman, has used Built4Life’s resources to sign multiple endorsement deals and also to learn how to start his own nonprofit.

Batty grew up helping his parents raise and care for horses in Payson, Utah. He saw how riding and being around animals helped young people with physical and mental limitations to find increased joy and comfort. Taking some of the money from his NIL deals, Batty started Edward’s Hands, named after Edward Lamb, a young man with autism who has worked with Batty using equine therapy and who is the son of BYU football assistant head coach Ed Lamb.

Batty says, “I sat down with Gary Veron and Billy Nixon [director of player experience and equipment operations] and started talking about nonprofit and what we could do with it. This past summer we decided to file for nonprofit status just to make equine therapy more accessible for people who may not know about it or may not have the money. A lot of places that do equine therapy charge, and it’s not cheap.”

Edward’s Hands helps feed and take care of 15–20 horses and pays for riding equipment and other essential expenses. And through hard work and careful budgeting, Batty still has some NIL funds left over to provide for his family.

“The summer is a thin time—from May to August you’re scraping together what jobs you can while training and keeping your spot on the team,” Batty says. “The other part of the year you’re working a part-time job, saving, paying taxes on your scholarship, and taking classes. It was really tricky to balance for a lot of guys, even more so for walk-ons [nonscholarship athletes]. We’ll still work summer jobs and jobs during the season to pay for our expenses, but NIL has given guys some breathing room. Fans should be excited; it should only elevate the level of play as we have more time to prepare.”

Batty’s teammate BYU quarterback Jaren Hall has opted to take a careful approach when it comes to endorsements, signing an initial deal with Elevate Chiropractic and then partnering with only a few other organizations. Instead of seeing big money now,

Hall is looking into investing and explains that he and his teammates are grateful for the education they’re getting to be set up for the future.

“A lot of guys on our team are starting to get interested in the stock market, cryptocurrency, and real estate, but these things require money to get into,” Hall says. “I think a lot of guys see this as an opportunity to not only take care of their families but also to prepare for their futures. I think that’s the biggest draw for a lot of us.”

And while starters on the football team may get much of the attention, BYU has broken ground nationally in showing how NIL opportunities can do more than make the rich richer. A deal with Provo-based Built Bar will provide nonscholarship football players with enough money to cover tuition in exchange for promotion of its products, and an agreement with SmartyStreets gives every female student-athlete at BYU the chance to earn up to \$6,000 a year to highlight the company on social media and make appearances at events.

Time will tell how the nationwide NIL market will shake out. Some predict college NIL deals could be worth \$1 billion annually. With NIL deals, some companies will find value in them, and some won’t. Some college athletes will likely make thousands, others only enough to cover a few expenses. But for athletes at BYU, Built4Life will be there to help student-athletes with whatever their branding and financial goals may be.

“I think BYU was already ahead of the game, and now they not only offer opportunities through NIL, but they’re doing it for everybody,” Hall says. “It speaks to the BYU network and how people care. And it will only get better. We’re grateful—my family feels blessed, and I know other student-athletes feel the same. BYU has done well taking it on and making everyone feel like there’s an opportunity for them.” **M**

### **About the Author**

Jordan Christiansen is the marketing communications manager at Crucial Learning after stints at BYU with BYU Marriott and the athletic department. As a BYU and University of Oklahoma alum, he’s ready for the Cougars’ Big 12 era to begin. Christiansen lives in Mapleton, Utah, with his wife, Natalie, and their five children.

# Silicon Spread

For decades, the San Francisco Bay Area has been home to a majority of the leading tech companies in the US, earning the nickname Silicon Valley. In recent years, however, a growing number of those companies have left the West Coast, and tech startups are setting up headquarters in other states.



44

## THE NUMBER OF STATES THAT CHARGE CORPORATE INCOME TAX.

Nevada, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming do not charge corporate income tax, although four of those states—Nevada, Ohio, Texas, and Washington—do have a gross receipts tax.

Source: [files.taxfoundation.org/20210202165820/State-Corporate-Income-Tax-Rates-and-Brackets-for-2021.pdf](https://files.taxfoundation.org/20210202165820/State-Corporate-Income-Tax-Rates-and-Brackets-for-2021.pdf)



1ST

## THE RANKING THAT UTAH EARNED IN SEEK CAPITAL'S LIST OF THE BEST STATES TO START A BUSINESS.

This rank was based on a variety of factors, including employment statistics, cost of living, and business tax climate. Forbes also ranked Utah third in its most recent “Best States for Business.”

Sources: [forbes.com/sites/andrewdepietro/2019/11/13/best-worst-states-entrepreneurs-2020/?sh=34cbfbbc46a6](https://forbes.com/sites/andrewdepietro/2019/11/13/best-worst-states-entrepreneurs-2020/?sh=34cbfbbc46a6) and [forbes.com/best-states-for-business/list/#tab:overall](https://forbes.com/best-states-for-business/list/#tab:overall)



6,500+

**THE NUMBER OF STARTUP AND  
TECH COMPANIES IN UTAH.**

These companies stretch across the state—from Logan to St. George—according to Silicon Slopes, a statewide organization and the official moniker of Utah’s startup and tech community.

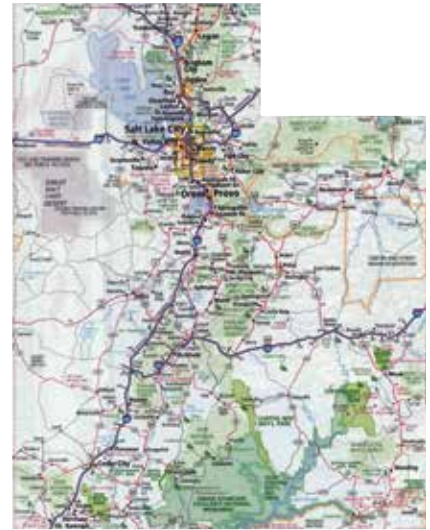
Source: [newsroom.siliconslopes.com/about](https://newsroom.siliconslopes.com/about)

25%

**THE APPROXIMATE PERCENTAGE  
OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES WHO  
ACTUALLY WORK IN THE CITIES  
WHERE THEIR TECH COMPANIES  
ARE HEADQUARTERED.**

According to data from Apple, Google, Intel, Cisco, Uber, and Salesforce, workers have become more geographically dispersed as companies grow, with increasing numbers of employees in flexible work schedules. One forecast estimates that 25 to 30 percent of the workforce will be working from home multiple days a week by the end of the pandemic.

Sources: [news.crunchbase.com/news/sf-bay-area-silicon-valley-startup-hq-exits/](https://news.crunchbase.com/news/sf-bay-area-silicon-valley-startup-hq-exits/) and [globalworkplaceanalytics.com/work-at-home-after-covid-19-forecast](https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/work-at-home-after-covid-19-forecast)



74



**THE NUMBER OF COMPANIES THAT MOVED THEIR  
HEADQUARTERS OUT OF CALIFORNIA IN THE FIRST SIX  
MONTHS OF 2021 ALONE.**

For at least a decade, Texas has been the top destination for tech companies leaving the Golden State. When identifying what they value most in a headquarters location, CEOs point to tax policy, regulatory climate, and talent availability.

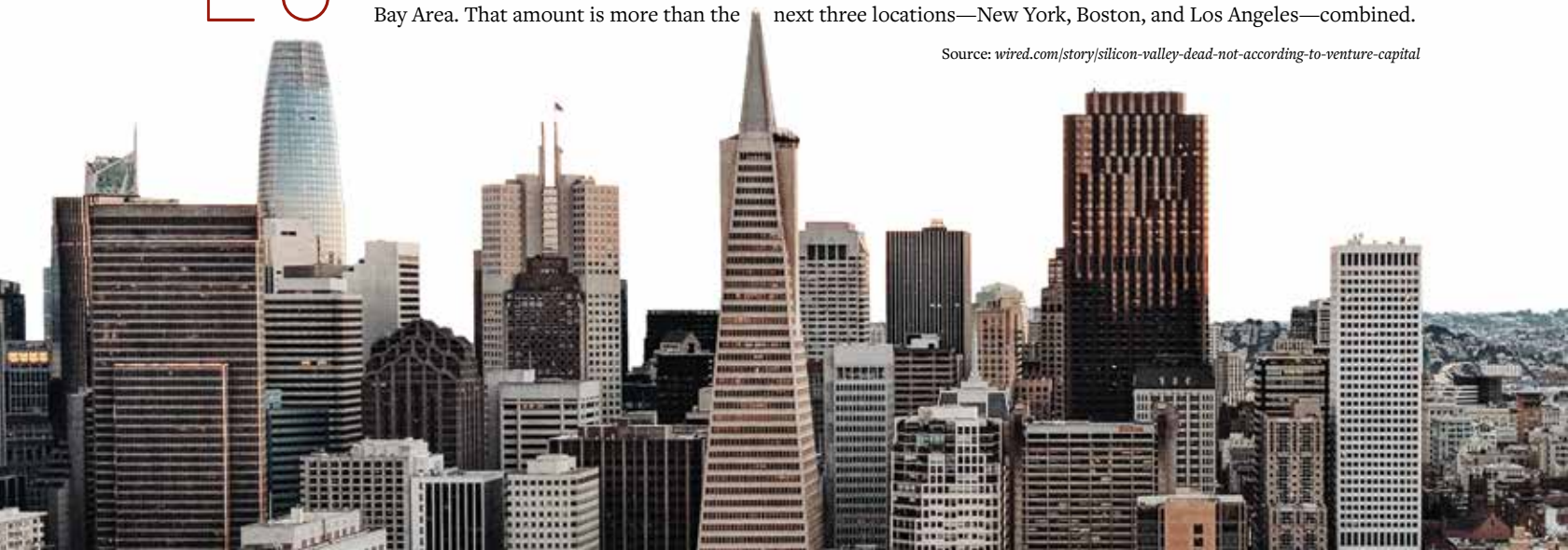
Source: [newsnationnow.com/us-news/west/companies-are-rapidly-leaving-california-study-finds-heres-where-they-are-going](https://newsnationnow.com/us-news/west/companies-are-rapidly-leaving-california-study-finds-heres-where-they-are-going)

\$25+

**THE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS SPENT ON VENTURE CAPITAL FUNDING IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA.**

Despite the companies leaving the state, venture capital spending in California remains strong. Of the \$69 billion that US-based venture funds invested in startups in the first quarter of 2021, more than one-third was spent in the Bay Area. That amount is more than the next three locations—New York, Boston, and Los Angeles—combined.

Source: [wired.com/story/silicon-valley-dead-not-according-to-venture-capital](https://wired.com/story/silicon-valley-dead-not-according-to-venture-capital)





# The Little CSR TREND

*Rewards or  
punishments? Both  
can put business  
leaders on a track  
toward corporate social  
responsibility (CSR).  
New research from the  
BYU Marriott School  
of Business explores  
these powerful  
inducements and offers  
direction for a world in  
need of altruism.*

## That Could



BY BREMEN LEAK

ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
JIM TSINGANOS





**A**t just 300 words—no more, no less—an August 2019 statement issued by the Business Roundtable and signed by 181 prominent CEOs challenged a half-century of convention. The purpose of a corporation, the statement said, is to benefit not just shareholders but also customers, employees, suppliers, and communities. “This new statement,” wrote a signatory, “affirms the essential role corporations can play in improving our society.”<sup>1</sup>

Why did the private sector—banks, retailers, and tech companies—feel the need for such a public commitment? One global corporate governance expert pointed to “a sustainability problem,” or “an understanding by most senior business leaders . . . that the market system is no longer working for the vast majority despite it being a huge generator of wealth for those at the top.”<sup>2</sup>

With stock prices increasingly tied to a company’s level of social or eco-consciousness as perceived by investors, another expert noted that powerful shareholder blocs were changing the corporate-governance game: “Confronted with the headwinds they themselves generated, American CEOs seem to have concluded that the best defence is a good offence.”<sup>3</sup>

Of course, the horizon looks a lot different now than it did in 2019. Battered by a worldwide pandemic, labor shortages, supply shortages, and increasingly visible climate change, business leaders are grappling with the reality that global problems, however far off or inconsequential they appeared before, have arrived and are affecting every aspect of our lives. Ignoring such problems won’t make them go away. But corporate social responsibility, or CSR, can do the next best thing—try to fix them.

The question now isn’t whether there’s enough collective pressure to nudge corporate decision-makers toward altruism. Clearly there is. Instead, the question is about which inducements work best to incentivize corporations to board the train.

What about rankings, raises, awards? What about socially responsible investment (SRI) funds—which now make up about one-third of all US assets under professional management—and all the cachet and earnings that come with them? What about exclusion from such a fund? What about protests or firings or hostile takeovers by shareholder activists? Thankfully, there’s a wagonload of research on this important topic, and much of it comes from the BYU Marriott School of Business.

## Sparkling Action

BYU Marriott assistant professor of organizational behavior Lisa Jones Christensen prefers the field to her comfortable office in the Tanner Building. She has studied poverty and entrepreneurship throughout Central America and East Africa, often working with migrants, refugees, and other marginalized groups. And she is increasingly concerned with the disproportionate effects of pandemics, climate change, pollution, and corruption on these groups. “It’s the poor who suffer most,” she says.

This concern is deep rooted. Before studying business and international development at BYU, Christensen spent a decade in industry at two Silicon Valley companies, riding the dot-com wave of the 1990s. It was a time of intense speculation, and there was money everywhere. But to what end? All that cash seemed to only widen the poverty gap. By the time the dot-com bubble burst, Christensen had quit her job, traveled abroad, gone back to school, and cofounded a nonprofit, HELP International, to aid Honduras after a devastating hurricane hit the country in 1998.

Christensen’s research has since evolved to consider both ends of the economic spectrum—rich and poor, powerful and powerless. After earning a PhD in organizational behavior from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and teaching there for almost a decade,



## Squeaky-Wheel Rankings: Notes from a CSR Reporter

By Bremen Leak

Earlier in my career, as a reporter in New York City, I covered CSR. The job was simple: follow the money, write about the impact. Around Thanksgiving each year, my team at *BusinessWeek* (now *Bloomberg Businessweek*) published a ranking of the most charitable companies in America. We used tax records, company reports, interviews, and consultations with industry watchdogs such as Charity Navigator to compile our list.

In 2005, Walmart ranked highest, with cash and in-kind donations worth \$188 million. Never mind that at the time the retailer was under fire for all sorts of business malfeasance—mistreatment of workers, mistreatment of suppliers, embezzlement in the boardroom. That year alone, two labor unions denounced the company, and Walmart responded with an aggressive ad campaign of its own. My suspicion is that after a year of protests, court cases, and all-around bad press, the title of America’s Most Generous Company could not have come sooner for Walmart shareholders.

To its credit, Walmart hasn’t stopped trying. In 2021 the retailer gave away \$1.4 billion in cash and in-kind donations, including \$43 million for COVID-19 response efforts. In a first for the company, Walmart also closed a \$2-billion bond for sustainability projects, and published its 16th annual ESG report. After Walmart’s CEO began a two-year term as chair of the Business Roundtable in 2020, *Barron’s*, a sister publication to the *Wall Street Journal*, published this provocative headline: “Walmart Is Adopting Socially Responsible Policies. ESG Funds Are Taking Notice.”

Maybe they are. I’m no longer a reporter, but I’m still fascinated by stories such as Walmart’s. In a bad year, CSR can offer a second chance at grace. But done right, corporate social responsibility offers more: a hopeful path forward.





she joined BYU Marriott as an assistant professor in 2016. Today, she's deeply interested in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, which have informed corporate giving programs since 2015. As of this writing, some 10,000 companies and 3,000 other organizations have embraced the UN Global Compact, a voluntary commitment by chief executives to support the SDGs. "They're not doing it simply for moral or courageous reasons," Christensen says. "They're also doing it because it's strategic, because it helps their bottom line."

And this gets back to the question at hand: Which inducements best incentivize corporations to choose the altruism route?

When companies prosper, so do their top decision-makers. This can take the form of bonuses, raises, awards, or positive press. On the flip side, business leaders who choose not to tackle global problems—or worse, who willingly create them—could be ousted.

And investors, who often have the power to push companies into or out of prosperity, increasingly demand action. So do regulators. In a recent editorial, the *Wall Street Journal* observed that "a leading issue [for the Federal Reserve] was the greening of the central bank. Not green as in money, but as in climate regulation." To pass the Fed's climate stress tests, banks would eventually need to liquidate fossil-fuel

assets and "adjust their balance sheets to take account of the risks from government climate policies like mandates, regulation or carbon taxes."<sup>4</sup> Those who wait to divest could be stuck holding trillions of dollars in stranded assets.

Such regulations are being driven by global targets to reduce carbon emissions, such as those agreed upon at the UN Climate Change Conference last November. Currently, the United States aims to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with several benchmarks along the way. Wouldn't it be better for companies to begin this transition before it's compulsory? "We're exploring that bleeding edge," Christensen says. "This stuff matters everywhere."

## A Lesson from Engine No. 1

At Clarkson University in Upstate New York, husband-and-wife assistant professors Ty and Alison Mackey recently coauthored a paper with Christensen, their former BYU Marriott classmate. The team's latest research explores whether pro-CSR investors ought to reward responsible companies or punish irresponsible ones. This research is based on modeling the Mackeys started a dozen years ago—sometime after meeting and marrying at BYU, earning master's and doctoral degrees, and becoming academics, but before investors paid as much attention to CSR activities as they do now.

"This was a crazy idea at first," Alison says, crediting Ty with the research concept, which was arguably ahead of its time. "We sent it to journals. People rejected it because it wasn't founded in reality."

By using game theory, the authors showed that if a large institutional investor wanted to influence firm managers to adopt socially responsible behavior and could either reward firms by creating an SRI fund (a carrot) or punish firms via shareholder activism (a stick), the stick would produce better results. "Across a pretty broad set of circumstances," Ty says,

"you're more likely to create more social good with the acquisition fund, punishing the worst rather than rewarding the best performers."

One reason the stick proved more effective, Alison says, is that carrots only work if you're really close to getting the carrot. Otherwise, why try?

After recruiting Christensen as a coauthor, as well as Jason Lepore from California Polytechnic State University, the Mackeys shopped their paper around again. Editors at the *Journal of Business Ethics* found the theory intriguing and liked the data, so they published it in November 2020.

In a surprising twist, the scenario Ty and Alison had researched for more than a decade played out one month later as Exxon Mobil made headlines while facing opposition from an activist investment firm called Engine No. 1.

"In December 2020, we start looking at an activist investor, Chris James, who invests in Exxon, gets enough board seats to start getting rid of management that's not sustainably oriented, and starts to shift the company," Alison says. "This sends shockwaves through the world in the sense that managers are starting to think, 'This could happen to me too.'"

In a nod to the 1930 children's book *The Little Engine That Could*, the *New York Times* called James's Engine No. 1—which seized three of Exxon's board seats in 2021—"the little hedge fund taking down big oil."<sup>5</sup> It was, the *New York Times* observed, a "stunning result [that] turned the sleepy world of boardroom elections into front-page news as climate activists declared a major triumph, and a blindsided Exxon was left to ponder its defeat."<sup>6</sup>

"In a sense," Alison reflects, "Exxon was exactly like our paper. They were the worst firm out there, and this investor said, 'Where could I do my best? I'm going to go influence this firm.'"

This type of influencing is hard to pull off, Ty adds. "It's trickier than just buying up shares for your ESG fund," he says, referring to a type of investing that uses environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria to evaluate company stock prices through nonfinancial factors such as sustainability plans, diversity statements, or data privacy policies.

To illustrate his point, Ty describes a recently derailed attempt by Citigroup and other investors to buy up coal mines and shut them

down. Because profits would eventually dry up, this action was a tough sell, even for ESG investors. As one Bloomberg columnist put it, "The people who would be good stewards of coal mines are the people who never ever want to own a coal mine. Oh well!"<sup>7</sup>

## The Problem with Full Steam Ahead

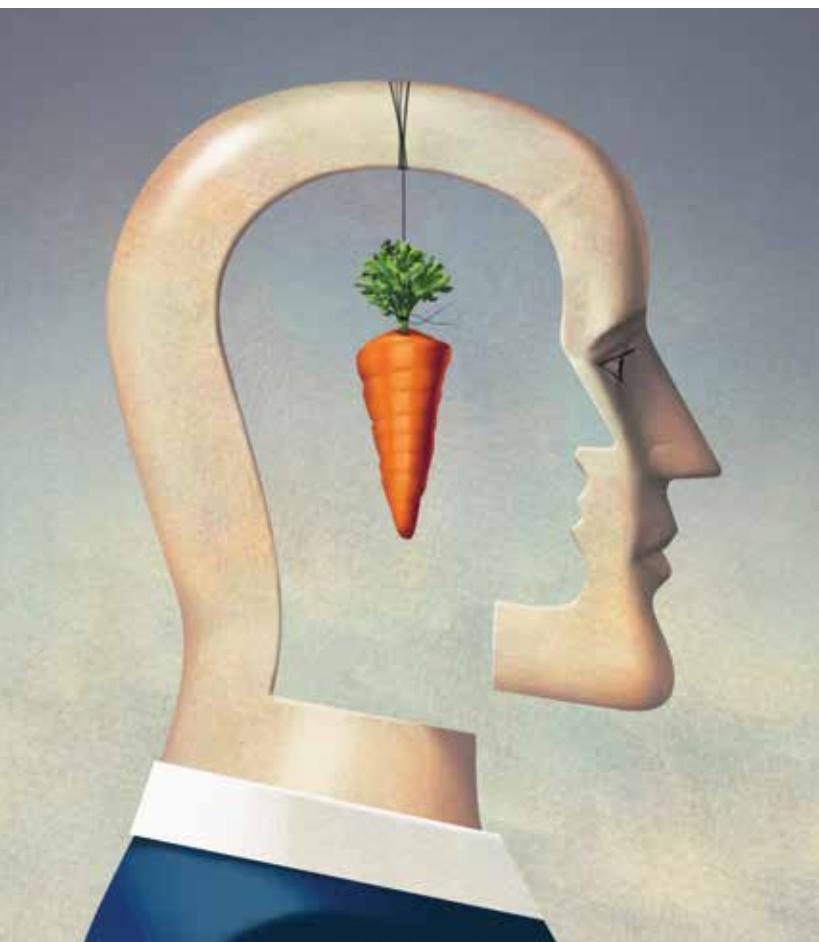
Back in the Tanner Building, BYU Marriott associate professor of strategy Ben Lewis has been researching inducements—carrots, mostly—for more than a decade. If anyone knows how companies respond to third-party rankings and ratings, it's him.

One of the first magazines to publish CSR rankings, Lewis says, was *Business Ethics*—not to be confused with the *Journal of Business Ethics*. The magazine sourced data for its 100 Best Corporate Citizens list from a research and analytics firm called KLD. While the magazine hoped its rankings would increase the incentives for publicly traded companies to act in a socially responsible manner, Lewis found that firms barely included on the inaugural list were actually penalized by investors. Why? Because shareholders still reigned supreme—not customers, not employees, not suppliers, not communities.

By penalized, Lewis means this: "You're actually better off financially if you don't make the list than if you're at the bottom," he explains. Lewis can access a business's profile and see how investors react to the news of its ranking, a reaction based on stock price variations. *Business Ethics* has never identified runners-up—the 101st or 102nd best corporate citizens, for example—and those businesses aren't affected by the rankings. But those companies on the bottom of the list, say 99th or 100th place, lose about 1.3 percent in value on the day of the announcement. That's because they appear to be in last place, far behind more committed, generous companies. It's an optics problem, but there's more to it. "If you're going to play the rankings game, you need to be all in," Lewis says.

Lewis coauthored a paper in 2018 about the *Business Ethics* rankings with another BYU Marriott associate professor, Chad Carlos, who teaches entrepreneurship. Both professors earned PhDs from Cornell University and joined BYU Marriott within a year of each other—Carlos in 2012, Lewis in 2013. In 2017, they coauthored a paper on "greenwashing," or environmental hypocrisy, and "greenhushing," or strategic silence. In it, they explored how companies can communicate CSR efforts, protect their reputation, and avoid corporate mishaps on social media.

"A timely example," Lewis and Carlos wrote in a blog post in 2018, was "the backlash levied against McDonald's after it rolled out a campaign in conjunction with International Women's Day to turn their iconic golden arches upside down to form a W as a signal of their support for women. Critics immediately labelled this as an act of hypocrisy, claiming that such a statement was inconsistent with McDonald's history of underpaying workers, many of whom are working mothers, and the company's active efforts to lobby against increases in minimum wages."<sup>8</sup>



# Sustainability in the Classroom: New Courses at BYU Marriott

Broadly, sustainability relates to our natural, built, and social domains. It's a topic in high demand at BYU Marriott, where new courses are shaping a generation of stewards. Here are two of them.

**GSCM 414: Introduction to Sustainable Business** is an undergraduate course taught by assistant professor of global supply chain Clark Pixton. The students, when sharing their motivations for taking the course, speak of career-defining opportunities: improving society, protecting the environment, innovating new solutions. Others speak of a moral obligation to God or future generations. Still others express a personal commitment to gain knowledge and lead by example. "I feel that the only way you make an impact," one student tells the class, "is by starting with yourself and then branching out as much as you can." Another student agrees, saying, "When I don't turn off lights or recycle, I don't see the effect, but when you multiply that by millions or billions, there's a huge effect. It's going to take every single one of us to have the collective impact we need, and this class will give us the tools we need to influence others in a positive way."

**MPA 689R: Equity and Inclusion in Public Service** is a graduate course led by Anthony Bates and Robert Christensen, professors in the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics. Equity and inclusion, they say, are not only constitutional and moral mandates but also requirements for just and sustainable societies. In this class, aspiring policymakers and public servants learn about social policy as well as solutions for equitable and inclusive organizations, which can elevate the human condition. In sincere and personal discussions on race, class, gender, and other topics, tears are sometimes shed. "What motivates a public servant is a higher sense of purpose," says Christensen. "It's knowing that you're working to help *all* of God's children thrive."



Going full steam when monitoring corporate accountability can be problematic, Carlos and Lewis conclude, particularly when those efforts stifle the very practices they intend to encourage.

## All Aboard

By now it should surprise no one that when the Business Roundtable issued its statement redefining the purpose of a corporation to serve a broader set of stakeholders, the statement was both celebrated and derided. On the one hand, the cultural shift it embodied was seen as a desirable move toward moral capitalism. On the other, it was viewed more as a hope than a strategy.

For Christensen, actions speak louder than words. In a paper coauthored with Adam Clark and Steve Kofford, both PhD candidates at the University of Utah, Christensen explores "stakeholder-oriented firms"—or companies that aim to benefit all stakeholders, not just shareholders. What makes stakeholder-oriented firms authentic in their CSR activity, the researchers ask. "When do you cross the threshold from ingenuine to genuine?" Kofford, Clark, and Christensen ask. "And what does it take to have altruistic motives? How do you know?"

Part of the answer, according to Christensen, "is that you only know when they start to lose money but they stick to it. Part of the answer is they do it early, before everyone else thinks it's got value." Authenticity matters. So does timing.

"CSR has become so strategic that there's just a short window when you can have an advantage," she says, "and then you just have parity. If everyone's divesting of sin stocks [such as gun manufacturers or casinos], if everyone's investing in women-owned businesses, you're not out front. You have no competitive advantage."

This knowledge can help investors identify companies motivated to repair—not fuel—global problems. "If you invest and you care, eventually you're going to want to put your money into a firm with genuine CSR," says Christensen.

Whatever form it takes—charitable donations, voluntary reductions in emissions or waste, improved worker conditions, support for vulnerable populations—genuine CSR activity can help a company win legitimacy, build a culture, and even gain a competitive advantage. Those business leaders who fail to act on their own may eventually face their own high-speed locomotive, compelling them to act or pay a price. There are carrots and sticks enough to nudge decision-makers down either track. **M**

## About the Author

*Bremen Leak, who earned a BA in communications from BYU in 2005, leads strategic planning for sustainability and resiliency at BYU.*

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# FIGURING IT OUT

Alum creates  
fantasyland of  
entrepreneur-  
ship by just  
“jumping in.”

BY KELLENE RICKS ADAMS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRADLEY SLADE

LEADING  
ALUMNI

Jay Davis

MANAGEMENT-ENTREPRENEURSHIP, 2008







**O**n the rare occasion that Jay Davis has a few minutes to relax, he enjoys reading in his office, surrounded by the thousands of books he's collected over the years. Davis loves to learn new things, and books have always been a valuable source of learning for him. However, much of the learning this entrepreneur and BYU Marriott 2008 management grad has done comes from simply being willing to figure it out, even when he had no idea what he was doing.

His drive to learn is one of the reasons Davis enjoyed his time at BYU Marriott so much. "At BYU, I wasn't just jumping through the hoops; I was learning," he explains. "I had access to professors I had heard about my whole life, and they opened their doors and hung out with me. I would stop by their offices and ask them all the questions I'd ever had, and it was this access to knowledge that inspired and drove me."

### Enjoying the Experience

Davis had heard about BYU professors throughout his childhood because both of his parents are BYU grads. "The BYU culture was strong in my family," says Davis. He grew up in Naperville, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, before moving to Colorado when he was 10, where his father worked as a management training consultant.

"My dad and I talked about two things growing up: business and the gospel," says Davis, who is the oldest of five children. "That set the stage for the rest of my life. I always planned on attending BYU, and I always planned on starting my own company."

A mission was also in his plans, and after his first year at BYU, Davis submitted his mission papers, expecting to receive a call to serve in the United States. "I was born with severe club feet," he explains. "For the first 18 months of my life, I wore full-leg casts, and I wore full-leg braces until I was 3. The doctors told my parents I'd need them until I was 19, but through a series of miracles and priesthood blessings, that wasn't necessary. However, because of the extra medical concerns, I anticipated serving in the states."

Davis was surprised to receive a call to serve in Brazil, where he walked 10 to 15 miles a day, something he never thought he would be able to do—but he figured it out. "It was a pretty crazy experience," he says. "But I learned at an early age that Heavenly Father has His own plans for us."

In addition to strengthening his testimony and confirming that the Lord had a plan for him, Davis's mission introduced him to people who deeply influenced his life. One of those influential people was his first mission companion, Eric King, who has been involved

with Davis in several of his ventures, including The Color Run and Pillow Cube, a company that makes pillows designed for side sleepers.

After returning home from his mission, Davis chose a major—business management with an emphasis in entrepreneurship—and dove in. "Those first two semesters back from my mission were my best semesters ever," he says. "I took all my prereqs and explored which business major I wanted. I even took an extra semester that I didn't need to take, simply because I was enjoying the learning experience so much."

### Jumping In

Eventually, however, Davis had to jump into real life—and he did so with surprising success considering that 2008 was not the best time to be starting a career. The Great Recession was in full swing, and the only job he could find was as a customer service rep for APX Alarm, which would later become Vivint. However, it took Davis only a short time to move from customer service to product development, largely because of his eagerness to figure it out.

"Any success I can claim comes from being the person who jumps in when no one else wants to," he says. "Over and over, something has come up that others either didn't know how to do or didn't want to do, and I'd

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raise my hand to volunteer. That willingness to learn, figure things out, and try new things has led to amazing experiences.”

Vivint’s roots were in selling and installing alarm systems, but around the time Davis came on board, the company branched out into home automation. When management asked for employees who had expertise or interest in expanding into home automation and product development, Davis volunteered. He didn’t always know how to do what was being asked, but he was more than willing to figure it out.

“I helped with developing new product offerings and the rebranding,” says Davis, whose efforts were rewarded with five promotions during his first two years on the job. “I got to do so many things that I had no business helping with, but it was so cool to be part of trying new things.”

Davis didn’t stay long at Vivint. His entrepreneurial eye started wandering, and he jumped at the chance to help King with a fledgling business he had joined called The Color Run. The Color Run is an untimed 5K run inspired by the Hindu festival of Holi wherein runners are covered in colored powder at stations along the route. Everything about this business was new, and Davis had to be willing to learn. As a result, he became familiar with everything from logistics and operations to marketing and advertising.

It was at The Color Run that Davis and another friend started delving into video marketing, and the pair launched a YouTube channel. “There was no agenda, and we

weren’t doing it to make money,” Davis says. “We did it to learn, to try something and see what happened. That’s a lot of what entrepreneurship is all about—that willingness, or faith, to plant seeds even if you have no idea if they will grow.”

### Ridiculous Optimists

Davis planted a lot of seeds in the next few years, figuring it out as he went. During this time, he spent 18 months in a “real job” at an agency, continuing to discover the ins and outs of the marketing world. “Over and over again, I was willing to look at things in new and unique ways,” he explains. “I learned the way that things were being done, but I also explored the possibility that there may be a better way.”

About this time, Davis began feeling the need to strike out on his own. “Ideas were gelling in my mind,” Davis says. “And I had a great mentor who said to me, ‘You have so much potential; you could do more. You need to create an agency that uses what you’ve learned to help startups that are ready for growth.’”

So Davis started Creatably.

Of course, before opening Creatably’s doors, Davis talked with his wife, Haley.

Davis and Haley met at BYU, and the couple got married their senior year. (Haley graduated in sociology in 2009.) She’s been by his side during his figuring-it-out adventures. “An entrepreneur’s spouse deserves many awards,” says Davis. “We’re such ridiculous optimists, and we need someone to

ground us. It’s a crazy life, and it’s not always a secure, stable one.”

Haley admits that she didn’t know what she was getting into, “but I did know it was him I wanted to marry,” she says. “So if that’s what he wanted to do, I wasn’t going to be the one to squelch that. I wanted to be the one to support him as he followed his dreams, but it was a lot about being naive.”

After a decade of marriage, Haley was no longer naive when Davis pitched Creatably to her. “She said she was behind me 100 percent—with one request: for one year, I couldn’t do anything else,” Davis recalls. “No side hustles, no other gigs. ‘It has to be this one thing,’ she said.

“And that’s why Creatably succeeded,” he acknowledges. “As an entrepreneur, I am constantly in ideation mode, always looking for a new idea, a new challenge. But that first year of Creatably, I stayed focused.”

### Telling a Different Story

In 2017, Davis started Creatably, a group of what he calls “marketing growth strategists” who specialize in helping startup companies move to the next level. “We’ve discovered that the best way to get to the next level is to think about things differently and take a different approach,” explains Davis. “We start by telling a different story.”

The company has built a reputation for creating videos and other marketing materials that look and feel fresh. “People come to us with brand and growth challenges, and we work with them to solve those problems,” he says. “Startups always hit plateaus, and our strength is working with companies to get them past those plateaus.”

The company has worked with a variety of well-known clients, including Homie, Manly Brands, Owlet, Thread Wallets, and &Collar. As Davis watched these companies grow, his entrepreneurial instinct kicked in. Thankfully, the one-year deadline requested by Haley had passed, so Davis was free to start figuring out what came next.

“I remembered that I wasn’t an agency person; I was an entrepreneur,” says Davis. “I kept seeing our clients, these startups, experience significant growth, and I started wondering why we weren’t investing in them. And then I started wondering why we weren’t starting our own company.”



## “AN ENTREPRENEUR’S SPOUSE DESERVES MANY AWARDS. WE’RE SUCH RIDICULOUS OPTIMISTS, AND WE NEED SOMEONE TO GROUND US.”

### What People Love

The idea for Davis’s next project sprung from his childhood. In grade school, one of his best friends was Japanese, and Davis was fascinated by the Asian pillow box his friend’s mother used. “She had this box that was wrapped in a towel, and that was her pillow,” he recalls. “It stuck with me, and one day when we were sitting around the office, I mentioned it. I even glued two pieces of foam together to create a sample.

“When I showed people my sample, they told me it was my dumbest idea yet,” Davis continues. “But while the square pillow may have looked ludicrous, when side sleepers tried it out, they often let out an audible gasp.” Davis made more samples and handed them out to friends and family, and he knew he had a winning idea when many of them refused to give the samples back, claiming they had misplaced the pillow.

Davis and his team at Creatably pulled together the Kickstarter campaign for Pillow

Cube in one week, which included shooting the video in the office and using staff members as actors. “I figured that Pillow Cube would be a side hustle,” Davis says. “I’d fit it in here and there between Creatably stuff.” In the beginning, Pillow Cube made \$500 a day, but within a year, the company was seeing \$10,000 a day in sales, and Davis decided that maybe he should pay more attention to the fledgling startup. Currently he spends most of his time overseeing Pillow Cube, while still serving as chair at Creatably and chiming in on other ventures.

“If you’re good at marketing, you can sell almost anything,” Davis says. “But that’s not what we want to do. We are committed to growing businesses and creating products that solve people’s real pains. That’s part of our secret to success. Whether it’s StairSlide, which is tons of fun, or &Collar, which is known as the unsustainable white dress shirt, we give people what they love and need.”

### A Fantasyland of Entrepreneurship

Because of his success, Davis can ensure that the environment where he works is conducive to the lifestyle he knows will bring the greatest sense of fulfillment, both for him and for those with whom he works. “We work hard,” Davis says, “but we also have a strict 40-hour workweek. We make the most of that time because when we’re done, we go home and spend time with our families.”

Davis and Haley’s family includes four daughters, ranging in age from 2 to 12, and his favorite thing to do, even more than starting a new company, is to spend time with his girls. They often visit him at the Pillow Cube office, where they help fold boxes, package pillows, and just hang out with Dad.

“This whole world I’ve built is a fantasyland of entrepreneurship,” Davis concludes. “When people ask me what my dream job is, I say that I’m living it. And I can’t be more grateful.” **M**



# Delving into the Consumer Journey

**IN A WORLD OF SEEMINGLY ENDLESS CHOICES**, today's consumers don't often travel a linear path when making a purchase. As part of the marketing junior core, BYU Marriott offers a three-credit class—Marketing 402: Consumer Behavior—that helps students delve deeply into the journey of why we buy what we buy.

Marketing 402 shows “how integral it is to listen to consumers, understand their needs, and find out what they care about in order to improve the user experience,” says Kathryn Eyring, a junior from Provo majoring in marketing. Throughout the semester, students gain skills that help them not only to land top jobs but also to improve their own decision-making.

When associate professor of marketing Darron Billeter was developing the course a decade ago, he turned to alumni working in the industry for advice, asking them what talents companies were looking for in new hires. “I keep checking in to ask what else I should be teaching,” Billeter says, “and I update the curriculum every year based on those suggestions.”

***“Because the consumer experience is also about life experience, we talk about real situations students are facing and about the role faith and testimony play in our decision-making. That’s a rewarding and powerful part of the class.”***

—DARRON BILLETER

One takeaway from the course is a clearer understanding of the decision-making process. “We start by talking about *self*—who we are and the decisions we’re making about our identities,” says Billeter. “We talk about how we’re influenced by our culture and those around us. Because the consumer experience is also about life experience, we talk about real situations students are facing and about the role faith and testimony play in our decision-making. That’s a rewarding and powerful part of the class.”

Another powerful learning experience happens when students choose a product category to research—such as frozen fruit, pickles, or soda—and a specific brand. During the first month, students shop with a core consumer of that product and watch the consumer use the product. Students outline their findings in a customer journey map that they later draw from to formulate ideas for improving or shaping the consumer’s experience.

Though class members work in groups of four, all students execute each part of the project and complete their own write-ups in addition to contributing to their team’s

## INSIDE *the* CLASSROOM



Another powerful learning experience happens when students choose a product category to research—such as frozen fruit, pickles, or soda.

presentation—that way everyone learns and practices every skill.

Class members also have the opportunity to analyze real-life consumer data because of Billeter’s agreement with top US consumer reporting agency IRI. BYU Marriott is one of only a few schools that have access to this information. In addition, students

receive a subscription to Brandwatch and become certified in social media data analysis.

As the semester winds down, groups use the insights they’ve gained from their research to develop new product ideas. The process includes making prototypes and putting together a pitch presentation, which is followed by a rigorous Q&A session and feedback from Billeter. Students leave the class with solid skills in consumer insights and product marketing management, confident they can make a difference at their first jobs.

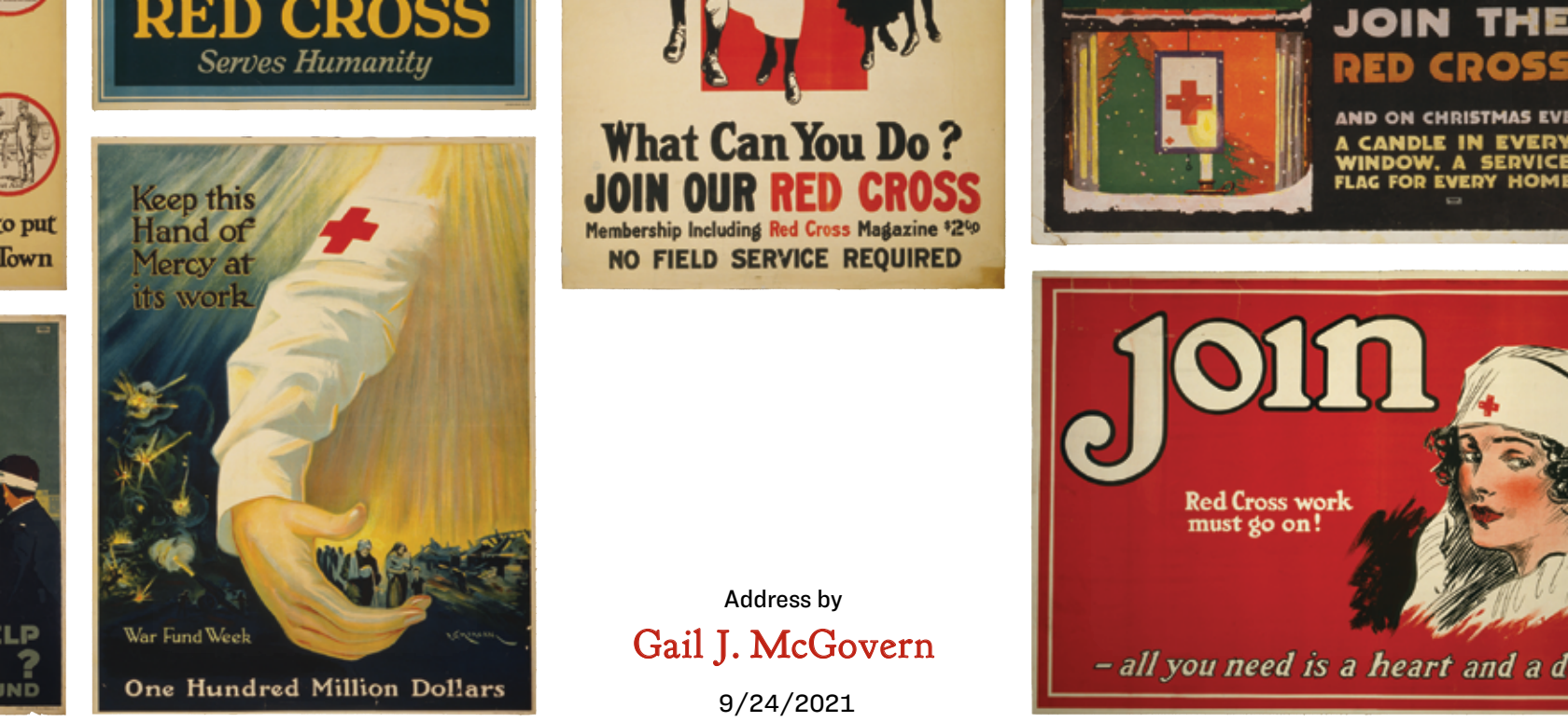
“This class has probably required the most time, impacted my future career the most, and been the most enjoyable,” says Wesley Skidmore, a senior marketing major from Los Alamos, New Mexico. “Consumer Behavior gave me experiences few other students in the country have had, and it set me apart during my interview process.”

—SHIRLEEN M. SAUNDERS









Address by  
**Gail J. McGovern**  
 9/24/2021

# Lessons from the TURNAROUND

Red Cross posters  
 from the  
 Library of Congress



**B**efore I share my experience and the lessons I learned from leading a turnaround, which was what I needed to do when I first got to the American Red Cross, I'm going to talk about the Red Cross mission, which is to prevent and alleviate suffering in the face of emergencies.

One in five people in the US have been touched by the American Red Cross in some way, but most people don't truly understand the depth and breadth of everything that we do. People know we respond to disasters—60,000 every single year—most of which are home fires. Many of the injuries and deaths from home fires are preventable if you have smoke alarms. So we are going into vulnerable communities with a box of smoke alarms and a ladder and a drill. We've installed 2.2 million smoke alarms so far, and as a result we've saved more than 1,000 lives.

We also distribute about 6.4 million units of blood to hospitals every single year. To do that, 13,000 people have to show up every single day to roll up their sleeves and give the gift of life to someone they will likely never meet.

Something most people don't know about is our services to the armed forces. We handle emergency calls, half a million of them a year, from people who are calling our hotlines to get emergency messages to members

of the military. We also have volunteers in all the Veterans Affairs hospitals and on all the military bases, not only in the United States but also abroad.

And how many of you have ever taken first-aid or CPR or babysitting classes? We teach about 4.5 million classes every single year. It's amazing how often I meet ordinary people who have saved the life of somebody who's in distress using skills they learned from the Red Cross.

We do international work. We're in 10 different countries teaching about disaster preparedness and response and how to build resilient communities.

We're also working on preventing the spread of disease. In partnership with the UN Foundation, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and the CDC, we've vaccinated more than 2 billion children against measles and rubella.

#### **+ Right the Ship**

The mission of the American Red Cross is amazing. It was part of what drew me to the organization. But when I showed up in 2008, the Red Cross was suffering from deep financial problems. We had a \$209 million operating deficit, and we had taken on about \$600 million of debt on top of that. We had hundreds of chapters all over the country, and they were all doing their own thing: They had

their own HR and IT functions and their own communications strategy. They had separate procurement functions, so every single chapter was purchasing independently. Chapters even had their own websites. As a result, there was a lot of duplication.

But even more distressing to me was that there was no way to share best practices. In fact, chapters were not incented to help each other because folks at headquarters ranked and rated the chapters, so everybody was vying to get to the top. There was truly a lack of teamwork.

Fast forward two years. We took all those back-office operations and brought them into headquarters. We centralized procurement. We reduced our headquarters staff by quite a lot, and we made reductions out in the field as well. We centralized marketing. We made one website with drop-down capabilities so visitors could find out what's going on in their local Red Cross chapters.

We have professional IT people now, and we are doing the coolest things. We have geospatial technology that can see what's happening on the ground during a disaster so that we know where we need to go. We taught smart speakers how to help people perform first aid and CPR. We have a chatbot named Clara that can help you figure out if you're eligible to donate blood. For blood drives, we're using AI to figure out how many donors are going to attend so that we can send the right number of phlebotomists to draw blood. All of this IT has helped us to be truly efficient.

In two years we managed to break even and build a foundation that would enable us to do great things going forward. And I have to tell you, every Red Crosser stepped up and helped right the ship.

So what did I learn from all of this?

#### **+ Best of the Best**

First: The biggest thing you should focus on is *staff*. Attract, retain, and motivate the best people. I picked that word *best* on purpose. Not good. Not really, really good. The best. I always look for two things—super smart and super nice. I'm fussy about this because I've learned over time that if you staff for expediency, it feels good in the moment, but you spend time digging out of your personnel problem. In the end, it's better and faster to pick the right person.

**“You want to be inclusive  
when you're making  
change, and you want to  
create champions who can  
carry the word for you.”**





*Join!*

The  
American  
Red Cross



I also look for chemistry on my team. I make every one of my direct reports interview the people who I'm considering bringing in. If one of them gives the person a thumbs down, I won't hire that person because I want everyone to get along.

Having said that, I also staff for diversity of thought. You want a strategist, a tactician, an optimist, a pessimist, a contrarian. You want to hear different points of view from people with different backgrounds.

I can throw a problem in the middle of our leadership table, and collectively they will solve it. They argue and they debate—it's a glorious, beautiful thing. And at the end, we come up with something that's better than anybody could have done individually. So remember the word *staffing*.

### + Creating Champions

Another thing I've learned is you've got to be inclusive, and you've got to seek out champions. When we were doing this turnaround, I did a back-of-the-envelope calculation, and I thought we might be able to turn this thing around in only a couple of years because there was so much duplication. The hard part of it was bringing people along. It was so important for them to feel like their fingerprints were on the solution.

So we brought in 30 chapter execs, and we said, "How can we save the American Red Cross?" And they worked on it. Then we said, "This is good. Let's bring in another 50 chapter execs." Then that group worked on it, and it got even better. Then we brought in more people, and they worked on it.

The process was slow. It took six months before we made the first move. But in the end, people went back to their home offices, and they said, "This is going to be great." So you want to be inclusive when you're making change, and you want to create champions who can carry the word for you.

Also, listen generously. I kept saying, "Why don't people want to make these changes?" I figured out that they loved the Red Cross mission so much they were afraid of the changes. They weren't trying to be mean-spirited.

So listen with an open heart. Assume the best about the person who is talking to you. You will feel better about life when you listen generously.

Next, communicate incessantly. I mean communicate and communicate and communicate and communicate. And when you think you've communicated enough, communicate again. I learned this when I was at AT&T. The average person has to see a commercial three times before they know who the sponsor is. It takes much longer than that for people to understand strategy. So communicate a lot.

### + Course Correct

One more thing: the world is changing—technology, geopolitics, economics, consumer behavior. If you don't embrace change, you're going to get left behind.

In this world of constant change, you're going to make mistakes. Admit those mistakes quickly and correct course.

Let me give you an example. Back when every Red Cross chapter was doing their own thing, one was charging \$40 for training and the chapter right next door was charging \$70. I thought, *We can close this gap. Let's all just charge \$70.*

The chapters weren't happy. They said enrollment was going to go down. But I said, "No, people are paying \$70 for it already. We're doing this."

Guess what happened? Enrollment started tanking in the first week. When we next got together, everyone was yelling at me, "Enrollment, enrollment!"

I said, "Yeah, sorry about that. That was a mistake. We're taking the price down to \$50."

You could have heard a pin drop. They were shocked. But after that, they started trusting.



## Q&A with the CEO

*You talked about how the chapters weren't collaborating and then they transitioned to helping each other. How do you find the balance between teamwork and using incentives to motivate people?*

In the beginning, it was a little rocky. The turning point came when we organized the chapters into divisions and gave them financial objectives. They were all reticent about taking on these objectives.

One chapter lost a million-dollar funder, and there was no way the chapter was going to dig out of that hole. Everybody was sitting in the room not saying anything, and a person finally raised their hand and said, "I can raise my objective a little bit and cover part of that." And then the next person said, "I can do that too."

I watched this unfold. They were so proud that they were lending a hand, and that spirit of teamwork started permeating everything we did. The feeling of teamwork genuinely incited people.

People like competition. They love being the top fundraiser or the top salesperson. You can be a good team player and still have friendly competition. If you hire people who are smart and nice, they're not going to try to climb on somebody's shoulders to get ahead. They're going to try to work together.

*How do you know when to take criticism and improve or when to just go forward with confidence?*

That is a good question because in this day and age, between social media and public relations, not many outlets want to report on a good news story. I see this when we have big disasters. The media

love us, they love us, they love us. And then one day they say, "This is getting boring. Let's look under every rock and see if we can find something that they're doing wrong." I learned over time that you just have to roll with those kinds of punches.

I'll tell you a personal story. When I became the head of the consumer markets division at AT&T, it was a big breaking-the-glass-ceiling story. There was a huge write-up about me and my career on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*. I went to work, and everybody was saying, "Gail, what a great story." I was feeling pretty good about myself.

I went into my office and in walked the chief financial officer of AT&T. He said, "I want to give you some advice. Never believe the good press they write about you and never believe the bad press they write about you." I thought, *Well, that was kind of a snarky remark.*

But after he left, I grabbed the paper and read the article. It really was over the top. I said to myself, "He's absolutely right. I don't bend steel with my bare hands. I am going to remember that." Later, when some critical story inevitably came out, I thought to myself, *Okay, never believe the great stuff. Never believe the bad stuff. Just keep moving forward.*

It's hard in the beginning. It hurts. But with experience, it gets a lot easier. Don't be hard on yourselves. I know that's so easy for me to say, but really: be kind to yourselves. You'll feel a lot better. My mantra is "I did the best I could" or "It seemed like a good idea at the time." That helps.

*When you were going through those high-stress, high-change times at the beginning of your tenure as CEO and president, how were you able to maintain morale, focus, and performance?*



If you make a mistake and admit it and course correct quickly, it's better than if you hadn't made the mistake. People will try new things if they know the leadership team will course correct.

### + A Higher Purpose

The last thing: When I was in the for-profit world, I would look at data and solicit input, but at the end of the day, I would say, "Here's what we're doing." I'd say "jump," and everybody would ask, "How high?"

Then I came to the Red Cross. I listened and I processed and when I said, "Here's what we're doing," our 300,000 volunteers would say, "No."

What do you do? I mean, we're not paying them a salary. I learned to lead from the power of my ideas, not the power of my

office. I also started learning to lead from my heart.

When I was at AT&T and everybody would get wound up, I would say, "People, calm down. We're not saving lives here. It's just telephone service." Then I went to Fidelity, and I'd say, "Calm down, people. We're just managing money. We're not saving lives here."

When I came to the Red Cross, I couldn't say that anymore. It got me thinking that when I was at AT&T, I should have said, "We can't get this wrong because we are connecting people with the people who they love and the information that they need. We have a higher purpose." And at Fidelity, we weren't just managing money: We were making people's financial dreams come true—putting kids through college, helping prepare for retirement. We had a higher purpose.

Everyone wants a higher purpose. As a leader, when you find that, it makes all the difference. People are way more engaged. **M**

### + About the Speaker

*Gail J. McGovern has served as president and CEO of the American Red Cross since 2008. During her tenure, her transformational initiatives have improved the financial stability of the Red Cross and expanded the reach of its lifesaving services. Prior to joining the Red Cross, McGovern was a faculty member at Harvard Business School, president of Fidelity Investments, and executive vice president for the Consumer Markets Division at AT&T. BYU Marriott honored McGovern with the 2021 International Executive of the Year Award. This text is adapted from a speech she gave on campus on September 24, 2021.*

At AT&T and at Fidelity, I was used to doing layoffs. That's what happens in big organizations. I hated it, but you get through it. At a non-profit? Oh, my goodness. We stopped the 401K match for a year to get solvent. We froze merit increases and the pension fund for a year. No one complained because we explained to them over and over that we had to do this to save the American Red Cross. They understood.

But when we did the first layoffs, that's when my inbox started filling up—not with "How dare you?" and not with "Why are you doing this?" Instead, the emails said things like "Alfredo is a single dad, and he's going to get laid off. Can I work for half my salary to give him the other half?" The Red Cross is a place filled with people who have heart, and it was really, really difficult.

My advice when you're in a position like that is to communicate again and again why you're doing what you're doing. The first time I started leading from the heart was when we were making all these changes. I could see employees and volunteers weren't really understanding the changes, so I kept reminding people of their mission. I tried to elevate them to the point where they understood the steps. The worst thing you can do when you're going through change is to have uncertainty. You keep morale going by explaining the changes.

*From your experience, what skills are valuable for someone going into nonprofit management? What other advice would you offer to someone interested in a position similar to yours?*

There are some nonprofits where people have huge hearts, but they don't understand business concepts—and they usually don't do well. Learn how to read a financial statement. Be able to recognize where the pitfalls are and what to do to mitigate them. Focus on tools that will help you fulfill the mission of the organization, such as understanding fundraising and managing expenses.

As for planning for your future, I'm going to give you some advice that may be counter to everything you've heard: Don't overplan it. Things are going to happen. I'm a two-time breast cancer survivor. That was not in my life plan. If you're going to have a plan, embrace the fact that it may not work the way you think. And don't stress about it.

Life is a glorious adventure, and you've got to enjoy the off-road parts of it as much as you enjoy the on-road parts of it. The curveballs that life throws you make you stronger and better equipped to deal with what comes next.



## around the COOLER

BY SHIRLEEN M. SAUNDERS

### 1. A FAN CONNECTION

Before the pandemic, many lesser-known musicians took advantage of opportunities to stream live performances online. When worldwide tours and concerts were canceled, bigger-name artists followed suit, providing an intimate connection with fans. Even as concerts resume, experts expect artists to continue interacting with their fans online.



# Seen Through a Screen

*When COVID-19 sent entire nations into quarantine, computer novices and tech nerds alike discovered that the world wasn't as out of reach as they may have thought. World travelers could still tour museums, groupies could stream concerts, and theater lovers could watch Broadway shows. While some of these experiences charged a fee, many cost nothing, and most of these online adventures remain only a web search away.*

### 2. MUSEUM ART

Art enthusiasts can tour the British Museum in London, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, or the Guggenheim in New York City—all without leaving the comfort of their living rooms. Museum tours are offered by a host of online platforms, including Google Arts & Culture, Amazon Explore, and the museums themselves.





### 3. ON BUS, BIKE, OR FOOT

Virtual tours are available for many major cities around the world. From the comfort of the couch, adventure seekers can drive through downtowns or stroll through neighborhoods. Rickshaw rides, shopping experiences, ferry excursions, and cuisine explorations are only a few of the almost unlimited options available.

### 4. GOSPEL LIVING

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints joined the effort to provide online content, including tours of historic sites, virtual streaming of Church-sponsored performances, and video calls with the missionaries. In addition, online missionary efforts have increased and continue in conjunction with traditional door knocking.



### 5. NATURE AT ITS BEST

The breathtaking beauty of the world can be seen through a computer screen via virtual tours, photo galleries, and 360-degree videos. Mother Nature lovers can tour Yellowstone National Park or enjoy the grandeur of Mount Everest. And that's just the tip of the iceberg; many more stunning natural experiences can be found.

### 6. A MOUSE EDUCATION

While remote or distance learning had started well before the pandemic, the sudden forced transition to online education expanded the virtual educational possibilities. Online courses on a variety of subjects are available for students of all ages to enjoy a taste of something new—or even to earn a degree.




### 2. WORLD-WIDE STAGE

Theatergoers were thrilled when recordings of popular Broadway shows were released during the 2020 shut-down. Opportunities to stay in touch with the stage—by watching everything from Shakespeare and musicals to dramas and comedies—can still be found online for those who can't make it to Manhattan.







# SURVIV- ING OR THRIV- ING

*These tips for fostering mental health in the workplace  
can benefit both employees and employers.*

By M. Sue Bergin Art by Jon Krause

Jason<sup>1</sup> always considered himself to be a rock-solid, emotionally stable person. So he was shocked when one morning at 3 a.m. he bolted upright in bed, his heart racing. His company was one week into the COVID-19 pandemic and as an IT manager, he was responsible for helping more than 300 employees shift from working in the office to working at home.

"I hardly slept for three months," he recalls. "By the time things settled down, I was a wreck. I came *this* close to being hospitalized. Maybe I should have been. It took months, and some professional help, before I finally got back to my normal self."

If you lead or manage an organization, you're likely nodding your head because you recognize yourself in Jason. Or maybe you're feeling concerned because you have seen your employees' desperation when anxiety about job insecurity sets in, or when workers feel so isolated working from home that they fall into depression, or when working parents are stressed beyond their limits by simultaneously managing remote work and children's online schooling.

Managers who fully grasp these kinds of details are, unfortunately, a minority. Most managers are unaware of just how much their workers' emotional health is impacted by events beyond their control, such as a pandemic, an uptick in natural disasters, or incidents of racial injustice.

Research released by Mind Share Partners in late 2021 reported that only 47 percent of US workers think their company leaders advocate for improving mental health at work. The study also found that 84 percent of respondents reported one or more workplace factors that negatively impacted their mental health in the past year. On the other hand, workers who said they felt supported by their employers amid the pandemic were more than twice as likely to feel satisfied with their jobs and were twice as likely to say they intend to stay with their organization for two or more years.<sup>2</sup>

The pandemic itself has brought attention to work-related mental health concerns. Tim Gubler, a BYU Marriott assistant professor of strategy, says the pandemic is an ordeal, but it's also "a natural experiment that's providing opportunities for us to learn." He, along with many management experts, believes

companies should look carefully at what has happened so far during the pandemic, both inside and outside their organizations, so they can tease out best practices. What's working can be supported and expanded, he observes. What's not working can be minimized or dropped.

As of early 2022, experts are clear that leaders of organizations, from self-employed freelancers to giant conglomerates, should prioritize assessing and boosting their mental health strategies. As the *Harvard Business Review* published in late 2021, mental health support has gone from "nice-to-have to a true business imperative."<sup>3</sup>

Some might argue that it's an employee's responsibility to take charge of their

about mental health. More than 2,000 years ago, Hippocrates taught that an imbalance in bodily fluids caused emotional instability. Even further back, ancient Chinese texts described conditions we would today label as "stress." In the Book of Mormon, Nephi pointed to classic symptoms of depression when he wrote about his heart weeping, his soul lingering in the valley of sorrow, and his flesh wasting away (see 2 Nephi 4:26).

Stability is a basic human desire. Our brains are hardwired for knowing. Without the anchor of knowing at least some things, we feel at sea, leaving us with a diminished ability to focus on tasks at hand. When health and livelihood are threatened, thriving often falls by the wayside in favor of simply surviving.

***"Ultimately, we as leaders have the responsibility to lead, model self-care, and help employees with their self-care, which includes finding them the resources they need."***

own mental health, including work-related burnout. But research shows that employers, not employees, have the greater power to impact workplace well-being. Gallup CEO Jim Clifton says that his company's research clearly indicates the reason more than one half of US workers are unhappy with their jobs: "It's the manager," he said in a 2019 interview. "Period."<sup>4</sup>

Since the pandemic started, many companies have stepped up their mental health support. But many have not. Interviews with BYU Marriott professors and seasoned alumni show the way for those who want to begin or boost their efforts to support workplace emotional health.

### **Mental Health in Context**

For years before COVID hit, a global mental health crisis had already been brewing. In the United States, depression and suicide rates began climbing about two decades ago. But humans have had some understanding of mental health for much longer.

Our ancestors recognized painful emotions, even without our modern knowledge

Science has given us richer language to describe mental health conditions and much greater resources to deal with them. Basic knowledge about depression, anxiety, and suicide is readily available, and mental health is becoming a more common topic of conversation and focus in the workplace.

### **Fostering Good Mental Health in Your Workforce**

Self-care is the mantra of the moment for managers and workers, and several BYU Marriott grads are embracing it with zeal.

#### **Model Self-Care**

BYU Marriott alum Taber Rigg, who earned his MBA in 2007, oversees 2,500 employees scattered throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico for food giant Cargill's starches and sweeteners division.

"Our people are just exhausted from everything going on, and burnout is high. We absolutely have been focusing on mental health," says Rigg. "Burnout is a shared responsibility between employees and the organization. Ultimately, we as leaders have



the responsibility to lead, model self-care, and help employees with their self-care, which includes finding them the resources they need.”

Starting even before the COVID pandemic, Cargill launched several mental health campaigns for its employees. In one program, top execs meet with employees to share stories about their own mental health struggles and their routines to combat burnout. The goal is to work mental health “into our everyday rhythms and routines of conversations,” says Rigg. “When leaders are vulnerable and share their stories, they give permission for everyone to speak up and say, ‘Yes! I feel the same way. Here’s what’s been impacting me, and here’s what would help me.’”

Most recently Cargill rolled out a Well-Being Manifesto tool that helps teams create a document to steer them toward daily attention to well-being. Each team comes up with its own ideas, such as deciding it’s okay to take full lunch breaks, decline a meeting, or ask for more flexibility around childcare needs.

### ***Set Boundaries***

Recognizing limitations and being able to set boundaries is crucial, says BYU Marriott alum Ashley Emig, who graduated with a BS in management in 2010. Emig, senior director of sales and licensing at Retail Monster, acknowledges that when she gets late-night emails it’s “super tempting” to jump online

and answer right away. “But that quickly leads to burnout,” she says. “I’ve learned to set my limits, focus on my family, and pick up the emails the next day.” And she encourages those on her team to do the same.

Erik Lamb, who graduated with an MSM in 2016 and is executive vice president of product for Drips, recognized workaholic behavior in one of his employees. He told her he wanted to see that she was offline when she should be. She responded, “I don’t know if I can do that.” Lamb worked with her, and after a few months, she was able to work less without panicking. She’s now spending more time with her ill mother, a commitment that had been a spoken priority in her life but now is a lived priority.

At Drips, Lamb says he’s seeing more burnout since employees started working from home. “When you work from home, you’ve got work tools on your phone, on your desktop, on your laptop, and all these streaming conversations,” he says. “You have to be much more conscious of boundaries.”

### ***Invest in Relationships***

Lamb, who supervises 30 workers, acknowledges that senior leadership in his company did not take well-being seriously enough for a while. A few months ago, they realized that the old ways of in-office work were not up to snuff for remote work. Since then, they’ve created a buddy system, launched budgeted employee clubs, and encouraged more casual conversation during meetings.

“Our buddy system is very simple,” says Lamb. “We pair you with someone who is not in leadership but has been here a while, and they can help you learn the unspoken rules and cope with remote work.” The program has been “incredibly well received,” he says. “Just being able to talk to someone informally has dramatically improved the way our employees perceive our work environment.”

Drips also funds employee clubs about common interests, such as pets, investing, and cooking. For the cooking club, employees get a package once a month with ingredients and a recipe. They cook on their own and then get together on a video call to recount their adventures. “There’s a lot of failure and a lot of laughter. It’s a way for people to connect with no expectation of performance,” says Lamb.



*Less anxiety also means happier employees. Happy employees are less likely to find another job, thereby reducing turnover and its costs. They are healthier and miss less work, also resulting in higher productivity.*

He encourages his team to be selective about meetings to relieve virtual meeting fatigue and to promote better performance. They should decline about 30 percent of the meetings they are asked to attend, he tells them. “If you don’t do that, you’re not allowing for the uninterrupted time you need for deep work. You can’t enhance your craft or think deeply about problems if you’re constantly in meetings.”

Lamb has also noticed that injecting “unfiltered conversation” into meetings has helped his team feel less stressed. “I used to go straight to the agenda,” he explains. “I’ve relented and encouraged everyone to just joke around for a few minutes. ‘How are you doing? How about your dog? How many cats do we have on keyboards?’”

#### **Ensure Physical Safety**

Before considering how to support their employees psychologically, managers must make sure that employees feel physically safe. BYU Marriott alum Barbara Leavitt, who graduated with an MPA in 2008 and is currently the community impact director for United Way of Utah County, says her agency has made their employees’ physical safety a priority. At the beginning of the pandemic the agency acted quickly to get their employees working remotely so they could stop worrying about COVID contagion. “We’ve established that their safety is

paramount,” Leavitt says. “They know we have their backs.”

As COVID pressures built, Leavitt integrated physical and emotional well-being into her weekly check-in with the four United Way directors she supervises. “I ask them, ‘Do you feel safe? Connected? Confident?’ I also provide an environment where they feel comfortable asking questions and making mistakes.” Flexibility is one of United Way’s greatest ways of supporting mental health. “Employees can come to us and propose changes, and we’re responsive,” Leavitt says.

#### **Show Thanks**

Gratitude from an employer is also essential to worker well-being. Taeya Howell, a BYU Marriott assistant professor of organizational behavior and human resources, has researched how public gratitude affects employees. In a study focused on essential workers such as nurses and firefighters, she found that when leaders openly express gratitude, “workers are more likely to see stress as a challenge they can overcome. Gratitude helps employees feel seen, which in turn improves employee well-being.”



#### **Building Your Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Skills**

Minority groups can be at an even greater risk for mental health struggles. No matter how many—or how few—people of color, LGBTQ+ folks, or women you have among your ranks, you can be sure most of them are experiencing an extra layer of stress.

Emig feels the added pressure keenly. “We all wear figurative masks, but as a woman of color, I’m forced to wear more masks to stay safe,” she explains. “The more masks we have to wear, the more energy we expend keeping the masks on. That leaves less energy to be as successful as we could be.”

In workplaces where minority individuals are few, pressures to represent one’s group can be particularly crushing. Emig has her share of experience with this dynamic, which she finds, paradoxically, both draining and motivating at the same time. “If I’m in a meeting, am I just speaking for me now or am I speaking for my whole culture? Am I speaking as the one woman in the room? As the one Black woman in the room? It’s stressful, but it also helps you build skills,” she explains.



Over the years, Emig has heard many reassuring words about racial harmony from coworkers and managers, but she's learned to watch for actions that reaffirm those words. She's committed to speaking up when conversations and actions don't match. "I'm like so many people of color—when we first started in our careers, we just put our heads down and did our work," she remembers. "But now, you might need to be that one dissenting voice that no one has heard before. We're not going to be quiet about feeling 'othered' in the workplace."

In 2020, the American Psychological Association's president, Sandra L. Shullman, said the United States was in the middle of a "racism pandemic" that was "taking a heavy psychological toll on our African American citizens."<sup>5</sup> About the same time, the *Harvard Business Review* published an article by Laura Morgan Roberts and Ella F. Washington titled "US Businesses Must Take Meaningful Action Against Racism."

Roberts and Washington discuss research that indicates employees can be helped or hurt by how their organizations respond to race issues in the media. An organization can either help workers feel psychologically safe or contribute to the feelings of mistrust. "Without adequate support, minority employees are likely to perceive their environments as more interpersonally and institutionally biased against them. Leaders seeking to create an inclusive environment for everyone must find ways to address these topics," say the authors.

They then caution managers, especially managers in the racial majority, against staying silent about racial injustice, becoming overly defensive, or overgeneralizing about groups when conflicts are in the news. "Think about how you can allow your employees to discuss what's happening without putting them on the spot or asking them to speak for everyone in their identity group," say Roberts and Washington.<sup>6</sup>

Emig suggests that nonminority managers develop their empathetic ears and hearts. If they don't understand what minority employees are experiencing but want to, a simple "Tell me more about that"—and then listening intently—goes a long way. Managers, she says, can tell their workers, "I'm probably not going to say the right things, but I'm

interested in learning and growing and making a space for you. How can I do that?"

### What Results Can You Expect?

There are a variety of benefits that you, your company, and your employees can expect from paying more attention to mental health in the workplace. As you and your company become more psychologically savvy, you can expect your workers to be less anxious. And because anxiety hijacks the brain, less anxiety means smarter and more productive employees. Less anxiety also means happier employees. Happy employees are less likely to find another job, thereby reducing turnover and its costs. They are healthier and miss less work, also resulting in higher productivity. All these factors add up to higher profits.

In his study, Gubler cites statistics that show the costs of corporate wellness programs are dwarfed by reductions in insurance and absenteeism costs. If workers aren't pressured to work when they are ill ("presenteeism"), US firms will save more than a combined \$150 billion per year—almost three times what absenteeism costs, he says.

All in all, organizations that consider their workers' emotional health will reduce the costs of turnover, absenteeism, and presenteeism. Those companies that commit to a more emotionally fit workplace will find their workers happier, healthier, more engaged, and more productive. **M**

### About the Author

*Sue Bergin is a writer, editor, and artist who lives in Orem, Utah. She taught at BYU Marriott as an adjunct faculty member and wrote the Family Focus section of Y Magazine for 17 years. Her current passion is editing and ghostwriting memoirs.*

### Notes

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3. Kelly Greenwood and Julia Anas, "It's a New Era for Mental Health at Work," *Harvard Business Review*, October 4, 2021, [hbr.org/2021/10/its-a-new-era-for-mental-health-at-work](https://hbr.org/2021/10/its-a-new-era-for-mental-health-at-work).
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5. Sandra L. Shullman, "We Are Living in a Racism Pandemic,' Says APA President," American Psychological Association, May 29, 2020, [apa.org/news/press/releases/2020/05/racism-pandemic](https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2020/05/racism-pandemic).
6. Laura Morgan Roberts and Ella F. Washington, "US Businesses Must Take Meaningful Action Against Racism," *Harvard Business Review*, June 1, 2020, [hbr.org/2020/06/u-s-businesses-must-take-meaningful-action-against-racism](https://hbr.org/2020/06/u-s-businesses-must-take-meaningful-action-against-racism).

## Tips for Leaders

Here are additional tips from the experts.

- Model the self-care principles you want your workers to practice, which means being specific—and public—about what you yourself do.
- Keep an eye out for employees whose needs don't fit majority patterns. If your workforce is remote, be aware that some people's situations may make it harder for them to work from home.
- Cultivate listening and empathy. Both skills take work to develop; put in the work.
- Remind your employees often of features in your company's health plan that cover mental health.
- When you see an employee's performance dipping, consider whether the cause might be an underlying mental health issue.
- If you've made mistakes that have hurt your employees during the pandemic (or anytime), create a plan to rebuild their trust.
- Don't look for an easy fix, because it doesn't exist. Try lots of things and see what works.

# School News

## New Council Pairs Students with Young Alumni

As BYU Marriott students prepare for careers after graduation, a new resource is now available to support them in their professional development and placement. The newly created Young Professional Advisory Council (YPAC) will give students the opportunity to learn from alumni who graduated from BYU Marriott within the past 10 years.

The inaugural cohort of advisors consists of a diverse group of 40 BYU Marriott alumni who graduated in a variety of majors. Each young professional leader (YPL) was individually nominated by department and faculty leaders across



the school for exemplifying the vision, mission, and values of BYU Marriott.

“The value of the YPAC will come in the young professional leaders’ ability to relate to students,” says **Sam Dunn**, assistant dean and director of the Steven and Georgia White Business Career Center at BYU Marriott. “The YPLs recently sat where our current students

now sit. These alumni were once nervous about their next interview, unsure of the best career path, and on the lookout for networking connections and sound advice. As faculty and staff, we believe the YPAC members will provide fresh and needed perspectives that can significantly improve BYU Marriott’s ability to achieve student career placement success.”

The YPLs will work in conjunction with the Business Career Center to help students with job placement and personal growth. Students interested in meeting with a YPL can contact their career advisor at the Business Career Center, who will facilitate a connection. Meetings will occur in person when

## Seed Grants Provide Opportunity for Student Entrepreneurs

Student entrepreneurs at BYU looking for guidance and financial backing can now receive both through the Rollins Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology’s new Seed Grants program. A part of BYU Marriott, the Rollins Center strives to support student-led entrepreneurial ventures through various programs. The Seed Grants program, one of the center’s newest additions, provides students with meaningful mentoring relationships and necessary funding.

Prior to the Seed Grants program, the Rollins Center sponsored the New Venture Challenge and Business Model Competition, rewarding winning student startups with monetary assistance. The Seed Grants program will replace these two competitions and allow for funding to be given to more startups.

**Chris Crittenden**, managing director of the Rollins Center, feels that the new Seed Grants program will better cater to the needs of student entrepreneurs. “In a competition, you win or lose. What’s different about the Seed Grants program is the committee is trying to nurture everyone along,” explains Crittenden. “The grant process is more like a relationship. If the committee doesn’t give a team money this month, that doesn’t mean we won’t next month. We give groups feedback so they can come back and obtain funding later.”

Seed Grants are awarded every month. A group of committee members composed of investors, alumni, and faculty gather to hear student entrepreneurs pitch their ideas. Students then have the opportunity to receive either a validation grant or a traction grant. Validation grants are for entrepreneurs in the beginning phases of their startups, focusing



on prototyping, market research, and problem-solving; recipients of this grant may receive reimbursement up to \$500 for expenses as they are incurred. Traction grants allow for a company to receive up to \$27,000 over time as students continue meeting milestones and implementing feedback from the committee.

“Companies will be at different stages over time. One company may come in and pitch for a validation grant, receive it, and then apply to come back for a traction grant after having completed necessary milestones,” says Crittenden. As such, students may apply for a Seed Grant no matter what phase their startups are currently in.



possible but may also take place through remote means such as phone calls, texts, emails, and video conferencing.

YPAC mentors were selected from a variety of backgrounds in order to help all students at BYU Marriott. The Business Career Center and Deans Office created this new resource for students because they recognize that recruiting constantly changes. Having young professionals involved helps the school be as up to date with current hiring practices as possible. Dunn calls BYU Marriott alumni the “secret sauce” of career placement. In order to keep ideas fresh, YPAC membership will be replaced every two years with a new group of YPLs.

### Ethics Conference Seeks Classroom Solutions



Business leaders and educators from across the nation recently gathered at BYU Marriott for the annual Partners in Business Ethics Symposium. The conference marked BYU Marriott’s first time hosting the event.

“The design of the conference is to bring together business school deans and executives to discuss what we as educators can do in the classroom to better promote ethical business behavior,” says **Brad Agle**, the George W. Romney Endowed Professor at the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics at BYU Marriott. “We want to prepare students to enter the workforce as leaders who value integrity.”

Faculty members from BYU Marriott who were in charge of organizing the conference wanted to ensure the sessions were heavily discussion based, inviting everyone to share their ideas for bringing positive change into the classroom. “We designed the conference in a way that encouraged a high level of participation and interaction,” Agle explains. “Most sessions had a facilitator and three or four panelists who initiated discussion among the attendees.”

Agle, BYU Marriott dean **Brigitte C. Madrian**, and NAC Professor of Business **Kim B. Clark** were hosts of the symposium. Additionally, several faculty members from the Romney Institute served as facilitators, including associate professor **Brad Owens**, adjunct professor **Barry Rellafor**, associate professor **Eva Witesman**, and associate teaching professor **Aaron Miller**. Other facilitators included Lance Bennett, an MBA prep coach and founder of LEB Partners; **Jeffery Thompson**, director of the Sorensen Center for Moral and Ethical Leadership at BYU; **Paul Godfrey**, the William and Roceil Low Professor of Business Strategy at BYU Marriott; and two faculty from the Department of Management: assistant professor **Isaac Smith** and professor **Kristen DeTienne**. Panelists included additional faculty from BYU Marriott, deans and professors from other business schools, business executives, and leaders of various organizations.

Attendees of the symposium left the conference looking forward to enacting change in the classroom. “The conference prompted me to think about how the next generation of business leaders will value ethics in their organizations,” says **McKenzie Rees**, assistant professor of organizational behavior and human resources at BYU Marriott. “The topics we discussed at this conference will hopefully be implemented by business school leaders moving forward and shape the conversation around ethics for years to come.”

The Partners in Business Ethics Symposium was first held in 2010 and hosted by the Penn State Smeal College of Business and by American Express. Each year, a different school is asked to host the symposium. The conference

brings together both ethics-driven and community-minded professionals, including business school deans, thought leaders in business, and corporate leaders.

### Air Force ROTC Recognized with Two Awards



The BYU Air Force ROTC (AFROTC), hosted by BYU Marriott’s Department of Aerospace Studies, was

recently recognized with two awards from the United States Air Force ROTC. The awards highlight the hard work, dedication, and achievements of the program’s staff members in 2021.

The first award, Northwest Region Team of the Year 2021, recognizes all 12 staff members of the BYU Marriott Department of Aerospace Studies, referred to collectively as Detachment 855, for their propensity to go above and beyond the call of duty to care for their cadets. A total of 35 detachments make up the Northwest Region.

Detachment 855’s achievements included organizing and taking senior cadets on an experiential learning opportunity to Normandy and other parts of France in September 2021. On the 10-day trip, cadets visited several World War II locations and were assigned to role-play as different leaders, such as General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The program leadership was also commended for its 2021 Veterans Day memorial service, which included former prisoner of war Lt. Colonel Jay Hess as the keynote speaker. The service took place in Brigham Square on the campus

# BYU Marriott MBA Scholars



*Eccles Scholars*



*Hawes Scholars*



*Stoddard Scholars*

BYU Marriott MBA students are recognized for their uncommon maturity, confidence, and experiences. They excel in many ways, including academically. Top MBA scholars are honored annually through the Eccles, Hawes, and Stoddard Scholars programs.

Ten students were honored as Eccles Scholars, an award presented by BYU Marriott's Whitmore Global Business Center. Each recipient was awarded up to \$9,000 of financial aid for schooling expenses, international projects, and global career exploration. The Eccles Scholars Award is funded by the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation and is awarded on the basis of academic performance and trajectory toward a global business career.

The 2021–22 Eccles Scholars are **Marisa Davila, Priyanka Gandhi, Cedric Huntington, Sara Isom, Thomas Metcalf, Kabir Rajput, Stephen Slabbert, Tracy Smith, Fabio Souza, and Mont Toronto.**

BYU Marriott named ten 2021–22 Hawes Scholars, an honor that carries the highest distinction given to MBA students at the school, along with a cash award of \$10,000 each. Named for successful corporate executive Rodney A. Hawes Jr. and his wife, Beverly, the Hawes Scholar Award was created in 1998 to recognize the accomplishments of graduating MBA students.

The 2021–22 Hawes Scholars are **Sean Beardsley, Josh Fuller, Ricky Gettys, Jason Nesto, Jess Harris Perez, Sam Porter, Millie Rapp, Tanner Simmons, Molly Turner, and Morgan Walker.**

Nine BYU Marriott students were honored with the George E. Stoddard Prize, a \$5,000 award given to exceptional MBA finance students. The Stoddard Prize was established in 1985 by George E. Stoddard, a 1937 BYU alumnus. Initially awarded to second-year students, the award has expanded to include first-year students.

The 2021–22 Stoddard Scholars are **Steve Bitter, Spencer Farley, Missy Hilton, Brian Low, Madhavan Padmanabhan, Dillon Redd, Pavel Semenenkov, Matt Smith, and Spencer Van Leeuwen.**

of BYU, with BYU Army ROTC cadets and staff also in attendance.

“The award means a tremendous amount to me because I know how hard our team members work and how much they deserve recognition,” says **Colonel Frederick D. Thaden**, department chair of the BYU AFROTC. “These awards each year are sort of like our Olympics, and this time we won the gold medal.”

The second award, University Employee of the Year 2021, was awarded to **Erin Ricks**, the Aerospace Studies Department program manager. Announced on January 28, 2022, Ricks’s award acknowledges her leadership, dedication to her job, and successes in assisting cadets, organizing events, and running the aerospace studies program.

“Winning this award with so many other qualified candidates also being considered is incredibly humbling,” says Ricks, who was recognized out of all 145 AFROTC detachments across the United States and who has won several AFROTC awards since starting at BYU Marriott in 2018. “My secret to success is my fellow employees,” she says. “They make feeling and being successful possible.”

## FACULTY NEWS

### ExDM Professor Achieves Excellence in Mentoring

At the end of every academic year, BYU awards one professor from each college with the Inspiring Learning Award. Experience design and management



(ExDM) professor **Ramon Zabriskie** is the 2022 BYU Marriott recipient for the student-nominated award. The honor recognizes a faculty

or staff member’s dedication to student growth through active mentoring.

Zabriskie was chosen as the BYU Marriott recipient because the appreciation of the students who nominated Zabriskie stood out to the award’s evaluators, says BYU Career Services associate director Adrienne Chamberlain. The students’ nominations included descriptions of Zabriskie’s impact on their future careers and their experiences as students.



One EXDM student who nominated Zabriskie for the award wrote, “He helped me realize I can pursue whatever I set my mind to, as long as I remember to lead with love.” Another added, “He taught us how to empathize with everyone we are designing experiences for. His class completely changed the trajectory of my career and academic goals.”

EXDM department chair **Neil Lundberg** is grateful for the impact Zabriskie makes on students. “Ramon shows up for class every day ready to care for and support students,” Lundberg says. “They know he loves them and is there for them in every way possible. He exemplifies the aims of a BYU education in everything he does.”

Of his award, Zabriskie says, “I don’t know if anything could be better for a teacher than to be honored by their students. I am humbled, grateful, and truly honored to interact with, learn from, and teach such incredible individuals.”

## STUDENT NEWS

### MISM Students Demonstrate Innovation at ICIS

While many students from BYU Marriott were beginning to take final exams at the end of the fall 2021 semester, two MISM students were presenting their innovative ideas to some of the brightest minds in the information systems (IS) profession at the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS). As some of the only master’s students presenting, **Lilia Brown** and **Benjamin Richardson** impressed the audience with their preparation and fresh take on IS topics.

ICIS is an annual conference where IS researchers from around the world gather to discuss innovative research in the field. For the conference, ICIS invited participants to submit case studies to be workshopped by other conference attendees. When BYU Marriott IS associate teaching professor **Degan Kettles** received the invitation to attend ICIS, he immediately thought of his two research assistants, whom he felt confident would be willing to step up to the challenge.

“As far as I am aware, Lilia and Benjamin were the only master-level students who presented during the workshop,” explains Kettles. “Everyone in the audience was extremely impressed



with them because this was an activity that would typically be done by a faculty member or a PhD candidate, and they performed as well or better than those who conduct this kind of research in a full-time capacity.”

For Richardson, the event was a fish-out-of-water experience as he and Brown were not among peers but rather

were in a group of tenured professors and others who had spent years studying these topics. Richardson believes that his and Brown’s fresher perspective played to their advantage as they proposed ideas that those entrenched in the field may not have considered. “After our presentation, we had a lot of professors tell us they hadn’t seen a paper like ours in a long time. It was a completely fresh view on some IS stuff that, because we’re not tenured in the field, we have a different view on,” says Richardson.

Brown shares that while the opportunity to speak was exciting, the presentation still sparked some anxiety. Despite the nervousness she felt, Brown says the IS program at BYU Marriott played a vital

## Renaissance Man of the Tax World

**Troy K. Lewis**, an associate teaching professor in the School of Accountancy at BYU Marriott, recently received the 2021 Arthur J. Dixon Memorial Award in honor of his outstanding work as a certified public accountant (CPA) in the area of taxation. Lewis received this honor virtually at an award ceremony held by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) on November 17, 2021.

The Arthur J. Dixon Memorial Award, bestowed by the AICPA Tax Division, is the highest award given in the accounting profession in the area of taxes. The AICPA found a worthy recipient in Lewis, whose dynamic career includes being the past chair of the Tax Executive Committee of the AICPA and testifying six times before the United States Senate Finance Committee and the United States House Committee on Small Business.

“It is an honor to have my name added to the list of the past recipients of this award,” says Lewis. “To be included among this select group of professionals that I have admired my whole career is truly a privilege I will always cherish.”

An alumnus of BYU Marriott, Lewis graduated in 1995 after receiving a BS in accounting and a MAcc with an emphasis in taxation. In addition to teaching, Lewis also currently owns and manages his own CPA firm, Lewis & Associates.

**Doug Prawitt**, director of the School of Accountancy, refers to Lewis as a “renaissance man of the tax world,” alluding to Lewis’s contributions in teaching, mentoring, leading key AICPA committees, testifying before Congress, contributing to academic articles, and influencing tax legislation. “The school and our students are incredibly fortunate to have him here at BYU Marriott,” Prawitt says.

The Arthur J. Dixon Memorial Award was established in 1981 to honor Dixon’s legacy of outstanding service to the tax profession. Each year, the AICPA Tax Executive Committee nominates individuals before selecting one exceptional CPA to honor with the award.



role in preparing her and Richardson for opportunities such as these.

“Presenting was extremely intimidating,” says Brown. “Benjamin and I were surrounded by experts in the IS field. But the MISM program has taught us how to overcome being intimidated because we’re always learning new things, such as Python or C# programming languages. Having practice in that type of learning environment was useful in being prepared for the conference.”

### MBA Students Awarded 3rd Place by Disney and Adobe



A team of BYU Marriott MBA students won third place out of 4,500 teams during the 2021 Adobe Analytics Challenge. The students’ success earned them a prize of \$6,000 and provided experience in real-world business situations.

The winning BYU Marriott team consisted of first-year MBA students **Christina Bates** from Bountiful, Utah; **Hannah Harris** from Temecula, California; and **Brookston Jeppson** from Draper, Utah.

The Adobe Analytics Challenge began with a digital kickoff meeting on September 8, 2021, when teams of students from around the world were introduced to representatives from Disney, Adobe’s partner for the competition. Teams were challenged to evaluate Disney’s e-commerce site, shopdisney.com, and analyze specific user behaviors on the website using the Adobe Analytics software.

After receiving instructions for the competition, teams received a virtual

training on Adobe Analytics. This training was vital because students used the software to gather data and prepare presentations featuring their research, analytics analysis, and recommendations for Disney.

The members of BYU Marriott’s team each contributed more than 40 hours a week in preparation for the competition. This time was spent learning the Adobe Analytics software and analyzing user behaviors on Disney’s website. “Working with Adobe and Disney helped me learn how to use data to break down an ambiguous problem to inform marketing decisions,” says Jeppson.

Team members presented their data to representatives from Adobe using three different buyer personas representing individuals visiting Disney’s website. “We identified three categories of webpage visitors with different needs and reasons for using shopdisney.com,” explains Harris. “Our team connected each buyer persona with a familiar Disney character to help the Disney representatives resonate with the data we were presenting. Newcomers to the website were represented by Goofy, future customers by Donald Duck, and loyal Disney fans by Minnie Mouse.”

Presentations were judged and evaluated based on teams’ proposed business objectives, success metrics, and recommendations for improvement to Disney’s site. After presenting, the BYU Marriott team was selected by the judges to compete in the final round against six other top teams in the competition.

**Jeff Dotson**, BYU Marriott professor of marketing and faculty advisor for the competition, was impressed by the students’ willingness to work through a variety of challenges to put together an insightful presentation. “BYU Marriott has a reputation for success in this competition, and the team’s performance this year continues to build that reputation,” he says.

### Two Students Receive Scholarships, Attend Sports Seminar

While their classmates shivered through another week of winter in Utah, two experience design and management (EXDM) students enjoyed the sunny coast of Hollywood Beach, Florida. Scholarship recipients and interns **Camille Cooper**



and **Kylie Jensen** attended the Stadium Managers Association (SMA) seminar in February 2022, honing skills they’ve learned at BYU Marriott and preparing for their future careers.

Every year, the SMA awards three scholarships to students across the country who work in sports facility or event management and participate in community service. Cooper and Jensen received two of those awards, with Cooper receiving the group’s highest accolade, the Rob Labinski Scholarship.

The pair credits their EXDM experience for helping them stand out among the applicants. “I am always encouraged to do EXDM class projects in a field that interests me, so I focus on sports,” Jensen says. “I also took a venue management class through the major, so I talked about my projects and that class in my application. My variety of EXDM experiences helped me earn the scholarship, and I think the uniqueness of the EXDM major stood out as well.”

EXDM adjunct professor **Justin Durfey** is on the SMA board of directors and helped Cooper and Jensen network at the seminar. He also saw how the experience connected to their coursework and will translate to their careers. “The experience that Camille and Kylie had at the SMA seminar puts them ahead of other graduates,” Durfey says. “They were able to meet some of the top stadium managers and executives in sports. These contacts make the transition from college to career much easier. These types of opportunities open doors to BYU Marriott graduates as students prepare to move into careers.”



# Alumni News

## MANAGEMENT SOCIETY

### Learning from Mr. Thank You

The California San Diego Chapter, in partnership with the California Irvine County, California Sacramento, and California San Francisco Chapters, recently hosted a virtual event featuring John Israel, founder of Mr. Thank You, a consulting firm focused on client and employee retention. Israel addressed the topic of gratitude in the workplace, teaching participants how to transform their professional and personal



relationships by expressing authentic appreciation and respect. About 30 management society members and friends participated in the event, and many were eager to share their newfound knowledge with their teams at work.

"I was impressed and motivated by his topic and thought it was relevant to our members, especially from the standpoint of moral and ethical leadership," says San Diego chapter treasurer Tanya Scott, who helped organize the event. "Gratitude is always in style and fits well with our business leaders' approach to serving clients, customers, and team members."

### Hospital Donations in Côte d'Ivoire

On November 27, 2021, the Côte d'Ivoire Chapter hosted a dinner gala to raise



## The Art of Persistence

"Art has always been in my blood," says Maryland-based painter **Rob Talbert**. He grew up looking over the shoulder of his dad, Neil, a watercolor landscape painter, and enjoyed taking art classes in high school and during his undergraduate years at BYU. But after completing a bachelor's degree in

university studies with emphases in English, philosophy, and Spanish in 1975, Talbert's practical side won out. Rather than pursuing art, he opted to earn an MBA at BYU Marriott, graduating in 1977.

Even as he progressed in his business career, Talbert's interest in art never waned. He loved visiting galleries, talking to artists, and producing the occasional art piece for his children or for a work project. But it wasn't until 15 years ago that he decided to get serious about picking up his palette and brushes again.

Talbert was visiting his dad and, on a whim, asked for an art lesson, which his father eagerly provided. After that, "learning art became a mission for me," he recalls. "I just could not leave it alone." He took lessons, participated in workshops, and made trips to Texas to study with an artist he admired. Since then, Talbert has created more than 200 paintings and has become a signature member of several recognized art societies. His work, which often highlights people and scenes from the American frontier, has won awards both in the United States and abroad and has been featured in juried shows and in art publications.

Talbert credits his wife, Becky, along with his three children, their spouses, and his seven grandchildren for their encouragement and motivation—and for serving as some of his best models. "They've been a huge support, not just in art, but in all areas of my life. I've learned more from them than I ever learned from any combination of classes or work experiences," says Talbert. "I'm deeply indebted to all of them."

Through painting, Talbert has been schooled in perseverance. "Art is nothing more than solving a whole lot of problems," he says. "You start off with an idea, and you immediately have to figure out how to get past one problem after another in trying to achieve it. Sometimes you succeed and sometimes you don't. It can be a difficult process, and it's taught me some real life lessons."

Persevering and problem solving have also been key in Talbert's 45-year career in information systems. As he neared the end of his MBA studies, Talbert received a job offer from Arthur Andersen in Chicago with an option to work in either auditing consulting or information systems consulting. Information systems seemed "more exciting and a better fit," he says—and he has never regretted that decision. Talbert has been an IS consultant, a vice president, and a program manager for numerous companies including Marriott International and Kentlands Corporation, a real-estate development and building firm. He has also been self-employed as a project and program manager. The most rewarding moments, he observes, have been "all the times I have been able to help people solve a problem, improve a process or a system, or bring clarity to something that is confusing."

Since 2018, Talbert has been IT program manager for the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), a 100-year-old nonprofit in Washington, DC, that administers programs that improve medical education. He leads a team of more than 100 people who are working on a multiyear project to modernize the AAMC's 50-plus custom applications that aid medical students in every step of their journeys, from taking the MCAT to being matched for a residency. The project also includes closing down on-premises data centers and moving applications to the cloud.

"It's my first time working for a nonprofit, and it's very rewarding," says Talbert. "Being able to impact the quality of medical education in the US feels vital and important. It's wonderful to be able to contribute everything I've learned over the last several decades to this effort."

# Connecting for Good

**Michele LeMon Stitt**'s family likes to joke that she can't walk through an airport without running into someone she knows. And it's a known fact that she can always get people to open up in first conversations. "I'm a connector—of people, places, and ideas," says Stitt. "I like knowing people and what they're thinking about and working on. And I enjoy connecting individuals and connecting organizations. Collaboration creates greater impact than working alone."

That gift for connecting has proven invaluable in Stitt's current assignment as community outreach leader for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Kansas City area. Stitt began serving shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, which brought both challenges and opportunities. "Things shut down, but the needs didn't go away," she says. "We found that God had important work for us to do that was made even more possible by the pandemic."

For example, Stitt and her team wanted to increase connections with city leaders who worked with marginalized communities. While scheduling in-person meetings might previously have taken months, during shutdown people readily accepted invitations for virtual meetings. As they entered others' homes via Zoom, "we got to know each other as brothers and sisters, and this allowed us to become trusted coworkers in good causes," says Stitt. "It was a miraculous way God expedited relationship building."

One opportunity to work together came during summer 2020, when violence affected many US cities. The Church's Welfare Department offered a truckload of critical commodities and invited Stitt's committee to find a high-impact way to use it. Together with other faith-based organizations, they created a drive-through Peacemakers Pop-Up, where volunteers, including local police officers, distributed food, masks, clothing, information about social services, and even prayer rocks painted by Latter-day Saint youth. "So many people came together to lift our brothers and sisters," says Stitt. "We were all witnesses that when we work together, God magnifies the effort."

Since then, the group has sponsored two additional pop-ups and is currently partnering to help families access living-wage employment by connecting them with short-term job training and helping remove barriers so they can participate.

A 1988 human resources alumna, Stitt was selected by General Electric (GE) for the company's two-year intensive financial management program, from which she graduated with honors. She worked for GE Capital and GE Medical Systems for eight years as a leader in quality, finance, and financial services.

Stitt and her husband, Jeff, met at GE in Milwaukee—though, coincidentally, they were born in the same hospital and delivered by the same doctor in Kansas City exactly a month apart. Stitt became a stay-at-home parent after their first child was born; the couple later adopted a daughter from Khabarovsk, Russia.

Jeff's career took the family to Kentucky, Minnesota, Utah, South Africa, and Switzerland. Three years ago, they returned "home" to Overland Park, Kansas. "We have loved every place we've lived," says Stitt. "We've been blessed to find friends and mentors who helped us navigate the culture and immerse ourselves as 'fellow citizens' as much as possible." These experiences, Stitt notes, have helped her be more open to other perspectives and appreciate different ways of approaching problems. "I think it has made me more invested in helping people come together in ways that amplify strengths. It's made me treasure unity."

In each community, Stitt has been recruited for volunteer leadership roles, including director of the Calvary Community Outreach Network board in Kansas City, member of the special education advisory council for the Blue Valley School District in Overland Park, president of the parents' association at the Inter-Community School in Zurich, and member of the board of directors for North Sands Learning Academy in Johannesburg. "I have a lot of energy and willingness to work. With my family responsibilities, volunteering has been a good fit for me," says Stitt. "As a member of a variety of groups seeking to lift others, I've seen the truth of what Joseph Smith taught: 'By union of feeling we obtain power with God.'"



funds for equipment for the pediatric department of the Treichville district teaching hospital in Abidjan. Eighty people attended the activity, including BYU Management Society members and their families, private donors, medical practitioners, and journalists. This is the fourth time the chapter has made similar gifts to hospitals in the region. In 2018, after discovering the huge need in their area for materials and equipment to care for premature infants, the chapter began buying and donating medical supplies and machines. When it became apparent that the hospitals' needs exceeded the chapter's resources, management society members decided to invite friends, colleagues, and local organizations to contribute, and the idea of a dinner gala was born.

"[The evening] was aimed at creating awareness and engaging people in the cause," says Stephane Edja Konin, president of the organizing committee. "It was also a great opportunity to promote our values. We could tell that those who attended were emotionally captivated, and we could feel their compassion. The hospital's medical staff was grateful for our help, and the donors were proud to be a part of the solution."

## The Great Resignation



In the United States, the BYU Management Society's south-east region recently launched a quarterly virtual lecture series on

leadership. One of their latest events was organized by the Washington DC Chapter and featured **Brooks Holtom**, a BYU Marriott Macc alum and current professor of management at Georgetown University.

Holtom, who consults with a variety of organizations and whose research on employee engagement has been published



in top academic journals, discussed the Great Resignation and why nearly two-thirds of US workers are currently looking for a new job. He shared ideas about strategies employers can use to keep employees with their company and ways employees can better engage with their employers—or find employers that are more likely to keep them engaged.

**Joel Cundick**, chapter president, reports that the 50 people who participated in the event had a positive experience and asked many questions. “We are hopeful that this lecture series will improve our ability to provide content that is helpful to our members in their careers, in their homes, and in their service to others,” he says.

## CLASS NOTES

### 1972



A 1972 business management graduate, **W. Ralph Peck** also completed a master’s degree in agriculture at BYU in 1975. He

went on to build a successful career at the Montana Department of Agriculture, including appointments to two governors’ cabinets and as an assistant dean in the College of Agriculture at Montana State University. In 2015 he retired as an administrative officer in the USDA Veterinary Services. Throughout his 40-year career, Peck was frequently recognized for his outstanding work and service to agriculture. He and his wife, Julie, have four children and six grandchildren and reside in Helena, Montana. Peck has volunteered as a member of the Rossiter School Park Board as well as numerous agricultural boards. In his free time, he loves serving in the Church, being with family, camping, hunting, boating, and snowmobiling. He was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in 2015 but continues to be as active as possible.

### 1980



“My degree from BYU Marriott has been invaluable to me in raising and managing the affairs of a large family,” says **Jane**

**VanderStek Richter**, a 1980 finance alumna. She graduated three weeks before giving birth to her first child and has chosen to stay at home full-time with her eight children, seven of whom have graduated from BYU. Richter and her husband, Ernest, reared their family primarily in the Houston area, where Ernest worked for ExxonMobil; they also spent five years on assignment in Doha, Qatar. The couple recently completed a three-year assignment as mission leaders in the Chile Concepción Mission, where they weathered civil unrest and the COVID-19 pandemic with their missionaries. To prepare for this calling, Richter learned to speak Spanish. In her free time, she enjoys reading biographies of historical figures, playing sports of any kind, doing family history research, and keeping in touch with her 24 grandchildren.

### 1985



While working in her first job after graduating with a BS in marketing, **Kirsten Wald**

**Stoneley** was introduced to computer systems and software and was trained to code. That laid the groundwork for her career in the computer software industry. She has since worked for several startup companies in sales and support, and she loves being customer facing and seeing how software can help clients achieve their goals. Currently, she is a principal project manager for client services for the AI company Nuance, which is in the process of being acquired by Microsoft. Stoneley resides in Woodland Hills, California, with her daughter. She owned her own interior design studio for 11 years, and in her free time she enjoys photography and international travel. Since 2012 she has volunteered with an organization that helps women and men who struggle with codependency, addiction, and broken relationships to learn new life skills and lead productive and happy lives.

### 1990

After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in human resources in 1990, **Jeff Trump** earned an MBA from the University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business in 1995. He spent three years in marketing



management at Kimberly-Clark Corporation and then joined what is now Reynolds Consumer Products (RCP), where he has

worked for more than 23 years. Trump has held various marketing and sales leadership roles in the waste bag, food bag, tableware, and bakeware categories. He has led the RCP International and Canadian businesses and now oversees the customer marketing group for private brands in the Presto business unit. Trump and his wife, Shelley Hill Trump (also a BYU graduate), live in the Chicago area with their two adult children. Outside of work, Trump is actively involved in church service and enjoys participating in a range of sports. His perfect day, he says, “would include spending time with my family and continuing my search for the perfect ice cream and the perfect guitar amplifier.”

### 1992



Since 2003, **Shon Gallagher** has been a software developer for Anthem Inc., a leading health benefits company that serves

more than 100 million people. As a solutions engineer advisor, he maintains various Anthem affiliate applications and websites branded under the HealthLink name. Gallagher, who earned a bachelor’s degree in management with an emphasis in management information systems in 1992, became interested in coding at an early age. “My father worked on the logistics software for the US Air Force for many years,” he says. “I guess you could say I followed in his footsteps.” Gallagher and his wife, Julia, are the parents of four children (the eldest of whom is a BYU alumna) and live in Cottleville, Missouri. He enjoys photography, cooking, and working on cars. He is a head-and-neck cancer survivor and has been cancer free for more than five years.

### 1998

As a senior product marketing lead for Microsoft, **Marco Bellini** oversees the marketing compete strategy for Windows and Surface products. Since



starting at Microsoft in 2006, he has filled numerous senior marketing manager and product manager roles. Bellini studied

electronic engineering in his native Italy, then graduated from BYU Marriott in 1998 with a BS in business management. Before earning an MBA at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School in 2006, he worked in product marketing in Utah and Italy and cofounded a software consulting company. Outside of work, Bellini is a part-time lecturer at the University of Washington Bothell, where he teaches undergraduate and graduate business courses on marketing management, business intelligence, and innovation. He enjoys playing in local tennis tournaments and collecting historical artifacts. Bellini and his wife, Daniela, reside in Seattle and have five children, including three current BYU students and one BYU graduate.

## 1999



When he was nearing the end of his master of organizational behavior studies in 1999, **Wilson Tan** received an invita-

tion to explore a job opportunity at Bell Textron Inc. (then Bell Helicopter), a technology company that provides commercial and military vertical flight aircraft to customers throughout the world. That invitation set the course for his future career. With the support of his professors and BYU Marriott's dean, Tan began working for the company one semester before he graduated—and has been there ever since. Currently director of HR business partners, Tan leads a team of global HR generalists located in the United States, Canada, Mexico, the Czech Republic, and Singapore. In 2020 he was part of a team that won the company's Chairman's Award for Innovation for helping set up an onsite health and wellness center. Tan also earned a BA in English from BYU-Hawaii in 1996. He and his wife, Marie, have four children (two of whom are BYU students) and reside in Fort Worth, Texas.

## 2003



As director of tax and controller for Communications Equity Associates, an investment banking and private equity firm in Tampa,

Florida, **Monica Donosso** oversees the tax firm's return preparation and filing for all of the private equity funds. She also prepares GAAP financial statements and recordings for some funds and does tax research on the formation and ongoing activities of all of the company's private equity funds, which bankroll commercial and residential real-estate projects throughout Florida, Georgia, and Texas. A 2003 MACC alumna, Donosso previously worked for CPA firm WSRP in Salt Lake City and for KPMG in Chicago. She and her husband, Hernando, reside in Tampa with their two children. In her free time, Donosso enjoys spending time with her children, learning foreign languages, and working out. She is a certified group fitness instructor and has taught weekend fitness classes. She is also a member of the Florida Institute of CPAs, where she volunteered prepanemic.

## 2005



**Jason Torres** was so impressed with Infor, a cloud enterprise solutions company, when he was a customer that he became an employee

as soon as the opportunity arose. Now a senior cloud program manager, he oversees cloud upgrade projects and bridges the gaps between customers and the operation and development teams. Torres's remote work position gives him flexibility for adventures with his wife, Heather, and their five children, ages 3 to 11. From their home in Parma, Idaho, they enjoy outdoor activities such as biking, kayaking, and swimming. They love traveling and in 2019 spent two months exploring the East Coast of the United States. Torres and Heather own a photography business specializing in weddings and portraits. Torres graduated from BYU Marriott in 2005, earning a BS in management with an emphasis in finance; he also holds a master of health administration and an MBA from Weber State University.

## 2009



After completing her bachelor's degree in information systems at BYU Marriott in 2009, **Dilly Stoyanova** worked as a web

developer and quality assurance analyst until she became a stay-at-home parent for her twin daughters. Stoyanova has recently reentered the workforce and is now with Kinestry, a company that helps bring AI solutions into a wide variety of businesses; some of their long-term clients include Nestlé, Disney, 20th Century Studios, and global apparel and footwear company VF. In her role as a business analyst, Stoyanova works as part of a team that evaluates a client's current systems and configurations and makes recommendations for improvements. Stoyanova also holds an MBA from Seattle University. In her free time, she enjoys doing freelance graphic design and photography. She and her husband, Jeremy Faulkner, and their daughters reside in Draper, Utah.

## 2013



Growing up in a small town in southern Idaho, **Tate Hansen** worked his share of manual labor jobs, typically in the freezing cold or

sweltering heat. So when it came time to choose a career, he knew he wanted to be able to provide well for a family—and work in a comfortable office building. Hansen discovered accounting while taking a college career-exploration class; after his first tax course, he knew he was in the right place. Hansen, a 2013 MACC alumnus, is now a senior tax manager at PwC in Salt Lake City. He enjoys helping clients understand and comply with ever-changing tax requirements, helping attract and retain new talent, and coaching the members of his team. Hansen and his wife, Amber, live in Bountiful, Utah, and are parents to six children—twins, a singleton, and triplets. In his free time, Hansen relaxes by reading, exercising, and watching movies with his family.

## 2015

As a chief scheduler for Sandia National Laboratories, **Jess Yao** oversees the



# The Family That Farms Together



They never planned to buy a farm. They were just looking for a place to live. But when **Kehaulani Jones**, her husband, Andrew, and their children moved from St. Louis to southern Wisconsin for Andrew's job, they stumbled upon a historic 80-acre farm—and immediately fell in love. Nestled in green, rolling hills and sheltered by Baraboo Bluffs, the area reminded them of Andrew's native New Zealand. It seemed the perfect place to connect with nature, teach their children to work, and complement their homeschooling activities. "We were transplants coming in from a different state," recalls Jones. "We didn't know what a gem this place was."

The previous owners hadn't lived in the house or seriously engaged in farming for more than 30 years, so it was "kind of a mess," says Jones, "but we saw it as a blank canvas." They began researching agricultural ventures that the whole family could be involved in and settled on lavender, a "triple-threat" plant that has medicinal, decorative, and culinary uses. Armed with skills she gained from the BYU Marriott MPA program, which she completed in 2001, and her 1999 BYU bachelor's degree in linguistics, Jones put together spreadsheets to look at the proposition from all angles.

Once they decided to move forward, the next hurdle was dealing with the naysayers. "It was so trying," Jones remembers. "I called up the extension office here in our area, and they said, 'What's lavender?' And then

I went into the nurseries, and people would say, 'You're going to grow what? That doesn't grow around here.' The first season, even customers were telling us the lavender wouldn't come back." But the family remained optimistic.

Jones attended lavender-growing seminars in the Pacific Northwest and, through a process of trial and error, adapted cultivation processes to the climate in Baraboo. "It was a big learning curve," she says. But the family jumped in with gusto, starting out with 2,000 plants and a variety of cultivars.

After an experimental year to make sure the lavender would survive a Wisconsin winter, they opened their farm to the public. Eight years later, Rowley Creek Lavender Farm is a complex agritourism operation that hosts a full calendar of events during lavender season. It boasts an onsite shop (an existing shed the Joneses spent two years renovating) and has a small online presence to sell the family's "aloha made" lavender products, ranging from essential oils and luxurious skincare items to home decor and food. Along the way, Jones has picked up certifications in permaculture, aromatherapy, natural skincare design, and yoga instruction to support the farm's activities.

In addition to cultivating the crop, the family handles marketing, social media, and website design, and they also provide tours and educate guests. "It's been quite an adventure," says Jones—and the best part is the unity her family has built along the way. "We know how to work together. It's all-hands-on-deck when there's an event. We've come to the point where we can almost read each other's body language and anticipate where to be and what we have to do." In addition to pitching in physically, everyone contributes their best thinking to improve the business. "The kids come up with amazing ideas and some creative solutions when we encounter challenges," she says.

Among her degrees and certifications, Jones lists her favorite as her "ongoing degree in mom." She homeschools her five children and says teaching each of them to read is one of her proudest accomplishments. "Most things I can't really take credit for, even this farm. It's a group effort. And whatever my kids have achieved, that's their thing. But I *can* say I taught them how to read. For me, that signifies that I helped to open their eyes."



integrated site schedule (integration of more than 40 project schedules) for a major program at the lab; manages a team of

schedule coaches; and trains project controllers, project managers, and technical leads in cost and schedule analysis. Yao, who held a rare remote-work position at Sandia for three years, was able to draw on her experience to provide resources and outline processes for multiple departments when the COVID-19 pandemic

forced the lab to provide flexible work options. Yao earned a BS in family life from BYU in 2011 and an MPA from BYU Marriott in 2015. She resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with her husband, Michael, and their young son. She has volunteered as a judge for the New Mexico state DECA competition and spearheaded a corporate gift donation effort to benefit a local Head Start program.

## 2016

"The thing I take the most pride in is that all of my coworkers in both of the jobs



I've had since graduating have trusted me to do quality work," says **Kelli McGhie**, who earned an MISM and a BS in information

systems in 2016. McGhie currently works for Fast Enterprises, a company that creates and configures software systems for state and local governments to help them handle taxes, driver and vehicle services, and unemployment. In her role as an implementation consultant, she configures existing software systems to

meet the individual needs of each client. McGhie was previously a conversion developer at Bit Link Solutions. She lives in East Windsor, Connecticut, and loves learning new things (such as languages and the names of world capitals), traveling to fun places (especially Disneyland

and Honolulu), and playing obscure board and card games. Last year she made and donated 50 sets of hand warmers.

## 2017

Making sure products get to the right place at the right time in the right



quantities is **Tony Tripp**'s focus as a senior analyst for inventory planning and replenishment at the Home Depot. Tripp, a

2017 global supply chain alum, supports the Home Depot's merchandising team in executing their sales strategy for all the walk-behind lawn mowers sold in every store, collaborating with vendors as well as his coworkers in the transportation, distribution, forecasting, and field operations divisions. "What I've enjoyed most in my career are the opportunities I've had to optimize a work process or build a tool in Excel that makes the work life of a teammate better," he says. Tripp was previously a design and engineering analyst at XPO Logistics. Outside of work, he enjoys cooking, reading, listening to music, and following the NBA. He and his wife, Kamree (a BYU elementary education grad), have one son and recently bought their first home in Woodstock, Georgia.

## 2018



**Katie Zackrison**

**Dalton** loves to explore new things, including restaurants, activities, and travel destinations. She also

knows the value of continually exploring career opportunities. A 2018 EXDM alumna, she has worked in the wedding industry, planned corporate events, and worked with a variety of nonprofits. "These experiences helped me discover my strengths and where I can influence others in positive ways, as well as what I value in a work-home balance," she says. Dalton started her career planning experiences for families at Thanksgiving Point in Lehi, Utah. Now, as commencement event coordinator for Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, she oversees all aspects of commencement ceremonies, from helping prospective graduates order regalia and obtain guest tickets to working with faculty and staff volunteers. Outside of work, Dalton, who is part Hawaiian, enjoys learning more about her ancestors and heritage. She and her husband, **Connor** (a BYU Marriott recreation management grad), reside in Mesa, Arizona.

## Building BlueBox

It's an unassuming blue box, not much bigger than a deck of cards. So it might seem surprising to hear **Dustin Ormond**, a BYU Marriott alumnus and a Creighton University associate professor of business intelligence and analytics, refer to it as one of the most rewarding projects of his career so far. The aptly named BlueBox is actually a miniature computer run by either electricity or solar power and loaded with a digital library that contains open-source textbooks, Khan Academy videos, Wikipedia Education, and wikiHow. Even without internet, any device that can connect through BlueBox's hotspot can access this wealth of information.

The project began when one of Ormond's fellow professors at Creighton, Charles Braymen, was exploring ways to provide people in developing countries increased access to educational resources. Early on, he asked Ormond to join him to help with technology. The result of their efforts is a Raspberry Pi-based computer that the duo has now placed in schools and churches in the Dominican Republic, several African countries, and refugee camps around the world. "I'm honored to be involved in this because it has an impact on building the lives of others," Ormond says. "It goes along the line of 'if you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.'"

Ormond and Braymen have also created a service-centered, multidisciplinary university course in which students learn to not only build the computers but also fix bugs, suggest and implement improvements, and conduct local trainings for teachers in developing countries. So far, says Ormond, they've only scratched the surface of BlueBox's potential.

Ormond, who earned an MISM and a BS in information systems from BYU Marriott in 2009, worked as a database developer at Xactware in Provo before entering a PhD program in business information systems at Mississippi State University. After completing his doctoral studies in 2014, Ormond, his wife, Amy, and their children (who now number five) moved to Omaha, Nebraska, where Ormond had accepted a position at Creighton.

Ormond says he was drawn to the university because of its similarities to BYU: it is a private school with strong Christian values, a welcoming culture, and students who are striving for excellence. Ormond teaches database and cybersecurity courses, and his research interests lie in areas of behavioral information security and deception. "I love teaching and interacting with students," he says. "It's so rewarding to see people increase their understanding through my classes and then be able to apply what they've learned in industry."

To enhance his teaching and research, Ormond built—and continues to expand—a web application for working with databases. It is a one-stop location where students can write code, diagram databases, build websites, write structured query language, take cybersecurity exams, and work on group projects, with the code synchronizing across students. The application also features conference calling, chatting, and project management tools and can track more than 200 points of student activity, including checking for cheating on exams. Ormond's colleagues use it in their classes as well. "They say it rivals similar apps in the industry and that I should license it to other universities," says Ormond. "That's something I'm thinking about for the future."

In recognition of his service at Creighton, Ormond was named Heider College of Business Faculty Member of the Year in 2015 and Graduate Business Faculty of the Year in 2019. He also received the college's Cahill Award of Excellence in 2018 and 2019. Ormond credits professors at BYU Marriott with showing him how to effectively interact with students. "I felt like the faculty actually cared about me as a person," he says. "I also saw that they were working on projects beyond teaching and research that made a difference in the world. They are role models for me, both as a professor and in my life outside of academia."









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