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# MARRIOTT

ALUMNI MAGAZINE



WINTER 2021





TANNER'S PUMPKIN PATCH

COSMO'S PUMPKIN PATCH

PLACE  
PUMPKINS  
HERE!

OPEN DAILY



# MARRIOTT

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

ISSUE Winter 2021

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◀ A STUDENT WALKS BY A FESTIVE DISPLAY IN THE TANNER BUILDING DURING BYU MARRIOTT'S HALLOWEEK, WHICH INCLUDED COVID-19 -APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES AND HOLIDAY-THEMED DECORATIONS TO THE SCHOOL. PHOTO COURTESY OF BYU PHOTO.

Sleep is optional. • He always has some injury that he's complaining about. • I'm so full I never want to eat again. • I have a bruise. *I haven't looked at it, but it feels hurty.* • I was standing in line, and a girl leaned back to do a quad stretch and hit my arm. • *If you had a catchphrase, what would it be?* • I feel like everyone's on a confidence high right now. • My goal is simple: *not to fail.* • Let me get a head start up the stairs. It'll take me an extra minute. • I'm so dumb, *I can't even figure out an elevator.* • The atmosphere here is different, that's for sure. • Hold up, *let me play some High School Musical real quick.* • Then we moved to Arkansas, and it was all uphill from there. • You need to help us understand, because you blow through the material so fast. • You're going to be president of the United States. I can totally see it. *You will fly me out to DC twice a week.* • I think it was too much and looked trashy. • If they call you for an interview, *make sure it is the best interview they have ever had.* • Not all of us can sleep all day. • When I first saw him, I thought he was super cute, but now *I don't know if we would work together.* • You should try out for wrestling. • Hey, you served in my mission! • *What's my name?* I know *your* name. • I might take a summer semester but definitely not spring. • Do you want the last bite? • *How long is it going to take for Mommy to get a job?* • Like a book club with commitments? • Food always brings people together—it's a principle. • *Go get it, buddy.* • It was a total infestation. So gross. • I am just going to work on IM, nothing too crazy. • Is this seat taken? *No, but it's closer than six feet.* • I was like, *"Can I have yo numba?"* • He said it, but do you think that's what he really thinks? • I am just looking for some consistency. • *I don't think my teeth are going to fit.* • It's a culture for sure, which is interesting. • Did you go to the Jazz swag wagon yesterday? • I'll direct message you the video; it was great. • Oh, no! *I forgot I parked in an A lot.* • Yeah, bro, I was a train wreck when I first got home. • I'm not even in the business program, *but the RB stairs are a big no-no.* • Her reign of terror ends today. • It's more like being abroad than study abroad. • *There were a bunch of dogs just chillin' in the congregation.* • As far as getting things done, I can't just wake up in the morning and look at a spreadsheet. • Gotta get some grub before you hit the books. • *Are Disney princesses feminist?*

**OVERHEARD  
IN THE  
TANNER**



4



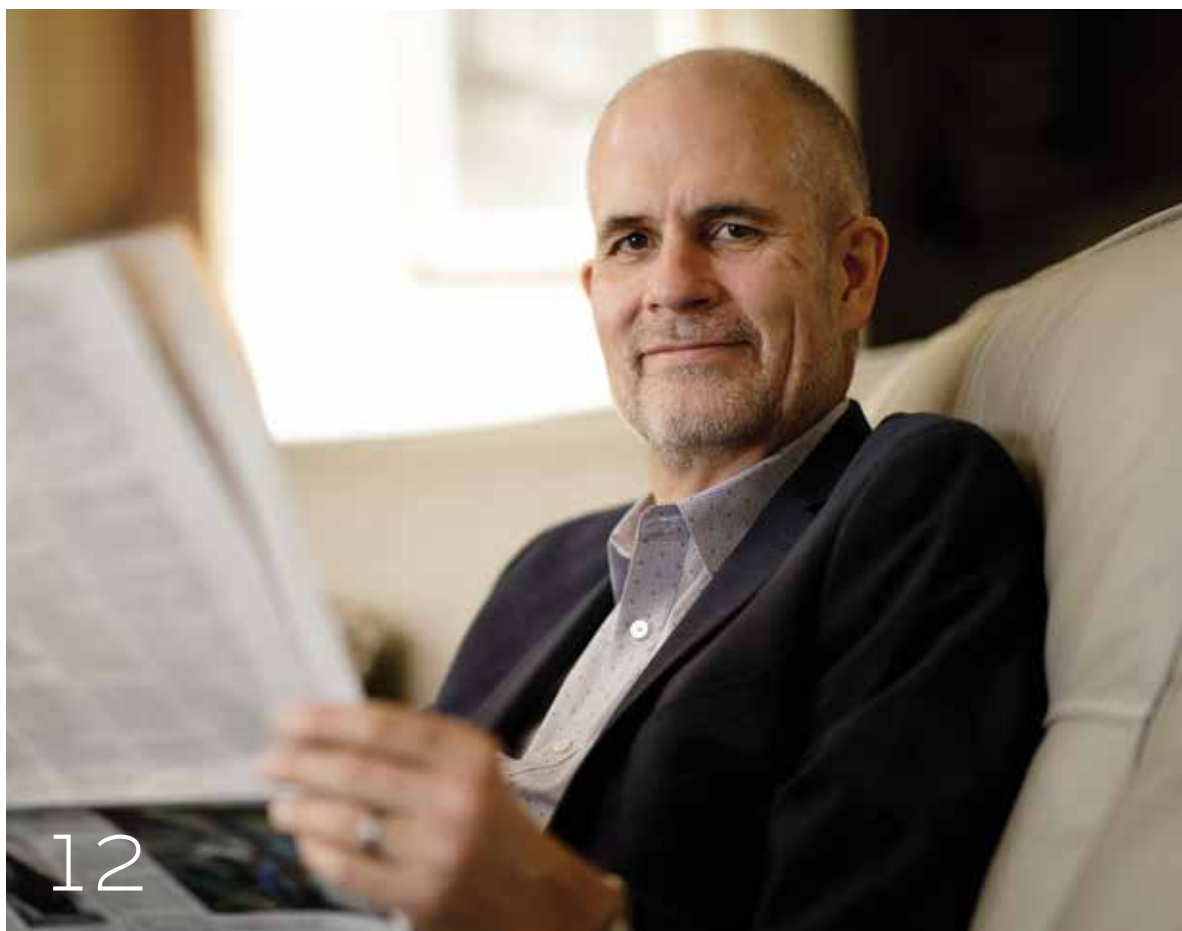
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### WEIGHTIER MATTERS

Eric Weight’s first job as a paper carrier taught him responsibility; his second job sweeping floors led to his interest in tech. Today the BYU Marriott IS alum works to improve customer experiences by implementing conversational formats for collecting feedback and helps companies harness feedback to increase the value of their products and services.

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### BENEATH THE SURFACE

Corporate culture has become a focus in recent years as companies become more aware of the forces that make some organizations more effective or stodgy or reckless than others. The underlying influences at play in an organization often forecast its rise or, sometimes, demise. Consequently, in today’s world, businesses have become much more intentional about the world they are trying to create as they recognize the need to be accountable to both stockholders *and* stakeholders—customers, suppliers, employees, the community, and even the planet at large.

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Cover illustration by Red Nose Studio





# WOMEN

# & EDU-

# CATION

*A Future Only God Could See for You*

ADDRESS by EVA WITESMAN

It is wonderful to be here. This is not an opportunity I would have imagined for myself. It is truly a future only God could see for me. I am grateful for a Father in Heaven who knows me—who knows my potential and who wants me to become like Him. I can't wait to someday see like He does—to know everything and to see the future and not just the past.

But for now I will stand like a little girl on my Father's feet, holding His hands and trusting Him as He guides me through the dance of this life. As His daughter, I hope someday to grow up to be just like Him. I am trying to become more like Him now by learning as much as I can and by working to refine the spiritual gifts He has given me.

## DAUGHTERS OF GOD

Revelation given in the book of Joel speaks of the role of women in the latter days when it says that, in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, . . . and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (Joel 2:28–29).

Your *daughters* shall *prophesy*! In these last days, we are meant to seek and receive spiritual revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost. Like Rebekah, Hannah, Elisabeth, and Mary, women are meant to receive direct spiritual revelation through the gifts of the Spirit. Like Miriam (see Exodus 15:20), Deborah (see Judges 4:4), Huldah (see



2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22), and Anna (see Luke 2:36), we can develop the spiritual gift of prophecy and refine our ability to communicate with our Father in Heaven in ways that affect our own spiritual development and have a positive impact on the world around us.<sup>1</sup>

These spiritual gifts bring us closer to the image of God, in which we were created. Through her choice to partake of the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden, Mother Eve made it possible for each of us to exercise our agency in a world filled with choices, thereby providing a way for us to spiritually develop. I do not think it was an accident that by knowledge she opened a pathway that would allow us to become more like God. I believe this sets an eternal pattern. “The glory of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:36), and we must likewise enhance our own inherent intelligence in order to become like Him and receive His spiritual gifts.

How do we reach this divine potential? How do we strengthen these spiritual gifts that have been foretold? Eliza R. Snow wrote, “Let them seek for wisdom instead of power and they will have all the power they have wisdom to exercise.”<sup>2</sup>

### AN EXPANSIVE VIEW

When God prepares a leader for the gift of prophecy, He expands their view; He does

not narrow it. He provides context for the leader’s personal prophetic development through lessons on the vast science and history of the earth and of the people on it.

To Moses He gave a vision of “the earth, yea, even all of it; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold. . . . And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; . . . And he beheld many lands; and each land was called earth, and there were inhabitants on the face thereof” (Moses 1:27–29).

To the brother of Jared He gave a vision of “all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be . . . , even unto the ends of the earth” (Ether 3:25).

And to all the Nephite women, men, and children visited by Christ, “he did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory. . . . And many of them saw and heard unspeakable things, which are not lawful to be written” (3 Nephi 26:3, 18).

Formal higher education provides an opportunity to see more as God sees—not through a narrow and shrinking echo chamber but with “the depth of the riches both of . . . wisdom and knowledge” (Romans 11:33), with all things continually before Him (see D&C 130:7), “for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things” (Alma 26:35).

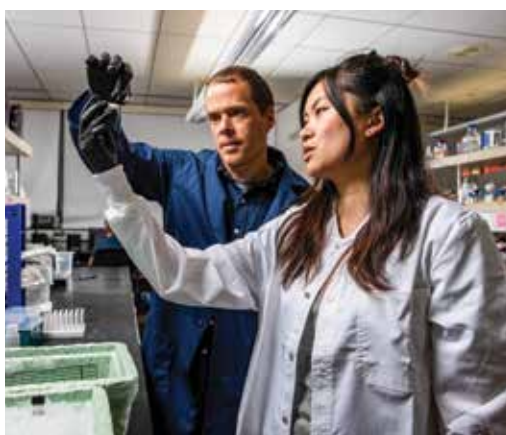


This vastness of knowledge must be earned through hard work and by leveraging a greater perspective than our own. Like Eve, we must have our eyes opened not only to new information but to new ways of thinking about that information. If we seek discernment through the Holy Ghost as we engage in this process, we will be brought to new ways of valuing, understanding, and perceiving truth.

### EDUCATION IS A COMMANDMENT

Multiple prophets and apostles have made it explicitly clear that “for members of the Church, education is not merely a good idea—it’s a commandment.”<sup>3</sup> Speaking specifically to women, President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “You must get all of the education that you possibly can.”<sup>4</sup> And President Dallin H. Oaks said, “We make no distinction between young men and young women in our conviction about the importance of an education and in our commitment to providing that education.”<sup>5</sup>

The Lord made clear that “all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal” (D&C 29:34). This means that the







*"You must get all of the education that you possibly can. We make no distinction between young men and young women in our conviction about the importance of an education and in our commitment to providing that education."*

—PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

commandment to pursue education—no matter how temporally useful—is really about the development of our spirits and our spiritual gifts. We are commanded to receive education, and this is a spiritual—not merely a temporal—commandment.

Prophetic counsel to women has repeated the benefits of education in case we are called upon to become so-called breadwinners in our households. This is wise counsel, and I have seen its place in the lives of close friends and family members time and time again. But this counsel adds, "precept upon precept" (2 Nephi 28:30), to a deeper truth about the education of women: our pursuit of knowledge has its own spiritual value regardless of whether we ever enter the paid labor force.

President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "Your mind is precious! It is sacred. Therefore, the education of one's mind is also sacred. Indeed, education is a religious responsibility. . . . In light of this celestial perspective, if you . . . cut short your education, you would not only disregard a divine decree but also abbreviate your own eternal potential."<sup>6</sup>

Our learning is of value not only if we become mothers or workers, church leaders or community activists. We are of value because of our divine heritage and because of what will one day be our divine inheritance. Our value is not merely instrumental. It is intrinsic. And our learning is not merely instrumental. It is essential.

## EDUCATION: "ON HOLY GROUND"

I love this powerful quote from President J. Reuben Clark Jr.:

[We] who [invade] the domain of knowledge must approach it as Moses came to the burning bush; [we stand] on holy ground; [we] would acquire things sacred; [we seek] to make [our] own the attributes of deity. . . . We must come to this quest of truth—in all regions of human knowledge whatsoever, not only in reverence, but with a spirit of worship.

. . . Our knowledge is to be coterminous with the universe and is to reach out and to comprehend the laws and the workings of the vast deeps of the eternities. All domains

of all knowledge belong to us. In no other way could the great law of eternal progression be satisfied.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, President Henry B. Eyring said, “Part of the tragedy you must avoid is to discover too late that you missed an opportunity to prepare for a future only God could see for you.”<sup>8</sup>

In a world that values education primarily as a means to increase our value in the workplace, nonlinear educational paths may sometimes be considered nontraditional, but they are not nonessential. As Kristen Oaks observed, “Women’s educational paths and experiences are often very different from men’s.”<sup>9</sup> As Latter-day Saints, we know that the pursuit of education is not merely about gaining marketable skills in an efficient and linear fashion but that education is also a tool for gaining important spiritual growth and spiritual gifts that can be used in all facets of our lives.

Our intellectual and spiritual growth through education is a righteous pursuit and represents our willingness to fulfill a commandment of God. Investments in our own development are worthwhile because we are daughters of God, and He wants us to reach our divine potential in every possible way. But it should also be acknowledged that it is virtually impossible for the influence of a Spirit-led education to end with only our own benefit.

In 1 Corinthians 13, we read, “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. . . . Charity never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:2, 8).

Elder and Sister Oaks wrote, “Our religious faith teaches us that we should seek learning by the Spirit and that we have a stewardship to use our knowledge for the benefit of mankind.”<sup>10</sup>

We seek knowledge because it makes us more like God and brings us closer to Him, and His central trait is pure and benevolent love for all of humanity. The more we become like Him through knowledge and the more we hone our ability to hear Him testify of truth through the Spirit, the more these things will lead us to service in every aspect of our lives.

Women’s voices are needed in all echelons of human activity. Boyd K. Packer taught, “We need women who are organized and women who can organize. We need women with

executive ability who can plan and direct and administer; women who can teach, women who can speak out. . . . There is a great need for women who can receive inspiration to guide them personally in their teaching and in their leadership responsibilities.”<sup>11</sup>

To this, President Nelson added:

We . . . need your strength, your conversion, your conviction, your ability to lead, your wisdom, and your voices. The kingdom of God is not and cannot be complete without . . . women who can speak with the power and authority of God! . . .

. . . I plead with my sisters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to step forward! Take your rightful and needful place in your home, in your community, and in the kingdom of God—more than you ever have before. . . . As you do so, the Holy Ghost will magnify your influence in an unprecedented way!<sup>12</sup>

Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson said, “All women need to see themselves as essential

*Our intellectual and spiritual growth through education is a righteous pursuit and represents our willingness to fulfill a commandment of God.*







participants in the work of the priesthood. . . . The kingdom of God cannot function unless we rise up and fulfill our duties with faith. Sometimes we just need to have a greater vision of what is possible.”<sup>3</sup>

Sisters, never question the value of your education or wonder whether you will have an opportunity to learn and use the knowledge you have gained. God knows you, and even though you may not yet know His plans, He knows the end from the beginning. He is preparing and qualifying you for the work He wants you to do. He will continually guide you to ways in which your knowledge and skills can be of benefit to yourself, your family, your community, and His kingdom.

### PREVENTING FRIENDLY FIRE

For the battles we face in this life, we need to allow God to arm us in His way, in His time, and with His spiritual gifts. But in preparation for these battles, our women are frequently wounded from friendly fire, even as we stand at the armory.

Virginia H. Pearce suggested that “when we feel that we must protect and defend ourselves . . . , our energy is used

counterproductively and our learning and the learning of others is severely limited.”<sup>4</sup>

Women frequently persevere in the face of insensitive comments on the part of those around them. We are prepared to soldier on through the attacks of the adversary, who seeks to deter the pursuit of our divine potential at every turn. We are often less prepared for the stinging and inappropriate attacks and judgments of our brothers in the gospel, fellow sisters, friends, spouses, and parents.

If God has directed—even commanded—a woman to pursue her education, who are any of us to turn her away or to add to her burden as she makes her way to the summit God has bid her to climb? If God is preparing the women of His Church to fulfill prophecy—both ancient and modern—about the role of women of the Church in these latter days, we should be celebrating and supporting the women in our lives as they prayerfully seek inspiration and use their agency and intelligence to grow spiritually and serve mightily.

Latter-day Saint women are courageous, particularly when they have been emboldened by the knowledge that Heavenly Father has a plan for each of us and that He will qualify us to do the work that lies before us. Once we know what God wants us to do, we are fully capable of following the counsel of President Hinckley to “sacrifice anything that is needed to be sacrificed to . . . train [our] minds and hands to become an influence for good as [we] go forward with [our] lives.”<sup>5</sup> We will seek every good gift in the service of our God. All we ask is that others not stand in our way as we pursue the Lord’s errand. **M**

*This speech is adapted from a BYU devotional given 27 June 2017 by Eva M. Witesman, an associate professor in BYU Marriott’s Romney Center of Public Service and Ethics.*

*Photography courtesy of BYU Photo and BYU Special Collections. All photos used in this article were taken before the COVID-19 pandemic.*

### NOTES

1. See Guide to the Scriptures, s.v. “prophetess,” scriptures.churchofjesuschrist.org.
2. Eliza R. Snow, letter to Mary Elizabeth Lightner, 27 May 1869, Church History Library; quoted in *Daughters in My*

*Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), 45.

3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Two Principles for Any Economy,” *Ensign*, November 2009; see also “Education Is a Commandment,” *Prophets and Apostles*, 27 July 2012, churchofjesuschrist.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/education-is-a-commandment.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stay on the High Road,” *Ensign*, May 2004.
5. Dallin H. Oaks, “Women and Education,” *Ensign*, March 1975.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Education: A Religious Responsibility,” BYU–Idaho devotional address, 26 January 2010.
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9. Dallin H. Oaks and Kristen M. Oaks, “Learning and Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign*, April 2009.
10. Dallin and Kristen Oaks, “Learning and Latter-day Saints.”
11. Boyd K. Packer, “The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, November 1978.
12. Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 2015.
13. Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Rise Up in Strength, Sisters in Zion,” *Ensign*, November 2016.
14. Virginia H. Pearce, “The Ordinary Classroom—a Powerful Place for Steady and Continued Growth,” *Ensign*, November 1996.
15. Gordon B. Hinckley, “First Presidency Message: A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Ensign*, January 2001.



# Learning at Home

With COVID-19 forcing schools around the world to adopt modified in-person, hybrid, or fully online instruction, the idea of homeschooling is gaining momentum. While the concept of teaching children at home is certainly not new, a growing number of parents are exploring and evaluating educational options for their children.



15 TO 30

THE NUMBER OF PERCENTILE POINTS THAT HOME-EDUCATED STUDENTS SCORED HIGHER THAN PUBLIC-SCHOOL STUDENTS ON STANDARDIZED TESTS, BASED ON A 2015 STUDY.

Higher scores were achieved regardless of family income or parents' educational status.

Source: [nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling](http://nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling)

3

THE NUMBER OF STATES—ILLINOIS, LOUISIANA, AND MINNESOTA—THAT OFFER HOMESCHOOL FAMILIES A STATE TAX CREDIT ON THEIR INCOME TAXES.

Taxpayers spend an average of \$11,732 per pupil annually in public schools, plus capital expenditures; taxpayers spend nothing on most homeschool students.

Sources: [southeasthomeschoolexpo.com/tax-deduction-for-homeschoolers](http://southeasthomeschoolexpo.com/tax-deduction-for-homeschoolers) and [nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling](http://nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling)





# 2 TO 4

**THE ESTIMATED  
NUMBER OF HOURS  
SPENT REMOTE  
LEARNING (ALTHOUGH  
THE NUMBER VARIES  
SIGNIFICANTLY).**

The Illinois State Board of Education recommends that kindergarteners spend thirty to ninety minutes a day in distance learning, with time increasing to a maximum of four hours a day for high school kids. While students typically spend six to seven hours a day attending in-person public or charter schools, much of that time is spent on activities other than learning.

Source: [sheknows.com/parenting/articles/2218929/how-many-hours-homeschooling-per-day](https://sheknows.com/parenting/articles/2218929/how-many-hours-homeschooling-per-day)



# 145

**THE NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WHERE SCHOOLS WERE CLOSED ON 20 MARCH 2020 TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS, AFFECTING THE EDUCATION OF MORE THAN 900 MILLION CHILDREN.**

Source: [en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse](https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse)

# 2.5 million



**THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF STUDENTS HOMESCHOOLED IN GRADES K-12 IN THE UNITED STATES PRIOR TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

That number represents between 3 and 4 percent of all school-age children. The number of children being homeschooled has grown between 2 and 8 percent over the past few years.

Source: [nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling](https://nheri.org/research-facts-on-homeschooling)



# \$700-\$1,800

**THE AVERAGE COST TO HOMESCHOOL ONE CHILD PER SCHOOL YEAR.**

This cost includes curriculum, school supplies, field trips, and extracurricular activities.

Source: [time4learning.com/blog/new-homeschooler/how-much-does-homeschooling-cost](https://time4learning.com/blog/new-homeschooler/how-much-does-homeschooling-cost)

# Weightier Matters

Written by Emily Edmonds

Photography by Bradley Slade

**E**ric Weight's alarm clock rang at 6 a.m. every morning, no matter the weather, no matter the month, no matter the holiday. On his front porch sat copies of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, ready for distribution in his Provo neighborhood. Weight, a trusty thirteen-year-old paper carrier, was responsible for delivering them.

"The Sunday paper was the worst because it was three times as thick because of all the ads," Weight says. "I would sometimes have to make two trips on my bike because they were so heavy."

Throwing newspapers while biking—a "lost art," says Weight—was challenging, but even more daunting? Getting customers to pay. Weight was charged for the newspapers, and if his neighbor-customers didn't pay up, he was left to foot the bill himself.





**Eric Weight**  
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT, 1988

LEADING  
ALUMNI

To aid in his collection efforts, Weight bought envelopes, stamped his name and address on the front, and delivered them with the newspapers so subscribers could easily mail in their payments. If they were still delinquent, he would send past-due reminders.

"I thought I was pretty innovative, and my approach certainly saved a lot of time going door-to-door," Weight says. "I definitely learned to communicate clearly with my customers."

Working as a paper carrier was also a lesson in responsibility. "I couldn't decide to sleep in or go on vacation without making arrangements. I had to show up every morning," he says. "There were no excuses."

After years of delivering the news, Weight took a job sweeping floors at an electrical supply company and worked his way up to managing the company's computer systems. "That job introduced me to computer systems, and I noticed how computers improved performance," says Weight, who stayed with the company through high school and college.

Weight's first two vocations—though they seemed a means to an end at the time—foreshadowed his eventual professional fortes: utilizing technology and managing customers. As head of experience-management consulting at NICE Satmetrix since October 2018, Weight now gathers feedback compiled through technology and designed to understand and improve customer experiences.

"We're trying to help customers have positive interactions and experiences, as well as help companies provide valuable products and services," he says. "I have a lot of passion for using technology to understand and enhance principles of marketing."

Weight's career, which has spanned more than three decades, was also shaped while he was an information systems undergrad at BYU Marriott in the 1980s and later a master's student at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business, where he earned his MBA in 1993.

"I'm a closet geek," he quips. "I can wear a suit and tie and love working with senior executives and CEOs, but I also love to geek out on spreadsheets and analyze data."

### Taking Action on Information

Up until COVID-19 hit Utah in early 2020, Weight could be found in a terminal at Salt

Lake City International Airport every few weeks, boarding flights to various US cities or Europe. Weight has continued working with his global team even with the abrupt halt in travel.

Customer-experience management—Weight's professional focus since 2005—was born out of the market research world. "NICE is about understanding customer feedback and, more importantly, taking action," he explains. "We are looking to change based on what we're learning—almost in real time—as opposed to conducting scientific studies with market research, which can take months. We're about impacting experiences as quickly as we can."

NICE Satmetrix collects information through contact center interactions, online surveys and feedback, recorded conversations, text messaging, and social media. "As society becomes more digital, the way we obtain feedback and act on it is going to continue to evolve as well," he notes.

This includes gathering information in more conversational formats, something Weight likes to call the no-survey survey: short bursts of interaction through texts or direct messages, including Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp. "We've got to get away from surveys and interact with people the way they want to be interacted with, through rich, conversational mediums," he says. "That objective is exciting but challenging."

### Practice What You Preach

Combining the exciting and challenging is not foreign to Weight. As a new missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints, he found himself in Thailand, smelling unfamiliar odors, observing poverty close-up, and experiencing 100 percent humidity.

"Nothing that I've ever done in my life was harder than what I had to do on my mission," he says.

At that time, missionaries in Thailand weren't allowed to go door to door, so Weight and his companions spent their time trying to strike up conversations in the streets and praying for referrals. "I was in a culture that was completely opposite to what I was familiar with, and it was humbling to realize how much I had to learn about the world," he recalls. "I gained so much from the Thai people's perspective of life and religion. I couldn't have gained that eye-opening experience any other way."

Weight credits his time as a missionary—in which he spent seven months serving as a branch president—for cultivating his leadership and presentation skills, traits he has relied upon heavily ever since.

"In grad school, I gave a lot of presentations, and so many people dread those. I was like, 'Give me the PowerPoint, and I'll present all day long,'" Weight says. "My classmates wondered how I was so comfortable in front of people, but they didn't realize I'd been speaking in public at church since I was twelve years old."

His time in Thailand had other advantages. Working all day, every day, increased Weight's faith in himself and in his abilities. And another mission bonus? Weight met his wife, Ann Crebs, while serving. The two overlapped in the Missionary Training Center in Provo for a few days; he even translated for her during a meeting held in Thai.







***“While I was only at Deloitte for two years, I was with the most accomplished business leaders of my career, and I gained incredible insights that have formed the basis for my management and business philosophies ever since. I think of it as my practical MBA.”***

Their paths crossed again in Thailand when they were involved in a street board presentation for a few hours one evening, although they didn’t talk to each other, and they also eventually served in the same area in central Thailand at one point.

Weight was eager to see Ann upon her return home. “After she gave her homecoming talk, I hung out at her house for a long time. I wanted to spend time with her,” he says. “She didn’t want to date, but she was happy to hang out with me because I was a mission friend.”

Friendship led to dating, and eight months later the two married. Today they have five children, ranging in age from twenty to thirty-two: Erica, Jake, Chase, Whitney, and Jared.

### Perusing Professions

Weight’s decision to attend BYU followed family loyalties. His father, David, was a BYU psychology professor who taught for

thirty-four years. “I thought I’d follow suit,” Weight says. “I took a psychology class and an economics class my first semester, but economics made more sense to me.”

Weight began looking at econ and other business-related fields before he settled on studying information systems, which seemed to be an ideal fit for his interests. “I didn’t see myself working in economics, but it is such an important part of business,” he says. “My experience at the electrical supply store clued me in to the excitement of business and computers, and it all kind of aligned.”

After graduating in 1988, Weight worked for a software development company for a few years. “I managed programmers even though I’d never written a line of code in my life,” he says. “The skills I learned from BYU Marriott allowed me to do that.”

Weight also credits his BYU education with preparing him for his MBA. “The level of competition was higher at BYU Marriott

because there were so many driven people,” says Weight, who applied to Kelley because his wife’s cousin (a Ford recruiter) praised the school. “I was able to focus on my soft business skills at Indiana because I learned so much in my undergrad program.”

With an MBA in his pocket, Weight took a business consulting manager position in Detroit at Deloitte Consulting, which had a strong recruiting presence at Indiana University. Not long into his job, however, Weight felt he should pursue another path.

“I saw the family life of partners at the consulting firm, and that’s not what I wanted,” says Weight, who had three young children, including a newborn, at the time. “While I was only at Deloitte for two years, I was with the most accomplished business leaders of my career, and I gained incredible insights that have formed the basis for my management and business philosophies ever since. I think of it as my practical MBA.”

### From Learning to Teaching

Weight’s leap of faith landed him back in Utah at Novell, followed closely by a move to Blain Olsen White Gurr Advertising, a company his friend helped start.

While he was pondering the decision to switch companies, he found himself golfing with his dad one afternoon. “Dad, I’m thinking about leaving Novell and working

with my friend to run an advertising firm,” Weight said.

His dad replied, “The only thing lower than advertising people are used-car salesmen. Are you sure you want to get into that field?”

Weight and his dad laughed about that exchange more than once over the years. Despite his father’s advice, Weight switched to the agency in 1996, spending more than eight years there. He was intrigued by the opportunity to be a partner and excited that most of the clients were technology companies.

In 2005, Weight accepted an adjunct teaching position at BYU Marriott. Being around students was energizing, and Weight worked to ensure his promotions management class was relevant to what students could expect in the workforce. “I was so impressed with the students,” Weight adds.

Gary Rhoads, a BYU Marriott emeritus professor of marketing and entrepreneurship, noticed Weight’s penchant for practical. “Eric is very applied; it was important for him to teach content in an applied setting and share how theories are actually used in companies,” says Rhoads, who met Weight when Weight was working at the ad agency and encouraged him to apply for the adjunct position. “He’s empathetic toward students and genuine. He says what he feels, and you feel what he says.”

Weight reluctantly stopped teaching in 2010 to serve as his home ward bishop.

### Weight Management

As a leader and manager, Weight has embraced an enabling style of management. “I work to set clear objectives and expectations while allowing people to grow and be creative,” he explains.

Weight subscribes to the adage that you should hire people who are smarter than you. “Don’t feel intimidated,” he says. “You don’t need all of the answers, you just need to work collaboratively and complement each other.”

Avoiding micromanagement is one of the attributes Weight says he values most. “It all comes down to hiring fully formed adults who can work on their own,” he says. “My job isn’t to tell my team how to do their jobs; it’s to remove road blocks or help navigate around them.”

Another prevalent philosophy Weight espouses is hiring “wigglers”—a term he and David Blan, a partner at the ad agency, coined. “A wiggler is someone who doesn’t accept the status quo,” he explains. “They challenge you and bring up things you hadn’t thought of.”

Weight now reads the news electronically, but he hasn’t forgotten the lessons he learned from his paper-route days. He credits

experiences gained from being a paper carrier, a missionary, young professional, and customer guru for shaping him into who he’s become. “Obviously you have to make lots of mistakes in life and in business to become better,” he says. “If you’re afraid of making mistakes, you’re never going to improve.”

Aligning life goals with career goals, he continues, puts people where they want to be. “I’ve been blessed with plenty of opportunities,” he says. “You don’t always expect all of the little twists and turns you take in your career, but they always mean something.” **M**

### About the Author

*Emily Edmonds never had a paper route, but she did study journalism and mass communications at BYU—and played Paperboy on the Nintendo at her friend’s house in elementary school. She currently plays with her three young daughters and works part-time at Salt Lake Community College, and as a freelance writer.*







## Elementary, My Dear Watson

**IN MANY OF HIS FICTITIOUS ADVENTURES,** Sherlock Holmes chides his partner, Dr. Watson, by saying, “You see, but you do not observe.” With its emphasis on teaching students to discover solutions to seemingly impossible problems, BYU Marriott’s course Strategy 421: Strategy Implementation is one that Arthur Conan Doyle’s character would have approved of. Analyzing problems and deducing the best course of action are the main takeaways from the strategy major’s capstone course, says James Oldroyd, associate professor of strategy in the Department of Management.

“When students think about a problem over and over, they get to a point where they actually have real insight. That’s a fun place to be, when they have an insight that they can share with a client that has potential to change business,” Oldroyd says.

The concept behind the course is straightforward: student groups complete studies for various clients—from local businesses to household-name companies—and deliver strategic recommendations for client dilemmas. Oldroyd explains that these are real projects from actual clients who approach him with a variety of problems for inclusion in the course. “The students collect data, meet weekly with the clients, and do a presentation for those clients by the end of the semester,” he adds.

What’s more, the course is so focused on that single goal—providing quality deliverables to clients—that any busywork is eliminated. “The class is 100 percent focused on value creation,” Oldroyd says. “There are

Analyzing problems and offering strategic solutions are the main takeaways from the course.

***“When students think about a problem over and over, they get to a point where they actually have real insight.”***

—JAMES OLDROYD

no assignments that aren’t directly related to clients.”

To give his students hands-on experience with their projects, Oldroyd takes a hands-off approach. Students handle client meetings entirely on their own, which teaches them to manage interactions and decision-making responsibilities professionally and independently. Students utilize everything from client data to their own independent studies to analyze the client’s situation and offer direction on issues such as growth, market entry, product expansion, and optimization problems. The course also prepares students for these projects with supplementary work.

“Dr. Oldroyd did a fantastic job creating a curriculum to go along with the projects,” says John Baadsgaard, a current BYU Marriott student majoring in strategic management. “I walked away feeling like I had learned so much more than I would have if I had just completed the project.” By the end of each semester, every student team compiles an innovative and well-researched recommendation, often impressing clients à la Sherlock Holmes.

“There is nothing better than seeing a client’s eyes light up when they hear your analysis and understand the insights you’ve found,” Baadsgaard says. “It’s great to feel informed about a new industry and to be able to answer their questions as well. Feeling like you’ve done real, meaningful work to contribute to a growing business is exciting. I’ve continued to follow the company I helped. There is nothing better than seeing them use some of the ideas we recommended.”

—CLARISSA MCINTIRE





The background features abstract, flowing green line art that creates a sense of movement and depth. The lines are thin and elegant, weaving across the page and framing the central text.

# BENEATH


*Exploring the Seen  
and Unseen Forces  
That Determine  
Corporate Culture*

by ELAINE JARVIK

ILLUSTRATIONS by RED NOSE STUDIO

# SURFACE

THIS IS THE *first* IN A SERIES  
OF ARTICLES THAT LOOKS  
AT WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL  
CULTURE IS, WHY IT'S IMPORTANT,  
AND HOW TO CHANGE IT.



ere's a pretty good clue that your company is in trouble: you drive into the parking lot one morning and discover a big rig has been set on fire by disgruntled employees.

For Jeremy Andrus, who was the new CEO of what was then the Oregon-based outdoor grill company Traeger, the 2014 blaze was a turning point—and a dramatic example of a larger yet more subtle problem within the company. He'd already noticed that some of his employees were ignoring his requests for meetings and reports, and were pushing back against his decision to outsource the shipping of the company's wood pellet grills. When he became the eighth CEO in as many years, employees expected there would soon be a ninth; in fact, behind his back they began calling him Ocho.

Before landing at Traeger, Andrus had graduated with a minor in business from BYU in 1996, had earned an MBA from Harvard, and had been the CEO of Skullcandy, growing that business to \$300 million in revenue. He knew Traeger's backyard pellet grill had impressive customer loyalty, and he could see the potential for sales growth—if he could tackle the internal problems.

Andrus eventually concluded he'd have to start over if there was any chance for success. So he bought the company, moved it to Utah, and hired people who were a good fit for his new company vision. "We thought about this in terms of a quarantine," wrote Andrus in a 2019 article for *Harvard Business Review*, using a prescient analogy. "We needed to be certain we didn't bring anyone who could infect the new culture we were trying to create."

### Obvious and Unseen Forces at Play

Companies have always had their own personalities, but it took academics to examine the phenomenon—in the same way outsiders might look with different eyes at the culture of a country—to understand how characteristics shape outcome. In this way, professors such as Edgar Schein and Richard Walton were the Margaret Meade of organizational behavior.

These scholars weren't the first to study how organizations operate, but both Walton, who teaches business administration at Harvard, and Schein, a former professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management, stood

back and saw an even bigger picture: that there are both obvious and unseen forces at play in all organizations, and those forces make some organizations more effective or stodgy or reckless than others. In the 1980s, Schein christened the phenomenon "corporate culture."

Four decades later, most companies talk about culture, but some think about it more profoundly and more energetically than others. For example, online retailer Zappos positions itself as a customer service company that happens to sell things, a place where its ten core values appear on employee sweatshirts, the employees call themselves Zapponians, and the website takes you to heartwarming Zappos stories. If you call to talk to a service representative, you can even choose to first hear the joke of the day.

The O.C. Tanner company, named one of *People* magazine's 50 Companies That Care, has created Culture Cloud apps and podcasts. Hubspot—named No. 1 on Glassdoor's 2020 Best Places to Work list—provides a free copy of its *Company Culture Cookbook: 5 Ingredients of a Great Work Environment*. In addition, hundreds of consulting companies exist that promise to repair cultures that have gone wrong.

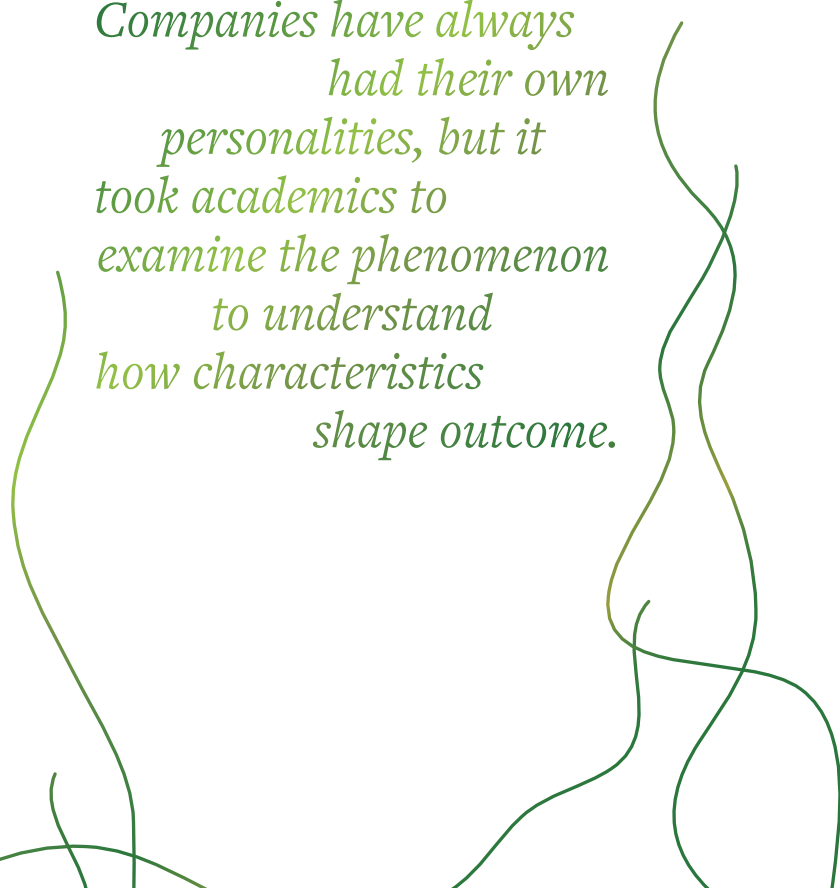
In the twenty-first century, *corporate culture* has become not just a buzzword but a mantra and, increasingly, an industry of its own.

Still, the concept of corporate culture can be abstract, so analogies are helpful. Schein looked to nature, coming up initially with the familiar image of an iceberg.

The tip, above the metaphorical water, consists of what you can readily observe about a company—the artifacts such as nap pods and onsite oil changes for employees at Google. Just below the surface are a company's professed mission statements, rules, and taglines. And the hulking mass of ice way down deep includes the tacit values and unspoken rules, modeled by managers and reinforced by something as simple as who goes to lunch with whom, that lead to "how we do things around here"—which, in fact, may not be like the mission statement at all.

In later years, Schein found another analogy he also liked: a lily pond, with its surface of flowers and its vast root system underneath.

"If you don't dig down into the reasons for why we do things," Schein told CultureUniversity.com in 2015, "you've only looked at the culture at a very superficial level and you haven't really understood it." His worry?



*Companies have always  
had their own  
personalities, but it  
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to understand  
how characteristics  
shape outcome.*



That the term is used too casually these days, encouraging people to think they're making substantive changes when all they've done is add a ping-pong table. On the other hand, a ping-pong table might actually signify that a company strives for a culture that is based on collaboration, one that is relaxed and playful, a culture that believes happy, connected employees are more innovative and productive. Sometimes culture is hard to pin down.

Underlying the whole notion of corporate culture is the need to outshine—to create a better widget or social media platform or to make a trip to Mars—so that customers will keep coming back to you instead of your competitors. To put it simply, says Kristen DeTienne, BYU Marriott professor of organizational behavior and human resources, “culture drives outcomes.”

Or as the late management guru Peter Drucker has endlessly (and perhaps apocryphally) been quoted: “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Sometimes the quote continues, “Culture also eats technology for lunch and products for dinner and, soon thereafter, everything else too.”

### Beyond the Window Dressing

The saga of two former five-and-dimes is a cautionary tale. In the 1960s, Larry Senn worked with both Walmart and the F. W. Woolworth Company as a consultant in what he then termed “process improvement.” A half century later, Senn, now chair of the culture-shaping consulting firm Senn Delaney, wrote on a Human Synergistics blog that while 1960s Walmart and Woolworth had similar financial and managerial resources, “it was clear that one company would succeed and the other would fail because of the mindset and habits of the firms.”

As he describes it in a 2015 interview with Tim Kuppler for CultureUniversity.com, when Senn visited the Woolworth headquarters, “it was just a bunch of old guys sitting around a table, and their only purpose seemed to be to maintain the status quo.” In 1997, the 118-year-old Woolworth Company closed its doors in the United States, unable to keep up with competitors such as Walmart.

For most of the history of business, company cultures happened more or less by default—and were often hyperhierarchical.



But in the decades since people such as Senn began doing case studies, businesses have become much more intentional about the world they are trying to create, says BYU Marriott professor of organizational behavior and human resources Troy Nielson. Companies also now recognize that they need to be accountable to not just stockholders but stakeholders—customers, suppliers, employees, the community, and even the planet at large.

In 2019 the Business Roundtable, representing 181 CEOs from the world's biggest brands, issued a new "Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation" in which it moved away from thinking of corporations as profit machines beholden to shareholders alone. The sentiment was echoed by the World Economic Forum in its "Davos Manifesto 2020." According to forum chair and founder Klaus Schwab, "Millennials and Generation Z no longer want to work for, invest in, or buy from companies that lack values beyond maximizing shareholder value."

Customers are savvier now, with access to information previously available only to analysts and shareholders. As for employees, a 2019 global employee satisfaction survey conducted by Glassdoor found that 56 percent of workers and job seekers said that a company's culture was more important than salary, and the number was even higher—

65 percent—among people age eighteen to forty-four; 77 percent of all workers surveyed said they would evaluate a company's culture before applying for a position. (These figures are prepandemic and presumably apply to workers lucky enough not to be desperate for a paycheck.)

"If people who have options in the labor market and can go somewhere else choose to stay and be fully engaged with heart and mind, then your culture is functioning well," says John Bingham, an associate dean of BYU Marriott. "If people leave, they're choosing to work somewhere else, and it's not just about money. It's about the opportunity to master something, to work with exceptional people, and to make a difference in the world."

What kind of culture are workers looking for? Not every worker wants the same thing, but they are looking for the right "culture fit." Some employees want a more structured culture, some thrive on innovation. No matter the preference, "the people who have real talent can see beyond the window dressing" of taco bars and company slogans, says Bingham.

Of course it's not just corporations that have cultures. Small businesses do too; so do nonprofits, police departments, religious institutions, presidential campaigns, and government entities.

When Vicki Varela took over the helm at the Utah Office of Tourism, Film, and

Global Branding in 2013, she knew what kind of culture she wanted to create: one where there was "creativity, curiosity, courage, and candor," all of it "packaged in kindness," she says.

She'd been lucky to work in positive cultures in the past, but she says she learned the most by watching the polar opposite during a stint at a company whose leader was threatened by the talent he had hired. Because the leader didn't model trust or praise, workers competed against each other in unhealthy ways and immersed themselves in heated, meaningless debates, including whether or not to remove the Coke machine. It would have made a great *Saturday Night Live* skit, Varela says, but it didn't feel good to work there.

The kind of leader who can create a healthy culture, she says, is a leader with a healthy self-esteem, one "who can embrace being around people who may be bigger and better."

### The Ultimate Team Sport

A company's culture can be hard to recognize when it's the water you swim in, so the people who study organizations have simplified by dividing cultures into different types. One common approach categorizes cultures as either clan, hierarchy, market, or adhocracy.

**Clan cultures** are collaborative, flexible, embrace change, pride themselves on employee engagement, and place a high





value on communication, welcoming honest feedback.

**Hierarchy cultures** have a clear chain of command, with multiple management tiers that separate employees and leadership. They tend to focus on how day-to-day operations are carried out. Innovation is less important than consistency.

**Market cultures** are all about competition and growth, prioritizing profitability above all else. It's all about meeting quotas and targets and being the best among competitors.

**Adhocracy cultures** are the ones where innovation and risk-taking are encouraged, where the aim is to come up with the next big thing before anyone else does.

No one type of culture is inherently better than another. A strong hierarchical structure with a culture focused on efficiency, for example, may work well for a bank but not for a startup. A strong culture of any type can be an asset or a liability, depending on the types of values that are shared. As BYU Marriott associate professor of organizational behavior and human resources Ben Galvin notes, a drug ring may be well run, with a culture that is hierarchical in nature, but it's still selling drugs.

When two strong, different cultures merge, the results are problematic. According to a 2006 study by the Institute for Mergers and Acquisitions, of 325,000 such deals in the previous thirty-five years, only half were considered successful by the managers in charge.

A company might have a strong culture that places a premium on high performance, notes Jim Collins in his 2001 book *Good to Great*, "where only results matter and there is no tolerance for missing one's targets." That can lead to high profits in the short term but can also lead to customer dissatisfaction. A call center, for example, may pay employees based on the number of calls handled, which means that customers might not get real answers to their problems. Even worse, a reward metric based on sales volume can open the door to cutting corners, unethical behaviors, and even deadly outcomes.

Three more cautionary tales: Wells Fargo, Enron, and Boeing, where mission statements touted integrity, but toxic cultures led to some employees putting profits above all else. At Wells Fargo that meant incentivizing employees to open fake accounts or pressure

customers to buy more products than they needed. The bank has had to pay out \$3 billion to settle claims.

At Enron, shoddy accounting practices resulted in bankruptcy and prison terms. "Enron had a great set of values on the wall," notes Senn. "But it didn't exist in the leaders. Unless you get culture at the gut level, it's not going to change."

At Boeing, the culture of safety began to shift after the aircraft company bought rival McDonnell Douglas, leading to a culture where maximizing profits and shareholder value apparently became more important than listening to employee concerns. The result, ultimately, was the deaths of 346 people when two Boeing 737 Max planes fell from the sky.

As Andrus watched the big rig burn in the Traeger parking lot, he knew culture changes had to be made if the business was going to survive. The measures he took were drastic—and successful.

Andrus continues to keep a steady eye on Traeger's corporate culture, making appropriate adjustments whenever he feels they are necessary. For instance, the company is trying to keep its collaborative culture alive even as everyone meets primarily on Zoom. Every Friday at 4 p.m., employees gather for a virtual happy hour where, sometimes dressed in costumes to match the week's theme, they tell jokes and stories and raise a Diet Coke to each other.

"Business is the ultimate team sport," says Andrus. "And a boss needs to protect the culture with his life." **M**

### About the Author

Elaine Jarvik is a Utah playwright and former reporter for the Deseret News. Her most recent play, *Four Women Talking About the Man Under the Sheet*, is scheduled at the Salt Lake Acting Company for a five-week run (streaming and in person) in spring 2021.

## Culture During COVID-19

If a company's culture is ultimately based on day-to-day values modeled by leaders and managers, and is buoyed by impromptu conversations in the halls, what happens when a pandemic hits and employees work from home?

In its 2021 Global Culture Report, the O.C. Tanner Institute, the research and education arm of the O.C. Tanner company, surveyed more than 40,000 employees and leaders in twenty countries and found that overall there has been a 13 percent decrease in employees' sense of appreciation since the pandemic began. More encouraging was employee sense of purpose, which had only declined 3 percent from the year before (with COVID-19 cited as the cause of only a 1 percent drop).

A study conducted in summer by Quartz and Qualtrics found 37 percent of employees surveyed felt their company's culture had improved in the work-from-home COVID-19 era, compared with 15 percent who felt it had declined. Men were 39 percent more likely to paint a rosy picture, and Millennials were more than twice as likely as Boomers to see an improvement.

Most telling, 70 percent said their company had a good work culture before the pandemic—suggesting that a good culture might provide a kind of immunity of its own.

# School News

## Continuing to Connect Through Real Estate



Instead of filling hundreds of chairs in an auditorium on campus, faces of BYU students and real estate professionals from across the country filled hundreds of thumbnail-sized screens as they joined together to attend the inaugural BYU Global Real Estate Conference on 8–9 October 2020. Hosted by the Department of Finance, the conference helped students create connections and begin building their careers in real estate.

The conference was held virtually using video conferencing, allowing hundreds of students and professionals to attend from home and expanding the audience beyond traditional spaces in the Tanner Building to countries as far away as Germany. **Troy Carpenter**, a BYU Marriott research associate and one of the event organizers, says that the conference gave the students incredible exposure to the vast career opportunities in real estate.

“Our goal as organizers for the event was to enlarge and strengthen the BYU real estate network and create opportunities for students to connect with professionals, and for professionals to collaborate with one another,” says Carpenter. “Our number-one priority is our students—to create pipelines for internships and full-time [job] opportunities.”

**Kaylee Drennan**, a finance junior from Midway, Utah, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend the event. “I would like to give a huge thanks to everyone who helped put all of this together. While this year has made conferences and events challenging, I am grateful we were able to take part in this conference via Zoom,” she says. “The conference was enlightening and a great opportunity to network and get to know professionals.”

The keynote speaker for the event was Bob Faith, CEO of Greystar, the world’s largest vertically integrated multifamily investment, development, and management company. He shared his experience as a CEO and how he has grown from working in real estate.

“You’re not going to be able to map out exactly where you’re going to go and how it’s going to work,” Faith says. “But just by being at BYU, you’re getting an incredible platform, incredible network, and incredible start.”

In addition to the keynote, students were invited to attend breakout sessions led by real estate professionals from a variety of backgrounds.

## Outstanding Staff, Faculty Awards



Linda Connell



Kristen DeTienne

BYU Marriott honored various faculty, staff, and administrators for their leadership in areas of teaching, research, professionalism, and service during the school’s annual fall kickoff meeting.

The recipients of the top two honors were **Linda Connell** and **Kristen DeTienne**. Connell received the N. Eldon Tanner Award, which recognizes BYU Marriott staff and administrators who have distinguished themselves in areas of integrity, leadership, and humble service.

DeTienne was given the Outstanding Faculty Award, which honors faculty who make remarkable contributions in professional service, publishing, teaching, research, and administration.

In addition to these two honors, several other BYU Marriott faculty and staff members were recognized for excelling in areas such as citizenship, professionalism, research, and teaching. **Grant McQueen**, the William F. Edwards Professor of Finance, was awarded the Citizenship Excellence Award, while **Troy Nielson**, professor of organizational behavior and human resources, and **Mike Roberts**, former assistant dean over the Business Career Center, were both recognized with the Citizenship Multiplier award.

**Felicia Jones**, former department administrator in the Department of Marketing and Global Supply Chain, and **Jennifer Maroney**, alumni director for the School of Accountancy, both received the Professional Excellence Award, which recognizes staff and administrative personnel who demonstrate excellence in management, professionalism, character, and initiative to improve.

Additionally, **James Gaskin**, professor of information systems, received the Research Excellence: Inspiring Learning Award, and **Jeff Jenkins**, associate professor of information systems, was presented the Research Excellence: Overall Contribution Award. Both awards were given in recognition of each professor’s contributions to their fields of academic research.

Other BYU Marriott professors were commended for their exemplary teaching efforts. **Marianna Richardson**, adjunct professor of management communication, received the Teaching Excellence: Adjunct award; **A. Kim Smith**, former director of the Peery Institute and now a recently retired professor of finance, was chosen for the Teaching Excellence: Inspiring Learning award; and **Mark Widmer**, professor of experience design and management, was honored with the Teaching Excellence: Overall Contribution award.



## IS Professors Vital in International Conference



Inside the classroom, BYU Marriott information systems professors encourage their students to find creative solutions to their problems. This

year, several professors on the Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS) committee utilized their own problem-solving skills outside of the classroom to help the conference transition to online.

AMCIS, sponsored by the Association for Information Systems (AIS), is one of the largest international conferences for information systems and technology in the world. Each year hundreds of scholars attend this conference and participate in panels, present academic papers, hear from keynote speakers, and engage with other participants in workshops. Originally slated to take place in Salt Lake City, this year's August 2020 conference eventually transitioned to online.

BYU Marriott associate dean **Bonnie Anderson** served as cochair of this year's conference. "As chairs, the work starts about four years before the conference and ends one year after," she says.

Other committee members found Bonnie's dedication to the task impressive. "Bonnie did an amazing job," says **Greg Anderson**, BYU Marriott professor of information systems, who was a social event chair. "She was so organized and didn't even blink when the conference went virtual."

In addition to Greg and Bonnie, seven other BYU professors served on the conference committee. Recently retired BYU Marriott professor **Rayman Meservy** was an honorary cochair; **James Gaskin** was an Early Career Faculty Consortium cochair; **Degan Kettles** was a workshops cochair; **Tom Meservy** and **Mark Keith** were the Emerging Research Forum cochairs; **Steve Liddle** was a sponsorship chair; and **Jeff Jenkins** was the webmaster.

Participants tuned in from several different countries for the 2020 conference.

In contrast to the 757 people who attended the previous year, 1,769 people registered for the virtual conference.

Even though plans call for upcoming conferences to resume in person, this year's situation ultimately sparked ideas for virtual participation options in future conferences. "In person conferences

add value in human-connection ways that are hard to replicate through online interaction, so I'd like to resume face-to-face conferences moving forward," says Bonnie. "However, I'm advocating for more virtual participation in future conferences, including remote participants and prerecorded videos."

## Insights from a Former Senator



Aboard Air Force One at the invitation of the president, then US congressman **Jeff Flake** thought of an ideal way to spend some downtime: do his home teaching. Flake had the operator call a man in his ward, Sid, who had suffered a heart attack the week before. The two talked for a few minutes before then president George W. Bush "happened to walk by," Flake told BYU Washington Seminar students in a 2006 address. "I said, 'Mr. President, would you mind saying hello to a friend of mine? He's had some heart trouble lately.' The president gets on the line, and he said, 'Sid! W. here! How you doing? People are concerned about you! There was a pause on the line, and I thought, 'Sid's had another heart attack!'"

Amounting to more than home teaching alone, service has been a keystone of Flake's career in both the public and private sectors. A Snowflake, Arizona, native who earned both his bachelor's in international relations and master's in political science at BYU, Flake began serving as a fellow at BYU Marriott's Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics in fall 2020.

With his eighteen years in public office, including six years as a US senator, Flake offers students valuable insights from his time in public service. "There

are good people on both sides of the aisle, and we have a good system that tends to correct itself if the pendulum swings too far one way," Flake says. "I encourage students to ask themselves 'How can I keep well informed?' There's no one source of information that will make you a well-informed, well-rounded person. Don't just consume information that comes to your newsfeed. Recognize that that's not going to give you a broad view, and instead read broadly."

As a BYU Marriott fellow, Flake has been a speaker for the MPA lecture series and a guest lecturer in the program's communications and organizational behavior courses, in the MBA program's ethics courses, and in BYU's political science department. He also holds regular office hours to meet with MPA, EMPA, and political science students.

When speaking to students on how ethics has played into his career, Flake relates the decision he faced in 2017 on whether to run for reelection in the Senate. "In my case, given where my party was then, people expected you to be with the president. I would have had to have been with the president on many of the issues that I had opposed. I felt that I would have had to condone behavior that I didn't condone in the past." Ultimately, Flake decided not to run for reelection.

The opportunity to have Flake speak to students is highly valuable, says Romney Institute professor **Jeffery Thompson**. "For someone who has been on the front lines of political battles and received more than his share of flak, [Senator Flake's] faith in our nation and his commitment to civil dialogue is nothing short of extraordinary," Thompson says. "I was struck by Senator Flake's humble and warm demeanor with my students. He not only talked about the importance of civility in our communities, but he exemplified it in everything he did in that session. He helped students see that despite the turmoil happening at the national level, the work of government can proceed effectively and gracefully at the local and state levels. I was grateful for the vision he brought to class."

# Six New Professors



Ryan Schuetzler



Bradley Cannon



Taylor Halverson



Spencer Hilton



Tyler Shumway



Katy Vance Reese

For the Fall 2020 semester, BYU Marriott welcomed six new professors.

**Ryan Schuetzler**, an assistant professor of information systems, comes to BYU Marriott from the University of Nebraska Omaha, where he worked as an assistant professor for five years. He earned his MISM from BYU Marriott in 2010 and completed his PhD in management information systems at the University of Arizona in 2015. Schuetzler's research focuses on how people interact with systems that use natural language, such as voice assistants Alexa and Siri. He evaluates how people can use this technology to gather information and conduct interviews.

Having earned his PhD in finance from The Ohio State University in 2020, **Bradley Cannon** is looking forward to being a part of BYU Marriott's faculty as a visiting assistant professor of finance. Cannon earned a BS in economics and finance in 2014 and an MS in financial economics in 2015, both from Utah State University. Cannon researches behavioral finance, which he describes as "the intersection between psychology and finance."

The educational journey of associate teaching professor of entrepreneurship **Taylor Halverson** has weaved around the country. Halverson earned a BA in ancient near eastern studies from BYU in 1997 and an MA in biblical studies from Yale University. He also earned an MS and PhD in instructional systems technology and a PhD in Judaism and Christianity in antiquity from Indiana University. Halverson has also published several books on scripture

and on the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Spencer Hilton**, an associate teaching professor of information systems, didn't follow a traditional journey to his career in academia. Hilton worked as a software developer in his undergrad years and hoped to start his own tech company. He earned a BA in communications with an emphasis in public relations in 2004, an MBA in 2007, and a BS in computer science in 2011, all from Weber State University. When an opportunity to join the faculty there full-time arose, he did not hesitate to take it.

Before arriving at BYU Marriott this fall to teach as a professor of finance, **Tyler Shumway** taught at the University of Michigan for twenty-five years. He also spent a sabbatical year teaching at Stanford University. Shumway received a BA in economics from BYU in 1991 and a PhD in business from the University of Chicago in 1996. Shumway's research covers a number of topics including behavioral finance, particularly how people behave with their investment decisions.

A new assistant teaching professor of information systems, **Katy Vance Reese** graduated from BYU Marriott in 2019 with BS and MISM degrees. Prior to returning to BYU Marriott, she worked at ExxonMobil in Houston as a cloud identity engineer. "I'm excited to teach and work at a university that embraces learning and faith," she says. "I'm inspired by the students and faculty at BYU Marriott and am excited to join them."

## STUDENT NEWS

### First-Place Finishes at Purdue HR Case Competition

Students from BYU Marriott attend the Purdue Human Resources Case Competition every year, but 2020's competition led to an especially exciting result. BYU Marriott's undergraduate and MBA teams both took first place in their divisions. As teams adapted to the new virtual format, they worked through problems that will be applicable in their future careers.

The virtual competition was hosted by Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, in November 2020. The

undergraduate human resource management (HRM) team included senior **Chelsea Allen Fredericks** from Delta, Ohio; senior **Rebecca Garrett** from Iberia, Missouri; senior **Daniel Pehrson** from Syracuse, Utah; junior **Amelia Phillips** from Lehi, Utah; and junior **Carson McCracken** from Alpine, Utah.

The HRM students' prompt dealt with representing diversity in a company's workforce. "Our team was given a case from Phillips 66 about underrepresented minorities," says Fredericks. "The organizers of the competition wanted us to compile data involving the population demographics of four key company locations and figure out the best way to mirror



the demographics with the company's job positions in specific job areas."

Once students got the prompt for the competition, they immediately set to



work on a winning solution. “The team and I spent forty hours preparing for the presentation. I felt like the competition was my full-time job for a week,” says McCracken. “During one of our late-night meetings, all of us were brainstorming ideas, and eventually we got into a flow where our solution started to come together, which was a highlight of the experience for me.”

The MBA team included **Easton Johnston** from Stafford, Virginia; **Sam Porter** from Mesa, Arizona; **Andy Price** from Pocatello, Idaho; **Mindy Torbit** from Sandy, Utah; and **Kimberlee Whatcott** from Maple Valley, Washington.

“My team and I were tasked with analyzing the unionization risk for a manufacturing workforce and providing recommendations for how to mitigate this risk,” says Whatcott. “The most rewarding aspect of the competition was working with great team members who were all willing to collaborate together and achieve the best presentation possible.”

As the MBA team worked together, they relied on one another’s strengths to create an effective solution. “None of us were experts with unionization, and we competed against schools with labor relations expertise,” says Porter. “Fortunately, we had a few second-year students on our team who knew some basic concepts that helped with our presentation. The success of our work depended on each person contributing significantly to the solution.”

To succeed in the competition, both teams had to face the scrutiny of judges as they presented their solutions and participated in a question-and-answer session. “Beyond offering students an opportunity to tackle real-world problems, case competitions like this one allow students to gain experience through presenting their ideas to external experts and practitioners,” says **Cody Reeves**, BYU Marriott assistant professor of organizational behavior and human resources and a faculty advisor for the competition. “Gaining this experience while in school will serve students well as they pitch solutions in the workplace.”

In addition to the team wins, Phillips and Porter also won the award for the best question-and-answer responder in their divisions.

When the awards ceremony began,

everything happened so fast, McCracken says. “The organizers of the competition announced BYU as the winner of the undergraduate division, and I felt a mix of surprise and excitement. I cheered out loud, even though I was muted on Zoom,” he says. “Winning as a team was such a wonderful feeling. Each member of the team was instrumental in making this victory happen.”

### SOA Students Win PCAOB Scholarships



Joy Saline



Derek Smith

When the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) announced the winners for the 2020–21 PCAOB scholarships, two students from the School of Accountancy (SOA) at BYU Marriott were among the recipients: **Joy Saline**, an accounting senior from Snowflake, Arizona; and **Derek Smith**, a second-year MAcc student from Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Each year, the PCAOB awards these prestigious, merit-based \$10,000 scholarships to 234 undergraduate and graduate accounting students across the United States. Rather than submit applications, PCAOB scholars are nominated by professors from their universities.

For Saline, the scholarship allows her to concentrate on her schooling. “Many students worry about paying for school,” she says. “Now I can focus more on learning and less on finances. I have an opportunity to rub shoulders with and learn from the best students in the nation, and I feel blessed that I can focus on enjoying the experience.”

Smith’s professors inspired him to pursue his current career path. “I want to earn a PhD in accounting and eventually become an accounting professor,” he says. “I’ve loved my professors in the accounting program, and their impact on my life is tremendous. They are a big part of why I want to go down the path that I am on now. The SOA has taught me to never

shy away from difficult things but that I should push myself and never be satisfied with the easy way out.”

SOA professors nominated Saline and Smith after witnessing the students’ dedication to hard work and learning. “We are incredibly pleased that two of our students were recognized with such a prestigious scholarship,” says **Doug Prawitt**, director of the SOA. “Our accounting program is highly ranked and nationally recognized, but truthfully much of our success is due to the unparalleled excellence of our students.”

## Undergraduates Receive Paul Morris Marriott Scholarship



Ashley Lynne Cronin



Payton Grover



Cayden Law



John Miller



Alex Thompson



Carson Trautman

Seven undergraduates received this year’s Paul Morris Marriott Business Management Scholarship, given to undergraduates who demonstrate a strong work ethic and a dedication to service.

The scholarship was founded by Rebecca Marriott Champion in 2010 to honor her father, Paul Morris Marriott, who was a vice president at Hot Shoppes Inc. (which later became Marriott International) and who helped grow the In-Flite catering division of the company.

Recipients include **Ashley Lynne Cronin**, **Payton Grover**, **Cayden Law**, **John Miller**, **Alex Thompson**, and **Carson Trautman**. Recipient not pictured is **Lance Casagrande**.

# Alumni News

## MANAGEMENT SOCIETY

### Scavenging for History



The Arizona Prescott Chapter of the BYU Management Society turned a tricky situation into a positive experience with its “Journey Through Prescott History: A Family Scavenger Hunt” event held between 18 July and 15 August 2020. To benefit the chapter’s scholarship fund, families solved puzzles and riddles while learning about Prescott’s history—all while adhering to COVID-19 guidelines.

“We wanted to provide an activity for families to enjoy outside of their houses,” says **Katy Kimball**, who began serving as the chapter’s president in June 2020. Participants completed the scavenger hunt at their own pace and shared their experiences on social media with the hashtag #PrescottFamilyScavengerHunt2020. More than thirty families joined in the fun.

“We are planning on adding this activity to our list of annual events,” Kimball says. “It may change a little bit based on loosening COVID-19 restrictions in the future, but it was a great event for promoting family fun and exploring this great town that we live in.”

### Ethical Leadership Worldwide

From 30 September to 2 October, BYU Management Society (BYUMS) chapter leaders from around the world came together for the 2020 BYUMS Chapter Leader Conference. Titled “You Are BYUMS: Living Moral and Ethical Leadership,” the annual conference “is intended to train and inspire chapter leaders, including presidents, committee members, and board members, to continue doing good work and be equipped with the skills they need to be successful,” says **Kristina Southam**, 2019 MPA graduate and member of the conference’s organizing committee.

“The BYUMS mission is to ‘grow moral and ethical leadership around the world,’ and we always spend time on increasing our own ethics skill set during the conference,” Southam continues. “With this theme and mission, it was particularly exciting to learn more about the new David E. and Verla A. Sorensen Ethics Center from our Q&A with Dean **Brigitte Madrian** and BYU advancement vice president Keith Vorkink.”

Other speakers at the conference included **Kim B. Clark**, NAC Professor of Business and emeritus General Authority Seventy; **Aaron Miller**, associate managing director of the Ballard Center for Social Impact and assistant teaching professor for the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics; and George Youstra, United States Special Operations Command chaplain. During the last session of the conference, George W. Romney Endowed Professor **Brad Agle** was awarded the 2020 W. Lowell Benson Award for service to the BYUMS.

“Though we wished we could host our guests in the beautiful mountains of Aspen Grove as is our tradition, we were grateful to have more of our international audience be able to participate,” Southam says, adding that the conference was “a hit.” Feedback on the conference was overwhelmingly positive, and organizers look forward to meeting with chapter leaders again next year.

## CLASS NOTES

### 1978



**Kirk Larsen** graduated from BYU Marriott in business management with a finance emphasis in 1978 and from Idaho State University

with an MBA in 1994. He held positions at Idaho First National Bank, US Bank, and Wells Fargo before joining Citizens Community Bank, a division of regional commercial bank Glacier Bancorp. As vice president and commercial lender at Citizens Community Bank, Larsen originated and managed loans to small- and medium-sized businesses. He has also served extensively in the community: on the boards and as president of two local rotary clubs; as a board member of a Certified Development Company; as a board member and president of the Idaho Falls Business Assistance Corporation; and as a board member of the Idaho Falls Redevelopment Agency, which promotes the growth of the city of Idaho Falls, where Larsen resides. Now retired, Larsen enjoys fly-fishing, sports cars, and studying economic development. He and his wife, Jeannine Berry Larsen (a 1976 BYU graduate in music), have four children and fifteen grandchildren.

### 1984



**Kari Cluff** earned her associate’s in business from BYU Marriott in 1984 and graduated summa cum laude from Western

International University with a degree in business administration in 2003. Cluff served a mission in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, before moving to Mesa, Arizona, to work for telecommunications company Motorola for three years, where she learned multiple programming languages. “During the next twenty-plus years, I took advantage of every opportunity I was given



to advance,” she says. Cluff currently works at supply company ORR Safety as a sales reporting analyst. Her responsibilities include reporting, designing and integrating analyses, and configuring and implementing reporting options. Cluff lives in Louisville, Kentucky, with her husband, Duane; the couple has one daughter. Cluff has volunteered with several local organizations and served on the boards of the Mesa Chamber of Commerce and the City of Phoenix Business and Workforce Development Center, among others.

1989



When **Jess Birtcher** expressed an interest in becoming a Japanese translator, his father suggested he “try something more practical.” But it’s unlikely either of them was thinking of the industry Birtcher has settled on: mining. Though not directly involved in the production of cobalt and other battery metals at exploration-mining company Jervois Mining, Birtcher supports these activities

as the company’s acting CFO. He graduated from BYU Marriott’s SOA with a BS in accounting and a MAcc in 1989 and has since worked at both Ernst and Young and insurance company Safeco. Birtcher entered the mining industry in 2006 as finance director at Rio Tinto and has also served as VP corporate controller and VP internal audit at Coeur Mining Inc. He joined Jervois Mining in April 2020, where he manages accounting, fund-raising, stakeholder management, and external reporting. Birtcher loves spending time outdoors, playing pickleball,

## Restoring Homes, Restoring Hopes

**Bill Hull** has, as they say, “seen things.” Homes and hotels ravaged. Entire highways torn apart. Sensitive situations he calls “biological disasters.” Sights many people have only seen in movies.

At first, Hull’s work may seem a long way from his experience at BYU Marriott, where he earned a BA in human resources in 1990. Though he enjoyed his classes, Hull wasn’t sure he wanted to go a traditional route with his degree. “I wasn’t finding anything that got me excited as far as going into the HR field,” he says. “I had worked construction to pay for school, so I just kept at it.” His skills in construction and carpentry helped him find work immediately after he and his wife, Melanie Sue Bevell, moved to Kansas City, Missouri.

After doing remodeling for several years and briefly going into business for himself, Hull was working in installation service at Heartland Barns when the company went bankrupt in 2005. He was let go the day his family moved into a brand-new custom home. At about that same time, nearly eight hundred miles away, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in the Gulf Coast, and thousands—including Hull—traveled to the area to provide relief.

While aiding in the cleanup, he joined LMA Roofing, where he managed residential roofing projects and found another field he both enjoyed and excelled in. “I had a ball,” he says. “I had the ability to help people and make a living, and there was the adrenaline from knowing that you’re doing good things.”

While Hull was primarily working with materials such as cement and wood in disaster restoration, he was also taking care of people. “I learned a couple of things while I was helping after Hurricane Katrina,” he recalls. “First, everything depends on trust. If people trust you to take care of them, they’ll take a leap of faith and let you help them; if they don’t trust you, everything just shuts down. Second, you have to listen to people. You may be a total stranger, but they’ve been through trauma, and they just want to tell you their story.”

After returning to Kansas City, Hull worked at Repairs Unlimited as a project manager, salesman, and estimator before accepting a position as a project manager with ServiceMaster Recovery Management in 2015. In that new role, he assessed property damage, communicated with building owners and their insurance carriers, and helped victims of all kinds of catastrophes, including floods and fires. “We liked to give people hope and confidence that things were going to work out and then make it happen,” he says. In March 2020 he joined Newman Construction Consulting as a managing consultant,

where he helps insurance companies and their clients estimate the cost of losses, determine the time frame for repairs, and arbitrate disputes.

Some of his favorite projects have included restoring the oldest operating family farmhouse west of the Mississippi after hailstorm damage and helping a widow repair her basement after a flood. “She was determined to do the repairs on her own, but she wanted someone to guide her,” Hull says. “It was fun to watch her become confident.”

Because it’s important in restoration work to demonstrate trustworthiness, Hull has always prioritized ethics in his work. “What I’ve always remembered from BYU and the classes at BYU Marriott is there was always an understanding that you need to be honest and fair,” he says.

Hull has three children, loves living in the rural Midwest, and continues to put people first. “I love being able to help people after disasters,” he says. “You get to know a lot of amazing people with a lot of different backgrounds. It’s just extremely rewarding work.”



volunteering at a local food bank, and writing poetry. He and his wife, Cassie, live in South Jordan, Utah. They have five children and five grandchildren.

### 1993

When she was young, **Jan Hall** and her family lived in many different parts of the United States, moving to wherever her father, who was a dentist in the US Army,



was sent. As an adult, she broke that pattern. After graduating in organizational behavior in 1993, Hall and her husband, Mike, lived in the Pacific Northwest for a few years before settling in Meridian, Idaho. They haven't left since. "It has been quite a change to settle in one place and raise a

family," she says. "My job over the past thirty years has been to guide, mentor, and influence my five children and create a deliberate culture of education and religion in my home." Through the years, Hall actively volunteered in her children's elementary schools and has supported her children in achieving various accomplishments, of which she is quite proud. In her free time, Hall enjoys reading, being at the lake or beach, and spending time with family and friends.

## Fifth-Generation Retailer



In 1968 more than 150 students graduated from BYU Marriott with degrees in business management. **Kristi Taylor Lawrence** was one of the few women in that graduating class.

Shortly before graduating, Lawrence had an interview with department store chain Sears, Roebuck, and Co., where she had worked as a retailer for several years. Though it went well, the interviewer told Lawrence he wouldn't be hiring her. "He indicated that I was exactly what they were looking for," she says. "I had experience with them, but they would not make me an offer because I was female. If I got sent for training, they'd have to arrange and pay for a second room."

Despite this setback, Lawrence continued to excel in her retail position and worked her way up through many positions at the company. As she supported her husband, **Stephen**, through school, Lawrence worked as a credit investigator, an auditor, and a buyer. By the time she tendered her resignation to become a stay-at-home parent, she'd had experiences she felt equaled the management training opportunity she'd been denied. "I look at that job as a great

training ground. I wasn't hired as a trainee, but I got the training as an actual hands-on employee," she explains.

The Lawrences and their two children moved to the Fresno, California, area in 1974 for Stephen's job with BFGoodrich, a rubber products manufacturer. Stephen later managed and then owned a tire shop for more than twenty years, and Lawrence used her business savvy to support the venture. She is now president and CEO of the company, K. Lawrence Inc., and is also managing partner of real-estate holdings firm TSK Enterprises. "I am a fifth-generation retailer. Retail and business were common topics of discussion at our dinner table when I was growing up," she says. "That's what my father was educated in, and that's what my brother went into. For me, going into retail was almost like going home."

Lawrence says she's pleased her company has no long-term debt. "We've been able to go from a starting point, using only the initial capital that we put in as a base, to where everything we do and all of our obligations are paid in thirty days," she says. "That makes it comfortable when you have problems in the economy, like what COVID-19 has done to us. The pressure is not as great."

In addition to managing her businesses, Lawrence is president of the board of trustees of the Fresno Mosquito and Vector Control District and an alternate trustee for the Vector Control Joint Powers Agency, a California public entity managing various public insurance programs.

"I came from a family that was involved in the community," Lawrence says. "You live in the community; you need to be involved in the community."

In addition to volunteering, she enjoys needlework, reading, and representing her faith and BYU. "We believe in being totally honest," she says. "Our customers know that we're not here to take advantage of anyone. I can't possibly represent myself as a Latter-day Saint and graduate of BYU and not be totally honest."

### 1997



Boosting the spirits of everyone around him is something that **Brian Carroll** does well. He was Cosmo the Cougar at BYU

from 1995 to 1996 and, years later, was a member of the Outrageous Committee, the culture committee for his department at Southwest Airlines. "This committee was responsible for helping maintain our famous culture by planning numerous events, such as volunteer opportunities and holiday celebrations," says Carroll. "This became an incredible way to share my passion for creating a fun-loving work environment." He initially joined KPMG as an auditor after graduating in management in 1997 and earning a master's in professional accountancy at the University of Texas at Austin. In Carroll's current position as senior manager of sales and revenue accounting at Southwest, he oversees three different teams. Carroll and his wife, Sheryl (a 1997 BYU graduate in elementary education), have four children and live, appropriately, in Carrollton, Texas. He volunteers monthly at a local shelter and likes to play tennis, watch sports, and travel.

### 2001



With three BYU degrees in hand, **Sung H. Kim** is well qualified for his position as staff software engineer at Walmart. He is the tech

lead for large-scale software products that help associates work better and customers shop easier. Kim earned a bachelor's degree in management in 2000 and an MISM in 2001, after which



he worked in the family business, went to law school, worked as a business analyst for Kia Motors and a data analyst at DMS Marketing in California, and then was a realtor at two different firms before returning to BYU in 2014. He graduated with a master's in technology in 2016 and has been with Walmart, where he interned before his graduation, in various positions ever since. Kim lives in Bentonville, Arkansas, with his wife, Christina, and their three children and three dogs. He enjoys biking, playing pickleball, and working to be the best parent he can be.

## 2006



As chief operating officer of the Meyers family, as **Julie Meyers** describes herself, the 2006 MACC graduate oversees her

Clearwater, Florida, household of six children with her husband, **Joseph** (who also graduated with a BS in accounting in 2006 and a MACC in 2007). In addition to her work in her family, Meyers works as a part-time accountant for a local business. "My friend asked me for accounting advice when she was starting up her staging business," Meyers says. "A few months later, she realized she didn't want to keep track of her books anymore and asked if I would take on the job. It's perfect because it's only a couple of hours a month." Meyers kicked off her career as a staff associate at KPMG, working there for two years and becoming a senior associate before becoming the family COO and a stay-at-home parent. "I had always wanted to raise children, so I quit the KPMG job," she says. Meyers enjoys exercising, cooking, baking, taking naps, and serving in the Church.

## 2016



**Tyson D. Erdmann** was interning with Marriott International in Park City, Utah, when he crossed

paths with his future employer. Erdmann began talking with Case Lawrence, CEO of indoor recreation and trampoline park company CircusTriX, and was intrigued with what he heard

# Culture Fusion

Onscreen, a pair of hands stirs chaat masala, dhaniya powder, and other spices together before sprinkling the mixture onto a plate of fish. The video isn't from a cooking network but the YouTube channel of **Nirnaya Lohani** called *Naya Fusion Food*.

"We don't like to eat plain, bland food," Lohani says, and her recipes reflect her preference for strong flavors. She began creating content for her channel while working from home during summer 2020. "I would put these pictures of our food on Instagram, but then I thought, 'I'm going to start documenting these so my daughter can use them when she grows up,'" Lohani explains. "I inherited my passion for cooking from my parents and wanted to pass it on to my daughter."

Just as Lohani adapts her traditional recipes to fit her tastes, she has learned through her career to adapt to a variety of cultures. She recalls that one valuable aspect of her BYU Marriott education was the opportunity to attend BYU and observe

the Honor Code while not being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "That experience provided perspective on being able to adapt to different environments, which is good from a career perspective," she says. "Your workplace could be nothing like you expect it to be, so learning to adjust to that is essential."

Lohani graduated in information systems in 2007 and accepted a position in California with KPMG as a contract compliance services associate. A few years later, she managed a department of thirty people at KPMG Global Services in Bangalore, India, for a year and a half. "Understanding and learning the cultural differences to lead and manage the team was a big part of my success there," she says. "I worked with local leaders to restructure the team to bring in the right talent to help drive success for the team. Mentoring and coaching each of these individuals to help them identify their individual goals and career paths was my proudest achievement."

After she returned to the California office in a managerial position, Lohani was promoted to director of major projects and contract advisory. In June 2019 she took a position with LinkedIn as a senior project manager in Sunnyvale, California. She also volunteers as the co-lead of her office's chapter of Women@LinkedIn, where "we are focused on building a community of women to support each other," she explains.

Lohani met her husband, Avishek Sharma, who is also a BYU graduate, shortly after moving to California. The couple has one daughter and lives in Mountain View, California, where Lohani spends her free time hiking, reading books, listening to podcasts, playing with her daughter and, of course, creating recipes. She also enjoys trying new food and maintains an elite status on Yelp, a business-review website.

In addition, Lohani serves as a board member of the Santi School Project, a nonprofit organization that provides teacher training and educational support to schools in Nepal, especially focusing on girls' education. "Once you educate girls, that information keeps passing on to the entire family," Lohani says. A Nepalese immigrant herself, she says that her success has come because of her community just as much as her own personal efforts. "Hard work and determination go a long way," she says. "But invest in yourself by surrounding yourself with a diverse set of people and develop relationships with them."



about the business. Almost instantly, Erdmann knew he wanted to be a part of it. He worked as an events manager at Marriott Vacations Worldwide for another year before joining CircusTriX as a general manager in 2017. In 2019

CircusTriX recognized Erdmann as the general manager of the year in marketing and social media. He lived briefly in Augusta, Georgia, managing a trampoline park there before relocating to manage a park in Seattle, where he oversees three

# All Rise

Born and raised in Honolulu, **Thomas Y.K. Fong** has long loved learning about the earth's natural processes. He originally planned to earn a bachelor's degree in geology at BYU and then pursue graduate studies in oceanography. But during one midwinter geology field trip to St. George, Utah, a sandstorm blew through the group's campsite, prompting Fong to reconsider whether his studies had brought him too close to nature for comfort. "Halfway through that cold, sand-blown night, I'm thinking, 'Is this really what I want to do for the rest of my life?'" Fong recalls.

So Fong switched his major to business management with a finance emphasis. He had also joined the BYU Army ROTC, and in 1972 he graduated as the Superior Cadet and a Distinguished Military Graduate. He was immediately commissioned as an officer in the Adjutant General Corps for two years active duty and another four years reserve service during the Vietnam War era. "It was a good way to apply my managerial skills," he says.

Fong decided a law degree would be a great complement to his business degree. He attended BYU's J. Reuben Clark Law School, graduating in 1977. During a personal interview with Rex E. Lee, then dean of the law school, Fong says Lee "emphasized the possibility of government service for at least part of my legal career to serve both community and country and yet still have time for family and Church service." Fong took Lee's advice, and public service became the focus of his entire legal career.

He accepted a position under the US Attorney General's Honors Program, serving for three years as a trial attorney, a short time as an appellate trial attorney in Virginia, and two years as the chief trial attorney and chief legal officer for the Central District of Los Angeles. In 1984 he was appointed a United States immigration judge (IJ), making him one of the first IJs of Asian or Polynesian ancestry since the position was created in 1952. Finally, in 2006, Fong was appointed as an assistant chief immigration judge, overseeing immigration courts in Utah, parts of California, and the entire US Pacific Ocean. "I found my business-management training extremely useful as a supervisory judge in managing the far-flung courts, dozens of judges, and a hundred staff who were thousands of miles away from my home-base court in Los Angeles," he says.

Passionate about training future judges, Fong has taught as an adjunct professor of law at the National Judicial College at the University of Nevada, Reno, since 1997. In that position, and as part of the new IJ training course program, he covered subjects such as entering oral decisions



from the bench and courtroom control. "The major part of teaching control was teaching judges to control themselves," he explains. "You've got to show compassion and patience and be one step ahead of emotional situations and still exemplify what is described as 'judicious' behavior and how people should respectfully treat one another in court."

In his legal career, Fong represented the federal government both as a trial attorney and later as a judge on three cases that ultimately went before the US Supreme Court. "And either my initial arguments as an attorney or rulings as a judge were reaffirmed in all three cases," he says.

Since 2016, Fong has gone into senior judge (or semiretired) status. Because of the ever-increasing nationwide backlog in cases, he has been asked to work part-time, a common circumstance for former judges. "I've loved being a government lawyer and judge," he says. "What I enjoyed most about my career has been my opportunity to serve and help people."

Fong also enjoys spending time on geology-related hobbies and with his family. He and his wife, Sharon Ann Wroten, have three children and ten grandchildren and live in Los Angeles.

facilities as an area manager. Erdmann earned a degree in recreation management in 2016 and spends his free time exercising, playing sports, and enjoying the outdoors.

## 2019

**Meagan Michael** remembers sitting in her career exploration class at BYU when she realized what field she wanted her career to be in: therapeutic recreation management. "I had my aha moment," she says. "I knew that was the path I



needed to pursue because it fulfilled my desire to help others in a clinical setting and pushed me to explore the world of business management." After interning with Steps Recovery Center in Payson, Utah, Michael took a position as a recreation therapist at San Jose Behavioral Health Hospital in San Jose, California. Her current responsibilities include assessing new patients, creating treatment plans,

and helping patients overcome barriers to leisure. Michael volunteered in college as a citizenship exam tutor at Centro Hispano, which provides services to the Spanish-speaking community, and the African Equity Fund, a nonprofit organization offering education, training, and funding to people across Africa. In her free time, she loves to read, cook, garden, spend time with family and friends, and travel. She has a goal to see all thirty Major League Baseball stadiums before she turns thirty.







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