



College of Business and Economics

# Business Dialog

Magazine | Winter 2021



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## Letter from the Dean

This past year has certainly been challenging and far different from previous semesters at TU, but CBE remains as strong as ever thanks to the dedication of our faculty and staff and the resiliency of our students.

This issue of Business Dialog will highlight just a few of the great things happening in our college. From new and innovative programs, relevant faculty research, student experiential learning, and alumni sharing their talents in Maryland and beyond, CBE continues to make a meaningful impact on society.

### Innovative Programs:

- U.S. News & World Report ranks TU's undergraduate business program among the top nationwide.
- CBE received MHEC approval for TU's first undergraduate certificate in entrepreneurship.
- Supply Chain Management accelerated BS/MS program expands to offer admittance to students majoring in Business Administration of any concentration, due to increasing enrollment in the program.

### Faculty Research:

This past election year, TU was one of just nine institutions in the U.S. with 85% student voter registration. Our students are passionate about civic duty and democracy, and we'd like to think our inspirational faculty ignited some of their flames. CBE associate professor of business analytics and technology management Dr. Natalie Scala performed instrumental research that helped ensure the integrity of this year's record-breaking number of mail-in ballots. She and computer & information sciences professor Dr. Josh Dehlinger teamed up to train many poll workers in Maryland to identify and address election security issues with the goal of mitigating internal and external threats.



### Tigers Giving Thanks:

Speaking of dedicated staff, this year, roughly 90% of CBE staff participated in the Faculty/Staff Giving Campaign which contributed toward the Big Give – a university-wide effort to provide financial support to TU students in need.

I am so proud of how our students, faculty, and staff have adjusted to this new environment, and all that has been accomplished throughout these unprecedented times. I am humbled to be a part of the CBE community, and I think you will be too after reading this issue.

Sincerely,  
**Dr. Shohreh Kaynama**  
Dean, College of Business and Economics

# Shining the spotlight on mail-based voting and student research

by Elizabeth Bailey

When associate professor Dr. Natalie M. Scala and professor Dr. Josh Dehlinger first teamed up to investigate voting security, they never expected that their work would face a worldwide pandemic coupled with a contentious election season. Like so many other things in 2020, they used it as an opportunity to expand the scope of their work.

Their research began in 2017 as an Honors College thesis project by Megan Price '18. With Scala by her side, Price looked at potential vulnerabilities at in-person polling locations in Maryland. The goal: to build a comprehensive list of threats and problems that could arise so that they can be mitigated and prevented. With voter integrity at the core of the project, Price and Scala worked to ensure that each vote is counted the way that it is cast by the voter and that the integrity of that vote remains constant throughout the entire process.

[Read more: \*Megan Price is doing her part to protect our elections\*](#)

Over the next three years, Scala and Dehlinger continued to build on Price's work, distributing training modules to voting precincts in Anne Arundel and Harford counties to help identify what can be done about threats. Built to be a complement to existing training programs, the modules are free and available online to Maryland's election judges.

[Read more: \*Protecting Maryland's polling places\*](#)

Fast forward to 2020, and the team reframed their research with the movement toward mail-in voting due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We weren't expecting that," Scala said of the opportunity to take an in-depth look at the security surrounding mail-based voting. "There was a lot of political discourse that mail voting was going to be full of fraud or that it was not the right way to go."



They found that to be far from the truth.

"Mail-based voting is quite safe in the fact that the process is so distributed, meaning we have drop boxes everywhere...there isn't necessarily a central location where all of the votes are. That actually keeps the process much safer and much less of an interest to an adversarial or foreign entity who might want to target it," Scala said.



Scala noted that, while there are some internal threats to mail-based voting, they hope to use their in-person voting training modules in a similar way to mitigate these issues.

After an election cycle that relied heavily on mail-based voting, Dehlinger added that this method should be a norm rather than an exception.

"Mail-based voting significantly increased voter turnout, but this should not be a one-off kind of thing. I think our work makes that argument...mail-based voting is secure, and we can train poll workers to keep it secure," Dehlinger said.

Since the beginning, and now with new angles to study, the team at Towson University is the only one of its kind studying polling place security.

"From a research or academic perspective, it is a novel area for us to look at," Scala said of being the only academic team to study local polling place security. With multiple avenues of research to explore, Scala and Dehlinger are most proud of the ability to involve so many students throughout the process.

The project co-authors, along with a professor collaborator at the United States Military Academy (West Point), have mentored a mix of undergraduate and graduate students through their research over the last three years. These students, 12 from Towson and two from University of Maryland, College Park, have been hands-on in the building of modules and conducting assessments. Several will be co-authors on academic publications. Many have graduated, with degrees ranging from supply chain management and political science to computer science and criminal justice.

"To me, it is very important the students have the opportunity to become engaged with the project, do



meaningful work, and make an impact in the community, while also having something to speak to on their resume," Scala said. "They saw their whole piece of the project through from start to finish, which has been a really strong opportunity for them."

Dehlinger added that seeing their research out in the community has been incredibly rewarding.

"A lot of times on the computer science side, we do a lot of research and it goes into a paper...with this, you can see an immediate impact that what our research and our students are doing can have an impact on the community," Dehlinger said.

The project has not been without challenges, like staying in touch with local election boards even as some of those offices experienced leadership changes. While COVID-19 allowed the team to explore mail-in voting on an unexpected level, it also forced election administrators to shift their focus to conducting the election during a pandemic. Even still, over 1,900 poll workers in Anne Arundel County had access to the training during the 2020 election cycle.

Expanded use of training modules coupled with consistent messaging about the security of elections are Scala and Dehlinger's hopes for the future. Their most recent study involved looking at the personal computer behaviors of poll workers as they translate to behaviors at a polling place.

"There are ways to train poll workers to help them do a better job, and there are ways to make sure mail-based voting stays as safe as possible," said Scala. "We need to make sure that as many people and as many boards of elections as possible understand results [of the training modules] and what those implications can do for their counties."

***“To me, it is very important the students have the opportunity to become engaged with the project, do meaningful work, and make an impact in the community, while also having something to speak to on their resume.”***

***- Dr. Natalie M. Scala***

## New Faculty Profile



# Leila Khoshghadam

Assistant Professor  
Department Of Marketing

by Jenna Harrity '20

### Education

Ph.D., Business Administration, Old Dominion University  
MBA, Marketing  
B.S., Electrical Engineering

#### Q: What are your research interests?

**A:** My primary focus is on interactive marketing in offline and online settings. In one research stream, I investigate the role that consumer sentiment has on the success/failure of firms' interaction efforts. In the second stream, I seek insight into actionable strategies to manage successful interaction between front-line employees and consumers.

#### Q: What are you looking forward to in your new role at Towson University?

**A:** I am passionate about teaching students and helping them prepare for future jobs. In this position, I am looking forward to growing my skills and helping my students succeed, which is very important to me! Moreover, I intend to expand my research by collaborating with fellow TU faculty members and learning new things.

#### Q: What is your plan for teaching in the remote space?

**A:** First and foremost, I intend to maintain a positive attitude and a supportive environment. Students should feel safe and certain about their education path, despite all the uncertainty around us.

Second, I have made changes in my teaching strategies to keep the quality of my online classes high. For example, to make students more engaged with topics, I spend less time on lectures while using more case studies, real examples, and news sharing. This will facilitate interactions between students and help them develop skills such as critical thinking and teamwork in remote classes.

#### Q: What do you like to do in your free time? Any new quarantine hobbies?

**A:** During the lock-down, I found myself caring more about my health: I started doing more workouts and eating healthier. I also enjoy reading my favorite books, which have been waiting for me on my bookshelf for a long time! Despite all the frustration, I try to think positively of this situation and catch up with work that I always want to do, but never seem to find a time to complete.

#### Q: If you had one piece of advice to give to your students right now, what would it be?

**A:** Do not get discouraged if the situation is not as you expected a year ago. A setback is an opportunity for a comeback! You can be at home and still progress every day. Try to learn new skills and build your resume, even when you are at home. Read the book *Conversations with Myself*, by Nelson Mandela and keep it in mind that he wrote the book when he was in prison!

I am also a good listener and I love to meet new people. In case you need two ears to share your concern, you can count on me!

#### Q: What is something few people know about you?

**A:** I am a good interior designer. I love to match colors, fabrics, and textiles. I always receive compliments about my design taste!

## Inside The Winner's Circle

# Corey Barnard

by Jenna Harrity '20

Former Towson University student Corey Barnard knows what it's like to be on both sides of the table – or of the screen – when it comes the annual College of Business and Economics Sales Competition.

This fall, Barnard represented Northwestern Mutual as a volunteer judge from the local industry in the virtual Sales Competition. But before that, he participated in the competition as a business administration major in 2017 – and won first place.

"I had a blast being in the buyer's seat," says Barnard. "It felt full circle: transitioning from student participant to buyer/judge. I was really able to be a part of the professional growth and learning that I benefitted from as a student."

Barnard recalls his experience participating in the competition as a student as something that helped shape his professional career.

"I remember being really anxious and nervous waiting for the results for hours in Stephens Hall," says Barnard. "But I felt accomplished when I came out of the room and felt confident in my pitch."

His pitch, which he used to claim first place, is a tactic Barnard uses to this day to close a sale.

After uncovering a clients' needs, he asks clients to rank, on a scale from one to ten, how interested they are in buying his product.

Regardless of the number given, Barnard says the follow-up should be "what can I do to get you to a ten? What aspects are missing?"

Barnard said that the Sales Competition is a great opportunity for students of all business administration tracks to learn how to perfect their sales pitch. When he was a student, he befriended students from other majors who found an education in sales to be extremely valuable.

"At the end of the day, no matter what role you're in, whether it's marketing, biology, mathematics, you are selling yourself. So, in that way, we're all sales people; sales strategies are essential for everyone to learn," he says.



Even attending the competition as a judge, the professional volunteer role is about more than judging the sales pitches, says Barnard. Attending the event as a Northwestern Mutual representative also meant an opportunity to network with and scout CBE students for potential internships and careers.

Attending the event as a Northwestern Mutual representative also meant an opportunity to network with and scout CBE students for potential internships and careers.

"Volunteering as a judge certainly had a personal touch because of my history with the event," says Barnard. "But I was also there on a professional and recruiting level."

Barnard says he was able to talk to students and upcoming graduates about his own career path, including how winning the Sales Competition was "a jumping off point" for him.

While the Sales Competition looked different than it did in 2017 due to this year's virtual format, Barnard says the event was extremely effective and that he didn't miss searching for on-campus parking.

"If I can give back some of that knowledge and be a part of someone else's personal and professional growth in their career, either as a sales person or not, that's something I find a lot of value in," he says.

# College News

## CBE mentorship program MentHER changes direction in its eleventh year at TU

by Jenna Harrity '20

For ten years, MentHER has been connecting and empowering women at CBE, local high schools and the business community. This year, the mentorship program will look somewhat different but still promises to deliver on its mission.

In this unique program that gives back to the community, CBE women are paired with a mentor from the industry. The CBE mentees give back by mentoring students at Randallstown High School. Both the high school and TU students learn financial literacy, career planning and life and workplace skills by working with mentors. Last year, MentHER had its largest cohort with 22 TU students. This year, 23 are interested so far.

Like other campus events, MentHER will operate virtually for the first time this academic year. But, in addition to the changes prompted by COVID-19, MentHER's new director, Professional Development Partner (PDP) Lauren Tigie-Meredith, has implemented new goals, activities and metrics to create measurable outcomes for all three levels of participation.

"The SMART goal scorecard is going to give everyone a clear direction on what they are trying to accomplish," said Tigie-Meredith. "By the end of the program, participants at each level will be able to reflect on the value of the program."

Upon entering the program, mentees will rank their knowledge on topics related to financial literacy, career planning and life and workplace skills. Based on their scores, the mentee will define several areas in which they need improvement.

"All participants gain something from this program. TU students participating will have the opportunity to both be a mentee and mentor," says Tigie-Meredith. "That's what life looks like in the real world."

The framework will serve both TU students and the industry mentors, Tigie-Meredith says. She says mentees will walk away with a sense of what they've accomplished, and mentors will have a "clear understanding of the impact their time made" because of measurable outcomes that will be a part of the framework.



Tigie-Meredith emphasizes the value of the multi-generational relationships that the MentHER program cultivates. This is an important life skill, she says, for young women to realize they can "play with the big girls."

"I always give the example of my four-year-old daughter learning the monkey bars. She would see an older girl doing the monkey bars, approach the girl, and say, 'Hi, my name is Beatrice, and I would like to learn the monkey bars.' Many times, the girls would say, 'No, I'm eight, you're four.' But occasionally, a girl would say, 'Alright, put your hand here.'"

"The business world is a new playground. Who are you going to be? Are you going to be the older girl who says, 'What are you doing here?' Or, are you going to be the girl who says, 'Alright, come along?'"

Women must work to "unlearn the rules of the playground," Tigie-Meredith says. Those rules don't exist – if you want to hang with those who are older or more successful, find a way to do it.

Even though hosting a mentor program in the virtual environment poses some challenges, it also creates more opportunities.

"There's something to be said for the women working in industry that want to participate more but may not have been able to in the past due to busy workdays or their location," explains Tigie-Meredith. "Now, instead of having to commute to campus and find parking, they can join a Zoom meeting and share content more easily. It's an opportunity for us to connect more."

## College News

## Unprecedented four winning teams are declared in Live Strategy Case Competition

by Jenna Harrity '20

The industry judges of the annual Live Strategy Case Competition at Towson University normally choose just three winning teams, but this year stood apart. Judges from this semester's industry sponsor, J.P. Morgan Private Bank, were so impressed by TU students' analyses that they couldn't decide on just three winning teams, so they presented a fourth-place winner.

In first place, the team Five Forces from assistant professor Anna Obedkova's management capstone course took the leading number of points, which included business administration seniors John Elmes, Nick Gordon, Ruby Goldin, Milan Patel, and Sophia Rampolla. A team called the COVID Consultants won second place, while another called the Brain Trust won third and the Fantastic 3 took fourth.

Every semester, the Live Strategy Case Competition requires students from the capstone MNGT 481 strategic management course to analyze the local business climate and propose solutions for an industry sponsor, researched over the course of the semester. The culmination of those were presented over Zoom on Friday, Dec. 4 to a panel of judges representing J.P. Morgan.

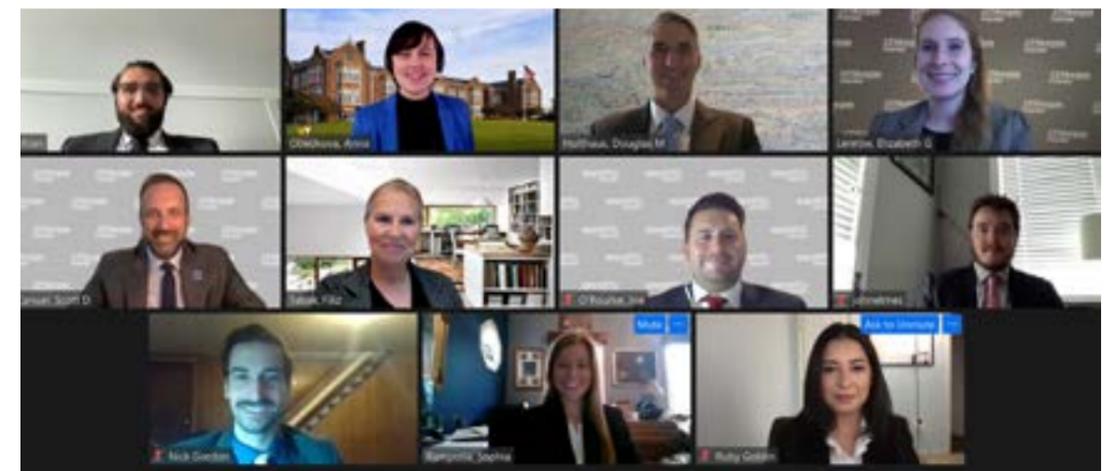
Like almost all companies and organizations, J.P. Morgan has adopted new business practices and embraced emerging trends in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The case study challenged teams of students to recommend which of these measures should continue and answer the question: "How should the bank adapt its business to thrive in the post-COVID-19 world?"

Obedkova said the judges were impressed with a map of Maryland that the winning team created which reflected the density of potential clients in each county.

"The team used an array of public data sources to overlay several maps over each other to provide the level of details that the judges found very useful," says Obedkova.

Across the board, judges were impressed by this semester's presentations.

"To see the talent TU has is extraordinary," says Elizabeth Lenrow, one of the judges from J.P. Morgan.





## Data Analytics Competition breaks ground and breaks borders across TU colleges

by Jenna Harrity '20



The first Data Analytics Competition at Towson University closed a successful competition period on Friday, Nov. 20. This was the second of two rounds; the first round having closed Oct. 31. The late November Zoom session brought together the contestants who passed Round 1 and ended with an announcement of winners.

A team of graphic design majors, Javonquay Montgomery, Genesis Smith and Brooke Walter, took first place, winning an award of \$2,500. In second place, Ruyi Patel and Yuqi Wan won an award totaling \$1,500, and Dante Steele took third place winning a \$1,000 prize.

The Data Analytics Competition is unique among College of Business and Economics (CBE) competitions since any major and degree seeker can participate in the competition. Students with various backgrounds and talents have room for creativity when it comes to their final reports.

Stella Tomasi, associate professor of business analytics and technology, said “students of all disciplines should be able to analyze data to make intelligent decisions.”

This pioneer competition proves that TU students are capable of thriving in interdisciplinary industry spaces. And the field of data analytics is only at the beginning of its period of projected growth.

“The Data Analytics Competition presented many challenges that forced me to hone in on my creative thinking and problem solving skills,” says Steele, an accounting major.

While working with data is not new to those studying accounting, “accountants being uncreative is a misconception,” Steele says. “We have various projects that depend on us having a diverse skill set to tackle obstacles.”

That diverse skill set helped Steele take third place.

Although the competition was new to the CBE, it brought in a wave of 50 registered teams, only 15 of which were advanced to complete the first round of the competition. The ten finalist teams that presented during the second round of the competition included students that spanned across the four colleges of TU.

Among such a diversely talented group of students, Steele said “it was an honor to be chosen among the top three.”



## Innovative gamification project teaches team leadership

by Jenna Harrity '20

When COVID-19 forced Towson University to turn to remote teaching, Mariana Lebrón, associate professor of leadership and management, encouraged her students in a YouTube video to think of the new learning space as a creative challenge.

"Since we last saw each other, things have changed quite dramatically," said Lebrón in the video. "The theme for the rest of the semester will be re-imagining teams in our new virtual world. It will take the ability to think outside the box."

Lebrón has implemented gamification projects into her recent curriculum. Not only do the projects teach students to work in a team, the final products will help organizations and companies strengthen teams in the workplace.

"With the changing multigenerational workforce, gamification is growing as a unique leadership strategy to engage employees more effectively in recruitment, training, and retention," said Lebrón.

Lebrón designed the project with the help of Rebekah Swab, assistant professor of management, and industry partner Ryan Bruns, a board game executive, to represent key characteristics of effective teams in common board game elements.

Last fall, Lebrón had just 12 students involved in the project. This spring, she has 70. But the recent challenges posed by social distancing measures have not discouraged the 16 teams from making games. In fact, the circumstances forced the students to create inside a unique modality, and they rose to the occasion.



“

**Gamification is growing as a unique leadership strategy to engage employees more effectively.**

- Mariana Lebrón

One of the teams from the Spring 2020 term created a game titled "Treasures of Carias," in which four archaeologists search for ancient Greek artifacts. It involves the use of unique software to create a virtual playing platform.

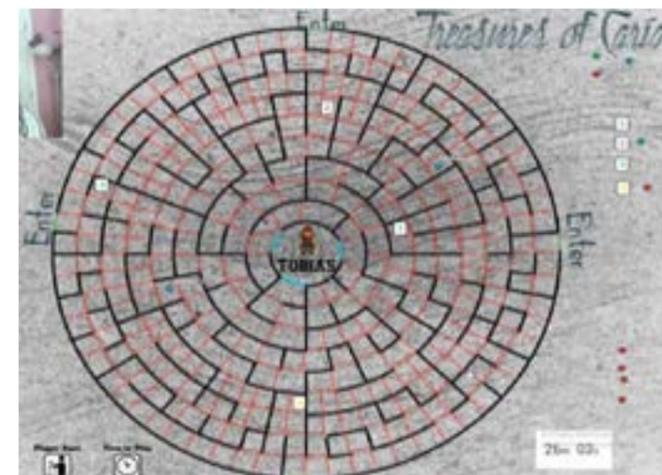
"I have a background in e-sports and tech, so when COVID-19 posed a challenge, I stepped up to transition the game from physical to virtual," says Joshua Finkelstein, a business management student graduating this year, and "Treasures of Carias" co-creator.

"One of the biggest challenges for everyone on my team was getting from the conceptualization stage to implementation," he says.

Many of the students' games facilitate team building by creating roles for the players, in which each has a certain part to play to progress to different stages. Others, like "Emergency Landing," require participants to communicate actively in order to escape the secluded island.

"The game reflects the way our team worked together to create the final product. It required honesty and feedback, and it would not be the same without all five of us working on it," says Taylor Sigur, a business administration major with concentrations in leadership and management, and who is graduating fall 2020.

"Creating this game taught me valuable lessons about myself," says Sigur, who helped design "Emergency Landing." "I realized that I have qualities of a leader, and team members value my opinions and feedback."



Additional contributors include students in the business administration/management and leadership major who co-created:

"Treasures of Carias:" *Giovanna Barbaro, Julia Atayi, Brian McKenna, Anthony Vendettim*

"Emergency Landing:" *Thomas Vondersmith, James Pine, Payal Patel, and Victor Batista.*



## Five students earn scholarship awards at Sales Competition

by Jenna Harrity '20

For six years, the Strategic Sales Competition has provided students an opportunity to gain valuable sales experience and the chance to network with local sales professionals from top companies. This year, though taking a new virtual format, proved no different.

Five students won scholarship money in the sixth annual Strategic Sales Competition on Friday, Oct. 23.

Three of the student winners, Charlie Gilbert, Anya Lacey, and Brady Bayles, will represent TU at the National Shore Sales Competition in March. The other scholarship winners were Michael Carter and Lauren Fluck.

Prior to this year's competition, contestants received product information to prepare for a 20-minute, one-on-one sales meeting with a potential "buyer." The contestants present the "need" for the product, propose a solution to the buyer's need, address the

buyer's concerns, and potentially make a sale. The meeting is recorded and streamed to several judges who score each student's execution of the stages of sales process.

This year, all 24 judges and six "buyers" were sales managers and recruiters from 14 companies in the area, including McCormick, Stanley Black and Decker, and Sherwin Williams.

"The feedback from the sales professionals in attendance was very positive," says Plamen Peev, associate professor of marketing. "According to them, the virtual format of this year's competition reflects the current realities their companies face and may well be a big part of the future of the sales profession going forward."

## CBE management professor and students are recognized state-wide

by Jenna Harrity '20



CBE professor of management, Joseph Zuccaro and over 130 CBE students are being recognized state-wide by the Regional Manufacturing Institute (RMI) for one of two "People's Choice Awards" as "Champions of Maryland Manufacturing."

RMI awarded both Zuccaro and the students in his management and leadership principles course for their research in Maryland manufacturing, surpassing 17 other organizations nominated. The recognized project required students to work in teams to study and interview various manufacturing companies.

"The purpose of this project is to learn about the individual companies and manufacturing in the state, but secondary objectives include learning to use the business resources in Cook Library, navigating LinkedIn, and networking," Zuccaro says.

Zuccaro's course gave students the opportunity to learn more about the local manufacturing industry as well as network with RMI members who lead various Maryland manufacturing companies.

RMI says recognizing "Champions of Maryland Manufacturing" is a key part of the group's image campaign to put a face on the next generation of manufacturing.

As a part of the integrative program, management and leadership principles students analyzed manufacturing companies from sectors prevalent in Maryland, including chemical & petroleum, electronics, fabricated metal, food & beverage, leather products, machinery, nonmetallic minerals, paper & packaging, plastics & rubber, primary & metal, printing, textiles & apparel, and transportation.

The hands-on program was designed to benefit both the manufacturing ecosystem and the aspiring business leaders, says Zuccaro.

"Since a majority of TU students are from Maryland and remain in the state upon graduation, it benefits them to know about the major industries present in the state and the career opportunities they offer," Zuccaro says.

"It also makes sense to promote these industries and make employers aware of the local, motivated talent available for their workforce."

In addition, Zuccaro's course enabled the students to ask industry professionals how they handle a variety of relevant issues including COVID-19, technology, and diversity. Students are learning how to navigate virtual networking, which is an increasingly essential skill.

"Students are working hard to use virtual networking tools like LinkedIn to identify managers at the selected companies," Zuccaro says. "It can be very challenging to get through to people, especially during the pandemic"

RMI says Zuccaro is changing the next generation of business leaders. Students in Zuccaro's class will take away a broad understanding of the importance of manufacturing to both the State of Maryland as well as the nation, while planting a seed that a manufacturing career can be rewarding in many ways.



# 11 Questions with Patrick St. Clair '16

## Council Chair, CBE's Young Alumni Advisory Council

Learn more about CBE's Young Alumni Advisory Council and their popular Skills to Pay the Bills workshops from Patrick St. Clair, Council Chair of YAAC

by Elizabeth Bailey

**Q: What is the role of CBE's Young Alumni Advisory Council?**

**A:** The Young Alumni Advisory Council strives to use our unique perspective as recent graduates to help the college teach and grow the next generation of business leaders. We also recognize that the connections we make in college don't end at graduation and work grow a sense of community within CBE alumni and create opportunities for them to engage with their college.

**Q: Who is a "young alumni" and how can they get involved with YAAC?**

**A:** A "Young Alumni" is anyone who has graduated within the last 10 years from the CBE. For those who are interested in our group or in getting involved with the college in other ways I encourage you to reach out to the Council at [cbeyaac@gmail.com](mailto:cbeyaac@gmail.com) or to Lisa Michocki at [lmichocki@towson.edu](mailto:lmichocki@towson.edu).

**Q: How did you first get involved with YAAC?**

**A:** I was fortunate enough to be one of the original members of YAAC when it was founded in 2016 and chosen to be its chair in 2017. As someone who was involved with the college as a student and remained connected as an alumni through mentoring students and guest speaking to classes, I was excited to give back to the community that had given me so much.

**Q: What are your future plans for YAAC?**

**A:** These past 5 years have been a learning experience for everyone. This group is a first of its kind not just for the CBE but for the University as a whole. And for many of its members, it is their first experience being on an advisory board. It's been my priority to discover how a group of passionate young alumni can best impact the college, finding success in consulting on some of the CBE's newest endeavors and planning events for both students and alumni. Looking to the future I'm focused on growing awareness of the group and recruiting the next generation of young alumni to take the council far into the future.

**Q: Can you tell us more about the Skills to Pay the Bills workshop series?**

**A:** Skills to Pay the Bills has been an annual event put on by YAAC since 2019. The event puts business leaders in front of students to facilitate interactive workshops teaching the soft skill that they think is most impactful to growth.

**Q: What student needs do Skills to Pay the Bills workshops aim to fill?**

**A:** The event aims to accomplish three things. 1.) Show students how paramount these skills are to their personal and professional growth. 2) Provide opportunities for students to work on these skills with their peers and industry leaders. 3) Provide resources for students to continue growing those skills after the event ends.



**Q: What has been the most popular topic among students?**

**A:** The Topic of Communication has been covered from many angles and is always a highly attended workshop. Some of the past communication workshops have included the power of word choice, how to de-escalate conflict, and how to communicate effectively with those you report to.

**Q: What kind of feedback have you received from students who have attended a workshop?**

**A:** Each year when students actually show up, actively participate, and stick around after the event to speak to presenters and YAAC members I am reassured this is a topic that students agree is important. The times that we have missed the mark is when we didn't make the content engaging. With so many events for students to choose from, those that succeed provide more than a power point and free pizza, and that has been our goal since the beginning and remains our goal today.

**Q: How have the workshops evolved since they started?**

**A:** Our first year the workshops were led by members of YAAC and the Advisory Board, after seeing the success from that first year we have worked to grow its impact by bringing in the best and brightest from the Baltimore community to speak to students on what topics they feel are the most crucial for their personal and professional success. We also work to understand what the most relevant skills are for the current workplace. This year the workshops revolve around succeeding in a virtual setting and how to have your opinion heard as policies and changes are being made.



**Q: What changes have you made to the workshop with the move to virtual job recruitment?**

**A:** Obviously the event will not be in person this year and will held over Zoom. Our challenge is to not let that impact our ability to engage students. We have worked to find relevant topics to today's challenges including a workshop all about how to start your career (or internship) virtually. Additionally we want students to realize that it wasn't just students that were forced to move to virtual but professionals as well. So the event will be set up just like the trainings that many of us professionals now participate in to further our own education.

**Q: What other resources are available to students through YAAC?**

**A:** Every member of YAAC joined because they have a passion for the CBE and the students within it. And while we are usually working to create programs and events for the student population as a whole we also have a passion for having an individual impact through mentorship and leveraging our networks to open up opportunities. Students looking to connect can learn more about the members on the CBE's website and can find all of us on LinkedIn!

*“Dr. Soistman’s gift is a remarkable extension of his legacy of generosity towards his alma mater. With this gift, Fran will help ensure that the university continues to attract talented students and provides enhanced resources to faculty and staff to support outstanding world-class research, teaching, and student success”*

*- President Kim Schatzel*



## Largest TU alumni gift has wide-ranging benefit

from the Towson University newsroom

Towson University alumnus Fran Soistman Jr. '79 has been a proud Tiger for more than 40 years. In 2015 he received an honorary doctorate degree from TU that read, in part, “He approaches complex issues with the university’s best interests at heart—unfailingly thoughtful, inclusive and focused on the ultimate goal.”

With a recent \$5.4 million gift—the largest from an alumnus/a in TU history— Soistman, a nationally recognized expert and top executive in the health care management sector, has continued to demonstrate his boundless affection for his alma mater. His first gift to TU in the late 1980s was followed by many additional contributions totaling more than \$600,000 in support of projects and initiatives across the institution.

“Over the past 30 years, I have had the pleasure of establishing multiple endowments and supporting a number of important initiatives at TU. Given the university’s strong momentum and significant opportunities to advance its ambitious vision, I thought that it was the right time to make a substantial commitment to TU’s future,” he says. “I hope it inspires others to support the university. My goal is that a fellow alum will quickly follow my gift with an even larger gift.”

President Kim Schatzel thanked Soistman for his generosity.

“Dr. Soistman’s gift is a remarkable extension of his legacy of generosity towards his alma mater. With this gift, Fran will help ensure that the university continues to attract talented students and provides enhanced resources to faculty and staff to support outstanding world-class research, teaching, and student success,” President Kim Schatzel said. “His gift is historic, and Fran’s leadership over the years has been extraordinary. And this gift further demonstrates that — as the largest gift ever given to Towson University by an alum.”

Soistman is the Founder and President of Healthcare Management & Transformation Advisory Services LLC. He retired as CVS Health-Aetna’s executive vice president and president of government services in 2019 after serving as Executive Vice President at Coventry Health Care and President and CEO at HealthAmerica.

Throughout his career, Soistman has remained strongly connected to TU. He has served on the Towson University Board of Visitors (BOV) since 2002 and as chair from 2016-18. He also served as a director on the TU Foundation – one of his earliest volunteer roles with the university.

His \$5.4 million gift to TU will benefit athletics, the College of Health Professions, the College of Business & Economics and programming to advance equity, diversity and inclusion.

### A “healthy” gift for future leaders in healthcare and business

After spending most of his career in executive leadership positions in healthcare, it is appropriate that a portion of his gift will also support the construction of a new building for the College of Health Professions—a \$173 million, 229,000 square foot home that will prepare students to become future health care leaders in Maryland and beyond.

“With the graying of America—the needs are only getting greater,” he says. “The pandemic pointed out our vulnerability as a nation and woke us up to the importance of health professionals as frontline and essential workers. Our CHP students have been scattered over a 2-mile radius for decades. It’s important that we bring them all under one roof.”

Soistman’s gift will also fully endow a wide range of scholarships in the College of Business & Economics, where he received his bachelor’s degree in accounting and finance, thus ensuring TU business students will reap the benefits of Soistman’s generosity annually.

“Business is the economic engine for Baltimore, the state of Maryland, and the entire region,” Soistman notes. “We produce many talented graduates. We need to continue to invest in this area.”

2019 - 2020

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We are deeply grateful to our donors for investing in Towson University's College of Business and Economics. We recognize the following alumni, friends, students, faculty, staff, corporations, foundations and other organizations that supported the college through the Towson University Foundation with annual gifts of \$1,000 and above from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020.

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