

# M MITCHELL MAGAZINE





**ON THE COVER:**  
Mitchell College of Business Senior Scholars,  
l-r, Kellie Snyder, Granger Heckler, Sydney  
Davis, Landen Harville and Eldon Porter.

“

This is definitely  
the place to be.”

-TROY DIXON  
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# From the Dean

DR. ALVIN WILLIAMS



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**TO GET INVOLVED AND  
STAY CONNECTED, FOLLOW  
US ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND  
AT [SOUTHALABAMA.EDU/  
COLLEGES/MCOB](https://southalabama.edu/colleges/mcob)**

At every single turn we are reminded of the global nature of our customers and suppliers. Almost everything we purchase has some link to another part of the world. As part of its core mission, the Mitchell College of Business continues to infuse global engagement across the curriculum and in many of its activities and programs, especially study abroad initiatives.

This edition of Mitchell Magazine spotlights the study abroad experiences of four Mitchell College students, and our global connections are reflected throughout the magazine.

Opportunities for international engagement continue to grow, with new study abroad courses in Singapore, Ireland and Iceland. Specifically, the course in Singapore focuses on business challenges and opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region, the focus in Ireland is on a comparable study of business practices in Ireland and Northern Ireland, and in Iceland the focus is on sustainable business practices.

In our own neighborhood, we have firms with headquarters in Australia, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, among others. These firms from around the world play an integral role in our economic vibrancy. The Mitchell College prepares students to tackle a broad range of global business opportunities and challenges.

As we reflect on the history of the Mitchell College since its inception some 60 years ago, consider the students and faculty from around the world who have enriched every facet of the College's life. More expansively, think about the alumni who live and contribute to companies around the globe. We are indeed engaged globally! As we grow, so will our global engagement.

Please join us on this journey!



## MCOB MISSION

The Mitchell College of Business produces innovative, future business leaders through experiential learning and global engagement with industry to advance the economic well-being of the Gulf Coast region.



# Step Right Up

A NEW CLASS OF MITCHELL SCHOLARS BEGINS THEIR JOURNEY TOWARD A DEGREE IN BUSINESS, A REWARDING CAREER AND A LIFETIME OF COMMUNITY SERVICE.

**Bailey  
Belaire**  
ACCOUNTING

**High School Involvement:**  
*Vice President of the Creative Writing Club, Key Club, National Honor Society*

**Hometown:** *Bay Minette, Ala.*

**Most People Don't Know:**  
*"I read the entire Harry Potter series in two and a half days."*

**Hobbies:** *Reading, writing and playing city-building games*

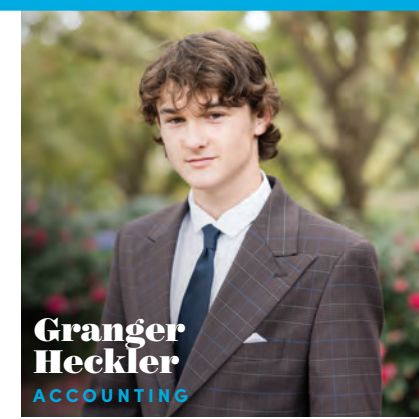
**Aspirations After College:**  
*"I would like to become a CPA and write a fantasy book series in my spare time."*

Bailey Belaire is a freshman accounting major and aspiring certified public accountant from Bay Minette, Alabama. In addition to scoring an ACT of 32, she immersed herself in activities throughout high school as a member of Key Club and the National Honor Society and vice president of the Creative Writing Club. In her free time, Belaire enjoys reading and writing and hopes one day to have her own book series published. Receiving the Mitchell Scholarship is creating opportunities Belaire is already enjoying. "The Mitchell Scholarship to me means that I can fully focus on my education and not have to worry about student debt or how I am going to juggle a job and my student life," she said. "When I was told that I had received this scholarship, I remember rejoicing with my parents. I am proud that my future will be so much brighter — and my life more full — with this scholarship."



TO SUPPORT FUTURE MITCHELL SCHOLARS:  
[GIVING.SOUTHALABAMA.EDU/ MITCHELLSCHOLARS](https://giving.southalabama.edu/mitchellscholars)





**High School Involvement:**

Swim Team, Bowling Team, Scholars Bowl, Hi-Q, National Honor Society

**Hometown:** Satsuma, Ala.

**Most People Don't Know:**

"I was a National Merit recipient."

**Hobbies:** Swimming and rock climbing

**Aspirations After College:** "I plan to pursue a career in a math-related field and use what the business college teaches to function well in a business as well as possibly run my own someday."

Incoming Scholar Michael Bowdoin participated in a multitude of extracurricular activities throughout high school. He managed his academic commitments while competing on the swim, bowling, Hi-Q and Scholars Bowl teams. He maintained a 4.6 GPA and made a composite score of 32 on his ACT. While Bowdoin is undecided on what major to pursue, he is excited to explore finance and other math-driven courses. He hopes to someday open his own business and looks forward to gaining new skills while at the Mitchell College of Business. "The Mitchell Scholarship is about equipping the most ambitious students with exactly what they need to succeed in a long-term career," he said. "Technology and opportunities were given to me and fellow scholars so our primary focus can be on academic achievement as opposed to financial or material worry."

**High School Involvement:**

Senior Class Treasurer, National Honor Society, National Technical Honor Society, Baker High School Marching Band, Ronald McDonald House Red Shoe Krewe, DECA, Distinguished Young Woman Participant

**Hometown:** Mobile, Ala.

**Most People Don't Know:** "I already own and operate a business called HappyLettering Co. I sell hand-lettered home decor and gifts!"

**Hobbies:** Cooking, working on her business venture, listening to music and fashion

Sydney Davis, who is pursuing a concentration in entrepreneurship, already has experience when it comes to owning and handling a business. While in high school, she launched her own hand-lettered home decor and gift business, HappyLettering Co., while maintaining a 4.5 GPA. She looks forward to what the Mitchell Scholarship means for her future as a burgeoning entrepreneur. Davis was involved in numerous clubs and organizations throughout high school, including the National Honor Society, the National Technical Honor Society and the Baker High School Marching Band. When she isn't running her business or studying, Davis enjoys cooking, playing music and working as a stylist at a local formalwear and bridal clothier. "The Mitchell Scholarship to me means peace," she said. "I can pursue a degree in business and worry less about the financial costs that usually accompany a college education."

**High School Involvement:**

Marching Bulldogs (Drum Major, senior year), Track and Field, Jazz Band, French Club

**Hometown:** Mobile, Ala.

**Most People Don't Know:**

"I was born prematurely."

**Hobbies:** Golf, working out and playing guitar

**Aspirations After College:**

"I plan to get my MBA and become either a private accountant or a CPA."

Daniel Harvey, the son of two Mitchell College of Business alumni, joins the Mitchell College from UMS-Wright High School. In addition to leading the marching band as drum major, Harvey was involved in a diverse range of activities including the Jazz Band, French club, and track and field. At South, he joined Sigma Chi fraternity and is majoring in accounting. Harvey is proud of the hard work reflected in his receiving the Mitchell Scholarship and is prepared to make the most of his experience at the Mitchell College. "I can't express how appreciative I am to be a recipient of the scholarship," he said, "because it has provided and will continue to provide me with numerous opportunities." Following graduation, Harvey plans to sit for licensure as a certified public accountant and launch his career in the accounting field.

**High School Involvement:**

National Honor Society, Boys State, Cross Country

**Hometown:** Bay Minette, Ala.

**Most People Don't Know:** "I lived in Germany for three years and have traveled to most countries in Europe."

**Hobbies:** Running and working out

**Aspirations After College:** "I want to work in wealth management and one day have my own firm. I also want to pursue my JD and work with my father at his law firm."

Between launching his career in wealth management, someday opening his own advisory firm and pursuing a law degree, Landen Harville has big aspirations. He is already enjoying his time at South as a finance major, and especially appreciates the freedom the Mitchell Scholarship provides. "This scholarship is allowing me to fully focus on my studies and get involved in clubs around campus," he said. "Being awarded the scholarship also reminds me that the work that I put into my academics really counts. I'm all the more motivated to strive for success." While in high school, Harville participated in the National Honor Society, Boys State and varsity cross-country while maintaining a 3.74 GPA and scoring a 30 on his ACT. When he is not working on his studies, Harville enjoys working out and running.

**High School Involvement:**

Honors Graduate, FFA (FFA Creed Speaking Competition County Winner, District Winner and Alabama State Fourth Place)

**Hometown:** Springville, Ala.

**Most People Don't Know:**

"I graduated a year early."

**Hobbies:** Skateboarding, listening to music and meeting new people

**Aspirations After College:**

"An aspiration I have after college is to run an online business that allows me to work anywhere in the world at any time I like. A personal goal of mine is to visit as many countries as I can in my lifetime, and I am willing to work as hard as possible to make that happen."

Receiving the Mitchell Scholarship provided Granger Heckler, a Springville, Alabama, native, clarity and direction. "Before receiving the Mitchell Scholarship I had no idea where I wanted to go to college, and the decision was constantly on my mind," he said. "This award created a pathway and an opportunity I couldn't refuse. It is opening the door to the next stages of my life and giving me a greater idea of what my life goals and aspirations actually are." The freshman scholar has an impressive record of club involvement and academic accomplishment. In his senior year in high school, Heckler was named the FFA Creed Speaking Competition county and district winner, and he placed fourth in the event at the statewide competition. He graduated with a 4.2 GPA and a score of 29 on his ACT. At South, Heckler is majoring in accounting and has plans to launch his own online business. He believes that the future of business is online and looks forward to exploring ways to use e-business to benefit others.

**High School Involvement:**

Jazz and Concert Band (electric bass and upright bass), Environmental Club, Watershed Clean Up

**Hometown:** Homewood, Ala.

**Most People Don't Know:**

"I've marched in both the Macy's Thanksgiving Day and Rose Bowl parades playing a bass guitar."

**Hobbies:** Playing guitar and yoga

**Aspirations After College:**

"After college I plan on starting my own practice in physical therapy."

Will Murray joins the 2022 Mitchell Scholar class as much more than a promising young academician. In fact, the musician has played in both the Macy's Thanksgiving Day and Rose Bowl parades and was a member of his high school jazz and concert bands. Now a finance major in the Mitchell College of Business, Murray still enjoys playing the guitar in his free time and has taken up yoga at the Recreation Center on campus. While at South, he hopes to acquire financial skills and business acumen before attending physical therapy school. Of the opportunities afforded by the Mitchell Scholarship, Murray said, "I value the sense of community that the small close-knit group possesses, and I've enjoyed the company of the scholars I've met so far."





**Eldon Porter**  
FINANCE

**High School Involvement:**

Golf Letterman, National Honor Society, Key Club, Youth Leadership Mobile, Life Teen, Green Club, President of the Young Men of St. Joseph Chapter

**Hometown:** Mobile, Ala.

**Most People Don't Know:**

"I was a junior domino world champion."

**Hobbies:** Golfing, fishing and hunting

**Aspirations After College:**

"After college I want to attend a law school that has a joint MBA/J.D. program to pursue a career in corporate law."

Finance major Eldon Porter did not have to look far when choosing the Mitchell College of Business. The Mobile native was a four-year golf letterman and the president of his Young Men of St. Joseph Chapter throughout high school at McGill-Toolen. When Porter wasn't busy playing golf or leading the St. Joseph Chapter, he was also an active member of the National Honor Society, Key Club, Youth Leadership Mobile, Life Teen and the Green Club. While balancing his extracurricular activities, he graduated with a 3.9 GPA and a 31 ACT score. Porter intends to attend graduate school and pursue a joint MBA and J.D. before launching a career in corporate law. He anticipates that the Mitchell Scholarship will aid him in creating business-world connections — with peers, faculty, alumni and executive guests. "When I was choosing which university I would attend for the next four years, I searched for a college community that would push campus involvement and academic success," he said. "The Mitchell College of Business presented the exact level of academic rigor I was searching for through the Mitchell Scholars program."



**Elizabeth Skeen**  
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

**High School Involvement:**

Air Force Junior ROTC, National Honor Society, French Club, Student Council Executive Board

**Hometown:** Bay Minette, Ala.

**Most People Don't Know:** "I was a manager at a Moe's Southwest Grill near my hometown before coming to South."

**Hobbies:** Going to the beach, outdoor activities, cooking and attending concerts

**Aspirations After College:** "I aspire to get my MBA and then pursue a job as a management analyst before eventually opening my own coffee shop."

Elizabeth Skeen, a business management major from Bay Minette, Alabama, has a special appreciation for what it means to pursue a collegiate education as a Mitchell Scholar. "As a first-generation student, the financial aspects of obtaining a college education were concerning and played a big part in my college decision," she said. "But not only is the Mitchell Scholarship allowing me to pursue my dreams financially, it is allowing me to make connections with like-minded people and the respected faculty and staff. I couldn't be more grateful for this opportunity, and I am proud to be a Mitchell Scholar." Skeen graduated from high school with a 4.2 GPA while engaging in a variety of extracurricular activities including Air Force Junior ROTC, National Honor Society, French Club and Student Council Executive Board. Skeen enjoys cooking, going to the beach, spending time with friends and family and attending concerts. While at South, she hopes to earn her MBA and pursue a job as a management analyst.



**Kellie Snyder**  
ACCOUNTING

**High School Involvement:**

Volleyball, Basketball, Track and Field, Academic Challenge in Engineering and Science (Worldwide Youth in Science and Engineering), FFA, National Honor Society

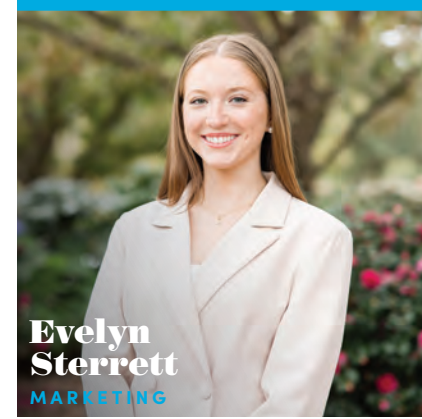
**Hometown:** Newark, Ill.

**Most People Don't Know:** "I have pulled an all-nighter for the sole purpose of finishing a good book series."

**Hobbies:** Playing sports, going to the beach and reading

**Aspirations After College:** "I hope to be an accountant for an influential company where I can help that company help others."

With an ACT score of 34, Kellie Snyder joins the 2022 Mitchell Scholar class from Newark, Illinois. The multifaceted scholar maintained a 4.0 GPA while tutoring classmates, competing as a three-sport athlete, and participating in the National Honor Society and the National FFA Organization. She's poised to continue the momentum as an accounting major and hopes to join a major accounting firm following graduation. "To me, the Mitchell Scholarship means opportunity," she said. "It has given me the opportunity to attend a great college without the financial burden I would have had otherwise. This lets me better focus on my studies and my future."



**Evelyn Sterrett**  
MARKETING

**High School Involvement:**

Varsity Cheer, National Honor Society, Student Government

**Hometown:** Mobile, Ala.

**Most People Don't Know:** "I've been to more than 20 U.S. states."

**Hobbies:** Reading, shopping and traveling

**Aspirations After College:** "I want to work in the marketing department at a big company, creating advertisements and finding ways to get creative with marketing a brand. I would love to be the person running the social media accounts for big name brands."

A creative spirit who loves to travel, Evelyn Sterrett joins the Mitchell Scholars class with plans to leverage her time at the University of South Alabama to prepare for a career in corporate advertising and design. After attending high school in Mobile, she didn't have to travel far to find the right collegiate fit. "I know that after my collegiate experience at South, I will be able to go into the workforce equipped with a quality education and the tools I need to succeed," she said. Her involvement in high school included activities such as varsity cheer, National Honor Society and student government. Sterrett graduated with a 4.0 GPA and 31 ACT score. Her journey at the Mitchell College of Business is just the beginning for Sterrett as she readies herself to launch a career in social media, advertising and marketing.



**Carter Tinnerman**  
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

**High School Involvement:**

FFA (serving as the student adviser junior year and chapter president as a senior,) Football, Golf, Track (National Championship qualifier in track, coach for younger pole vaulters)

**Hometown:** West Milton, Ohio

**Most People Don't Know:** "I pole-vault here at South."

**Hobbies:** Longboarding, cliff jumping and swimming

**Aspirations After College:**

"After college I want to pursue a career in real estate development."

National high school track championship pole vaulter Carter Tinnerman came to South Alabama from West Milton, Ohio, eager to represent the University as a high-caliber student-athlete. "When I was informed that I had been selected for the Mitchell Scholarship, I instantly knew I was going to be a Jaguar," he said. "In addition to the scholarship itself, the connections I will form as a result of this amazing opportunity are priceless." Tinnerman has plenty of experience balancing athletic and classroom responsibilities; throughout high school, he played football, golf and track while maintaining an overall 4.3 GPA. In addition to his athletic involvement, he also dedicated his energies to serving the West Milton FFA chapter and led the organization as chapter president his senior year. At South, when Tinnerman isn't hard at work preparing for track season, he is dedicating himself to his studies with hopes of a career in real estate development.



**Kyle Tyler**  
ACCOUNTING

**High School Involvement:**

Asian Club, National Honor Society, Varsity Quiz Bowl, JV Wrestling (captain and secretary)

**Hometown:** Chicago, Ill.

**Most People Don't Know:** "My eyes change colors but usually just different shades of brown."

**Hobbies:** Studying history

**Aspirations After College:**

"I'd like to go to law school and become a tax attorney."

Chicago native Kyle Tyler has big ambitions for the future. Majoring in accounting, the freshman Mitchell Scholar plans to attend law school and pursue a career as a tax attorney. Throughout high school, Tyler was involved in a variety of extracurricular activities, including the Asian Club, the National Honor Society, the Varsity Quiz Bowl team and the wrestling team, while scoring an impressive 33 on his ACT. He also served as the captain and secretary of the junior varsity wrestling team at his high school. Tyler is especially grateful to be a recipient of the Mitchell Scholarship, as it allows him to focus on his education and motivates him to work hard and maintain a high degree of success in the classroom. "The scholarship is not something just given away," he said. "I must maintain a standard."



# Return on Investment

FOUR EARLY MITCHELL SCHOLARS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AND HOW THE PROGRAM INFLUENCED THEIR LIVES.

Building a great university demands a variety of expertise and imagination, including innovative faculty and bold vision. But without top-notch students, it may never reach its potential. Back in 1999, when the University of South Alabama was still young, benefactor Abe Mitchell created the Mitchell Scholars program, to attract those very students to the business college that bears his family name.

We asked four of the early recipients to reflect on the difference in their lives and careers that resulted from being named a Mitchell Scholar.

Here are the stories told by Mark Spivey (2002), Amber Knott (2004), Keith Davidson (2004) and Leann Bosarge (2004). Their career interests span from banking and sales to finances and fishing boats, but all four recognize the impact on their lives from being a Mitchell Scholar.

## MARK SPIVEY

Originally from Montgomery, Alabama, Mark Spivey fell in love with South Alabama and Mobile over the course of several campus visits to see his older brother. Spivey enrolled in 1998 and immediately got involved on campus with Sigma Chi, Campus Outreach, Southerners, SGA and intramurals. He also remembered his father's advice to establish connections and developed strong relationships with the dean of the business college and his professors during his freshman year.

"In large part due to my early involvement and GPA, I got a phone call one day at my dorm from the dean. He told me, 'Mr. Mitchell would like to choose you as the first recipient of the Mitchell Scholarship.' One of my greatest moments in college — really a cool moment throughout my life — was being able to call my mom and dad and say, 'Hey, as long as I don't screw this up, my college is paid for.'"

"Being able to make that phone call was really special to me."

Spivey excelled throughout his undergraduate career and graduated in finance before returning for his MBA. Today, he is vice president of commercial banking at Truist Bank in Mobile, where he enjoys working with business owners to help them achieve their goals and dreams.

With a passion for serving others that extends far beyond his professional career, Spivey has a long history of serving Mobile. He is on the Senior Bowl committee and boards of directors for Victory Health, Mobile Area Education Foundation, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce and Mobile Sunrise Rotary Club. Recently, Spivey has led an effort to connect student-athletes at South to nonprofits and charities through the creation of Jags Impact, a 501(c)(3) NIL collective. The entity will partner student-athletes with various charitable organizations to use the student-athletes' name, image and likeness in supporting the organizations and community philanthropy.

"The Mitchell Scholarship is a badge of honor that I've worn for the past 24 years," Spivey said. "Through those years in college, what I didn't know is that what I was getting was an opportunity to develop a relationship with Mr. Abe Mitchell. I remember sitting in my office one day fresh out of college working at the bank and I got a call from Mr. Mitchell. He asked how everything was going and how I was. That speaks to the core of who he is and his intent."

## AMBER KNOTT

Entrepreneur Amber Knott is an achiever and an overcomer. While growing up in Fairhope, Knott developed a strong desire to be the first in her family to attend college. She began her search for a college where getting an education would be financially feasible. The Mitchell Scholarship helped check that box; Knott enrolled at South as a finance major with a full scholarship and a new goal: To graduate in three years.

Over the course of the next three years, Knott kept busy. While taking up to 21 credit hours per semester, she was an active member of Phi Mu sorority, represented the Mitchell College as an SGA senator and worked for the Vanguard campus newspaper as advertising manager. While in her third — and last — year of college, Knott began working for the Lagniappe newspaper in Mobile. She received a full-time offer and joined the company as advertising account manager following graduation.



MARK SPIVEY



AMBER KNOTT



KEITH DAVIDSON



LEANN BOSARGE

"I want students to know that you can go to South and then go see the world. You will be prepared after going to South to professionally compete in your career."

— KEITH DAVIDSON

As opportunities arose within the pharmaceutical and medical sales industry, Knott pivoted and stepped into a position with GlaxoSmithKline as a sales representative. The demanding industry was the perfect challenge for Knott, who spent time learning her products, calling on medical professionals and traveling the Southeast over the course of 15 years.

Following the stillbirth of a child, Knott evaluated her work-life balance and decided to change career paths again. She joined her husband, John, an entrepreneur, in his business ventures. Together they launched Coastal Repair Solutions in 2020 and own and operate Beach Laundry. In addition they have a growing residential real estate portfolio.

The change allowed her to focus on both her family and her professional interests. And, after several rounds of in vitro fertilization that included consultations with physicians around the United States, Knott gave birth to a daughter, Pearl Virginia, in January.

"Having connections through the Mitchell Scholarship gave me the confidence I needed to be successful in life," Knott said. "The business courses were instrumental in guiding me to where I am today, and I gained important interpersonal skills through my involvement on campus that have shaped who I am."

## KEITH DAVIDSON

Keith Davidson's pathway around the world began at South.

"I've been to 42 countries and six continents, and flown almost 2 million miles," he said. "I want students to know that you can go to South and then go see the world. You will be prepared after going to South to professionally compete in your career. Go challenge yourself — it is up to you to determine your success. South will prepare you."

Davidson grew up in Baldwin County and decided to attend his father's alma mater when South offered him the Mitchell Scholarship. He arrived on campus hoping for a career with a Big Four accounting firm post-graduation. While living on campus, Davidson became a Southerner, a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon and president of the business fraternity, Alpha Kappa Psi.

Four short years later, the accounting major launched a career with PricewaterhouseCoopers.

After working for PwC, the accounting professional took a finance position with Kimberly-Clark, and his career took off. Davidson received assignments around the globe and spent time living in Dallas and Atlanta, as well as Asia and the Middle East. Throughout his seven years with the company, Davidson diversified his skill set, with roles in finance, marketing, corporate development and mergers and acquisitions for the company.

Davidson also pursued and held financial executive roles with major medical device and pharmaceutical entities EndoChoice and ICS—AmerisourceBergen. Today, he is a principal in Dallas at CLA, a national accounting and consulting firm, where he oversees the firm's accounting and consulting practice for technology companies and startups.

"You have to make your own future," he said. "No one will care about your career as much as you."



# Mitchell Scholars

BY THE NUMBERS

29

MINIMUM ACT SCORE

200+

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

2000

YEAR THE 1ST MITCHELL SCHOLAR GRADUATED

\$4.7M

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS GIVEN SINCE 2006

12

STATES WHERE MITCHELL SCHOLAR ALUMNI LIVE

6

STATES REPRESENTED AMONG ALL CURRENT MITCHELL SCHOLARS

Fight for it and be strategic in carving your own path. I was always looking forward and thinking strategically about where I was going. My career has been the ride of a lifetime, and it all started at South."

## LEANN BOSARGE

From wearing floaties on the dock around her dad's commercial fishing boats to managing the family company and shaping the industry as a member of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, Leann Bosarge has been immersed in the fishing business for as long as she can remember. Growing up, Bosarge was never far from the water, and as she approached college, she wanted to stay close to home.

"I wanted to be able to work for my family's business while going to school," she said. "South provided the perfect opportunity to do just that, and the Mitchell Scholarship allowed me many more opportunities from there."

At South, Bosarge majored in both finance and accounting. In addition to working two jobs and taking a full course load, she also served as vice president of the service organization Tour de Force, secretary of Beta Alpha Psi accounting honors society and secretary of the Financial Management Association. Just a quick 40-minute drive from Pascagoula, Mississippi, and the family business, she would travel back on weekends to work on various projects. By the close of her senior year, Bosarge was conflicted.

"I wasn't sure what I wanted to do and whether or not that was graduate school or working for a major accounting firm," she said. "Mr. Mitchell had a conversation with me and helped me realize that I didn't necessarily have to leave to work for a large, publicly traded company to be successful. I could actually be just as successful and fulfilled right here on the Gulf Coast. He helped me to

see that, while those things might be what some people see as success, I had all the opportunity to further and shape the future of my industry and community right here with my family's business. I stayed true to my roots, and I'm so happy I did."

After several years at a publicly traded bank, during which time she also earned her MBA at South, Bosarge was drawn back to the industry she knows and loves.

As the head of new business development for Bosarge Boats, she manages an increasingly diversified portfolio of business — from working with the Corps of Engineers on endangered species relocation to negotiating with multinational companies on the decommissioning of oil rigs — in addition to overseeing the company's commercial fishing operations.

Following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, Bosarge used her passion for the marine environment and her community by overseeing a commercial fleet of more than 100 vessels involved in both protection and recovery efforts.

Bosarge serves as a member of the National Seafood Council Task Force and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, where she has served for nine years managing the marine resources of the Gulf of Mexico in federal waters from Texas to Florida.

"Life has bookends. Other than my four wonderful children, my time on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will be one of the bookends of my life," Bosarge said. "It has been an incredible honor and an amazing experience, and all of it together with Bosarge Boats, that's what makes my world fun. I do a little bit of everything, and I get to do it with my family. I will never look back and wish I had spent more time with my family and seen my mom and dad more. I love that I get to see them every day."

# Mitchell on Mitchell Scholars



## SOUTH'S LEADING DONOR TALKS ABOUT THE REWARDS OF SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN THE MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND HELPING THEM GRADUATE WITHOUT DEBT.

Each year, Abraham "Abe" Mitchell meets the Mitchell Scholars who have earned the business scholarships that bear his name at the University of South Alabama.

Each year, he urges students to continue their business studies.

Each year, he sees the results of his investment in young scholars.

"They're all so young and bright," Mitchell said. "When I meet them years later, or semesters later, that's an exciting thing. And I've had professors tell me that when they have a Mitchell Scholar in the classroom, they can tell."

The scholar program, which was launched in 1999, offers students four-year scholarships to study in the Mitchell College of Business. Scholars are required to do business internships and maintain high grade-point averages. In return, they receive up to \$70,000 to cover tuition and expenses, along with a laptop and a stipend for study abroad. They also are paired with professional mentors and given opportunities for leadership and teamwork development.

The idea behind the program is simple.

"We had good students coming out of Mobile and going out of state or elsewhere for college, so we started the scholarships to try and get more of them to stay here," Mitchell said. "Hopefully, they can become the core of future leadership in the city."

More than 200 students have been awarded scholarships through the Mitchell Scholars program. Many have graduated and work for local businesses. Others pursued different careers.

Mitchell laughs when he recalls a pair of Huntsville students who won Mitchell Scholarships several years ago. They turned out to be pre-med students who used the business program to pay for their pre-med undergraduate educations.

"Somebody asked if that bothered me," he said, savoring the memory. "No. Those are the kind of entrepreneurs we're looking for."

Mitchell and his brother Mayer attended the University of Pennsylvania's famed business school, the Wharton School, before returning to Mobile and founding The Mitchell Company, one of the most successful real estate development firms in the southeastern United States. The company built more than 175 shopping centers and 25,000 single-family homes.

In 1986, the brothers sold their interest in the company to focus on philanthropic endeavors, which includes support for the University of South Alabama. The Mitchell family has contributed more than \$100 million to South, which makes them the most generous donors to a single public university in the history of the state of Alabama.

For Abe Mitchell, the scholar program is more personal and focused than other donations to the University. He enjoys meeting with business students each fall. He sees the future in their faces.

"This is very rewarding," he said. "It's rewarding to see students graduate without debt, which gives them more flexibility in starting their careers."

Mitchell said he doesn't try to lecture students or guide their careers, but he does have one piece of advice for all Mitchell Scholars.

"Becoming a Mitchell Scholar is a great achievement in itself, but don't rest on your laurels," he said. "The academic requirements for retaining your scholarship are not flexible. Do what it takes to meet the requirements, and it will be a great investment in your future."



# BROADER HORIZONS

*Study abroad offers new classwork, new insights*

TO SUPPORT STUDY ABROAD OPPORTUNITIES: [GIVING.SOUTHALABAMA.EDU/MITCHELLSTUDYABROAD](https://giving.southalabama.edu/mitchellstudyabroad)



C.C. ANNULIS (L), MACY ADAMS (R)

## FOUR MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS STUDENTS FOUND MORE THAN CLASSROOM LEARNING DURING THEIR STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS LAST SUMMER.

Study abroad programs allow students to experience new places and cultures, make friends from around the world and gain a global perspective — all while earning college credit. It allows students to develop highly valued skills such as intercultural communication, foreign languages, adaptability and problem-solving.

This past summer, Mitchell College of Business students studied in the UK and Argentina, and gained valuable college and life experiences.

The value, said junior C.C. Annulis, was found in “the people. Not only the people on the trip with me, but every person I met — maybe a waiter or on the tube or businesspeople we talked with. I learned about how to connect with people and how important that is in the business world and as a citizen in general.”

She is especially pleased to be “bringing those skills back here with me; to broaden my community and my network. It’s something I hope to do forever.”

Annulis, a marketing major, and Macy Adams, a sophomore accounting major, both participated in a month-long program at Queen Mary University of London, sponsored by the University of South Alabama and Midwestern State University in Texas.

“The professors were amazing,” Adams said, and the supplementary lectures by representatives of Lloyd’s of London and De Beers were remarkably useful for learning how businesses operate elsewhere in the world.

Studying abroad, Annulis said, “opens your mind. I thought I had an open mind going into it but realized I had to open it even more.”

For Adams, it was also a chance to verify a dream. “I’ve always thought I’d love a big city, and a month in London helped me know that this is what I want when I graduate,” she said.

Studying in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was Ethan Flowers’ third international venture. This time, he worked through a private company that organizes visits with host families.

Whether at class, on the 20-cent-per-ride subway, at a soccer match or in the arts district, there was a lesson to be learned. The senior finance major was particularly struck — staying in a country that had three finance ministers in a month — by the stability of American finance. But also, he was impressed by the perseverance of the Argentinian businesspeople in complicated times. And he learned to tango.

“Are study abroad programs for everyone? Yes!” said Flowers. “If they can accept that the American way is not the only way. You need to accept a different culture and learn from it.”

For Josie Albin, a finance and marketing major who spent a month at Oxford University in the U.K., the experience was a chance to learn about linkages between the U.S. and the U.K., and how elements of this special relationship are influenced. But more than that, it was an opportunity to discuss and hear different perspectives, whether on politics, business, law or moral questions.

“Taking a step outside your comfort zone is never a bad thing,” said Albin, a senior from Kansas. “Taking a step out will always be to your benefit.”



ETHAN FLOWERS

“I thought I had an open mind going into it but realized I had to open it even more.”

—C.C. ANNULIS



JOSIE ALBIN (L)



“The key is to listen to the person you’re communicating with and watch for signals.”

—DR. JEANNE MAES

# Q&A

## TALKING DATA WITH THE C-SUITE



You have the data: How the increased cost of that tiny widget will affect the production cost for each ship your company is building. How a logistical stranglehold on a West Coast port will delay production in your Gulf Coast plant. Whether a wage increase is worth the added production cost if it attracts workers during a time of full employment.

Now you need to catch the ear of the C-suite so you can share your knowledge. And that’s not always easy.

Management Professor Dr. Jeanne Maes has coached hundreds of business professionals through communications

struggles. At the fall South Alabama Center for Business Analytics, Real Estate and Economic Development conference, she teamed with Dr. Jennifer Zoghby, a visiting assistant professor of marketing and quantitative methods, to help data professionals make sure they can get their message through to the boss.

Now the two share with Mitchell Magazine their expertise on effective communications, including how to adapt to diverse personalities and how to be heard.

**Q: WHY FOCUS ON COMMUNICATIONS?**

A: Data professionals are brilliant at data and analytics, but may have limited exposure to communications skills. And those attending last year’s SABRE conference asked for such a session.

**Q: WHAT CAUSES COMMUNICATIONS DIFFICULTIES?**

A: Sometimes it’s as simple as semantics. In banking, for example, a data professional hears the word “app” and thinks of a computer application, but a loan officer hears the same word and thinks of a customer’s loan application. Make sure your terms are clear.

**Q: WHAT IF MY BOSS DOESN’T WANT TO LISTEN TO ME?**

A: Sometimes it’s a fundamental difference in work style. If you’re chatty and your boss is all business, he or she may not want to take the time. Learn to identify your style and that of your boss and prepare your presentation to match theirs.

Think about the implications of your data. Start with the most important element of it. Show the implications of it. Then ask what your boss would like you to do with the information or what other information might be helpful. And then, listen.

One low number doesn’t sink a ship, so you might help your boss see options. For example, during the heart of the pandemic, many companies struggled. Rather than giving up, some used data to find a way to pivot — and some of those came through stronger than they were at the start.

That is why relationships are so important. The boss may not want to hear it, but they’ll see that you’re not out to get them.

**Q: HOW CAN I LEARN ABOUT STYLES?**

A: Take a personality assessment — a complex one like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or a simpler version. (Maes and Zoghby adapted one for the SABRE conference.) Assessments ask individuals to identify their style in facets including whether you prefer to analyze, interact, decide or explore; whether you value order, cooperation, results or concepts; whether you are precise, tactful, direct or complex. Once you have a clearer understanding of your own style, think about your boss in the same terms. Then match your presentation to his or her style.

**Q: DO THESE PRINCIPLES APPLY TO INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS?**

A: If communications are difficult within your own company, those difficulties can be compounded when expanded to the world stage. Before you Zoom or email or phone someone in another country, go online and learn what you can about the business culture there. Don’t stereotype from that background, but do adapt your style. And ask the person you’re talking with to let you know if you make a gaffe.

You have to translate information no matter whom you’re talking with, but that need is even more obvious when there’s a language barrier.

**Q: HOW WILL I KNOW IF I’M COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY?**

A: The key is to listen to the person you’re communicating with and watch for signals. Whether that person is across the office, across the country or across the globe, you can pick up on their body language and other clues. Then adapt — give more background or get to the point; lay out an overview of the situation or be more precise; spend time chatting and building a relationship or get down to business.

If you want your message to be heard, adapt your style to that of the person you are talking with.





# Engineers Build Business Acumen in MBA Program



TO SUPPORT MBA SCHOLARSHIPS: [GIVING.SOUTHALABAMA.EDU/MBA](https://giving.southalabama.edu/mba)

“To perform well in a job, you need to think in terms of business. It’s not just doing the job, but knowing the purpose of your job within the organization.”

—ALAMELOU SIVAPRAGASAM

On the job as an engineer at Chevron’s plant in Pascagoula, Mississippi, Mordecai Israel realized quickly that the path to executive management required more than his ability to keep machinery working.

Leading her own startup IT business in Singapore, Alamelou Sivapragasam discovered that technical expertise wasn’t enough for business success.

And Paulo Goncalves, too, saw that success at global steel producer AM/NS could be enhanced with a broader view of the business than his career as a mechanical engineer could offer.

All three have excellent engineering credentials. And all three realized that building their business acumen would broaden their options moving forward — leading them to enroll in the Master of Business Administration program in the Mitchell College of Business.



**Mordecai Israel**

Israel had a rocky road through high school in Georgia and was working part time in fast food when his parents pointed out that he needed to change course if he wanted to go to college. At the time, he hadn’t really thought about college, but that nudge was enough for a recalibration. He boosted his grades, completed an electrical engineering degree at Alabama A&M University and earned a master’s degree in electrical engineering from South.

Now he’s working on not only the MBA, but also a Ph.D. in systems engineering. In addition to his job as an instrumentation controls and electrical design engineer for Chevron, Mordecai recently began a career in real estate and sold over \$1 million in homes during his first year.

He loves the economic theory and financial information he’s encountered in the MBA program.

“At work, I like to get into the financials and see how we make our money — how does engineering impact the financial?” Israel said.

Beyond the workplace, Israel says the MBA coursework is also helpful for handling his own money. “It’s changed my viewpoint on how money works.”



**Alamelou Sivapragasam**

Born and raised in India, Sivapragasam had completed her electronics and communication engineering degree. After getting married she moved to Singapore. She worked in software engineering, consulting and project management for 17 years before launching her own business. Three years into that new venture, her husband was transferred to Mobile, and she joined him.

Looking for her own path forward in the U.S., she opted to start the MBA program.

“To perform well in a job,” she said, “you need to think in terms of business. It’s not just doing the job, but knowing the purpose of your job within the organization.”

She has found classes on leadership, accounting, economics and business management particularly helpful. So helpful that she recommends that anyone who’s completed a few years of work should consider an MBA “so they can see how their contributions help their organization achieve its goals.”

Engineers tend to concentrate on solving problems, but, she says, they also need to understand management’s vision and learn how their work affects an organization’s budget.

Sivapragasam is doing the health care concentration within the MBA program. “My aim is to use my IT expertise to speed up the processes in the medical field where prompt service is important.”



**Paulo Goncalves**

A native of Brazil, Goncalves is a mechanical engineer, working as a reliability engineer at the AM/NS steel mill in Calvert, Alabama.

He started his career at a mill in Brazil that became part of ArcelorMittal (the “AM” in “AM/NS”), a global steel producer that encourages its employees to work at other locations in its worldwide network and also to continue learning throughout their careers.

Goncalves decided to take advantage of both of those suggestions. He transferred from Brazil to Alabama, to the mill that converts slabs of steel into more usable coils. “It’s a beautiful and challenging process,” he said.

Why an MBA?

“Even though I worked for many years as a manager there, I needed something to supplement this part of my knowledge,” Goncalves says. “We have to deal with and manage projects with different teams, and in many ways this can enhance my managerial skills.”

“It’s very challenging — it’s not my native language, and I’m trying to learn how college works here. And it’s a long time since I sat on a school bench. But I like to learn new things.”

The concepts from his classes are proving useful, he said. Learning to connect the dots through accounting and studying different management techniques have been most beneficial.

“I had done managerial training during my work in Brazil — however, this is much deeper, very interesting,” he said. “It’s giving me a better insight into different aspects of how the company functions.”



# Making a Move

**DR. GWEN PENNYWELL, WHO GOT HER START ON THE TECHNICAL SIDE OF THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY, HELPS OTHERS MERGE INTO THE BUSINESS WORLD.**



Sometimes a career needs to pivot. Dr. Gwen Pennywell made a big one, from engineering for General Motors to academia at the Mitchell College of Business, where she often helps students make adjustments in their own careers.

An associate professor of finance and economics and interim assistant dean for graduate programs, Pennywell worked nine years as a design engineer with General Motors after earning her degree in electrical engineering from Prairie View A&M in Texas.

That GM work was fun for her — a chance to work in Detroit, Ohio, Mexico and Canada. And she's proud that she can still trace the wiring on a car's electrical system.

But something changed for her.

"I turned 30," she said, "and I said, 'What do I want to do with my life?'"

And the answer was, she wanted to be a teacher. Long before she started designing car electrical systems, she used to line up her stuffed animals and teach them the lessons she learned in early elementary school.

But when she checked on how to get credentials for public school teaching, she discovered to her chagrin that she would basically have to start college over. It made much more sense for her to go for a Ph.D. Her automotive career track had already nudged her toward management, so she opted for a Ph.D. in business, choosing a finance specialty because it's the most quantitative part of business and numbers have always been her forte.

She entered a business program that was "open to accepting engineers. In a Ph.D. program you study the theory behind decisions. It was easier to teach that to engineers, because they already knew the math and theory behind decisions."

Now Pennywell helps students and those trying to decide if they want to return to school — including, you guessed it, engineers — whether a graduate business degree is right for them.

The key to that decision, she says, is that "you need to understand the direction you want to take in your career."

"If you want to go into administration, even in an engineering firm, an MBA will typically take you further than just having a technical degree.

"Our non-business graduate students come from a work environment. In that work environment they realize that if they need to move up, they need a credential. For a management path, an MBA is a strong signal."

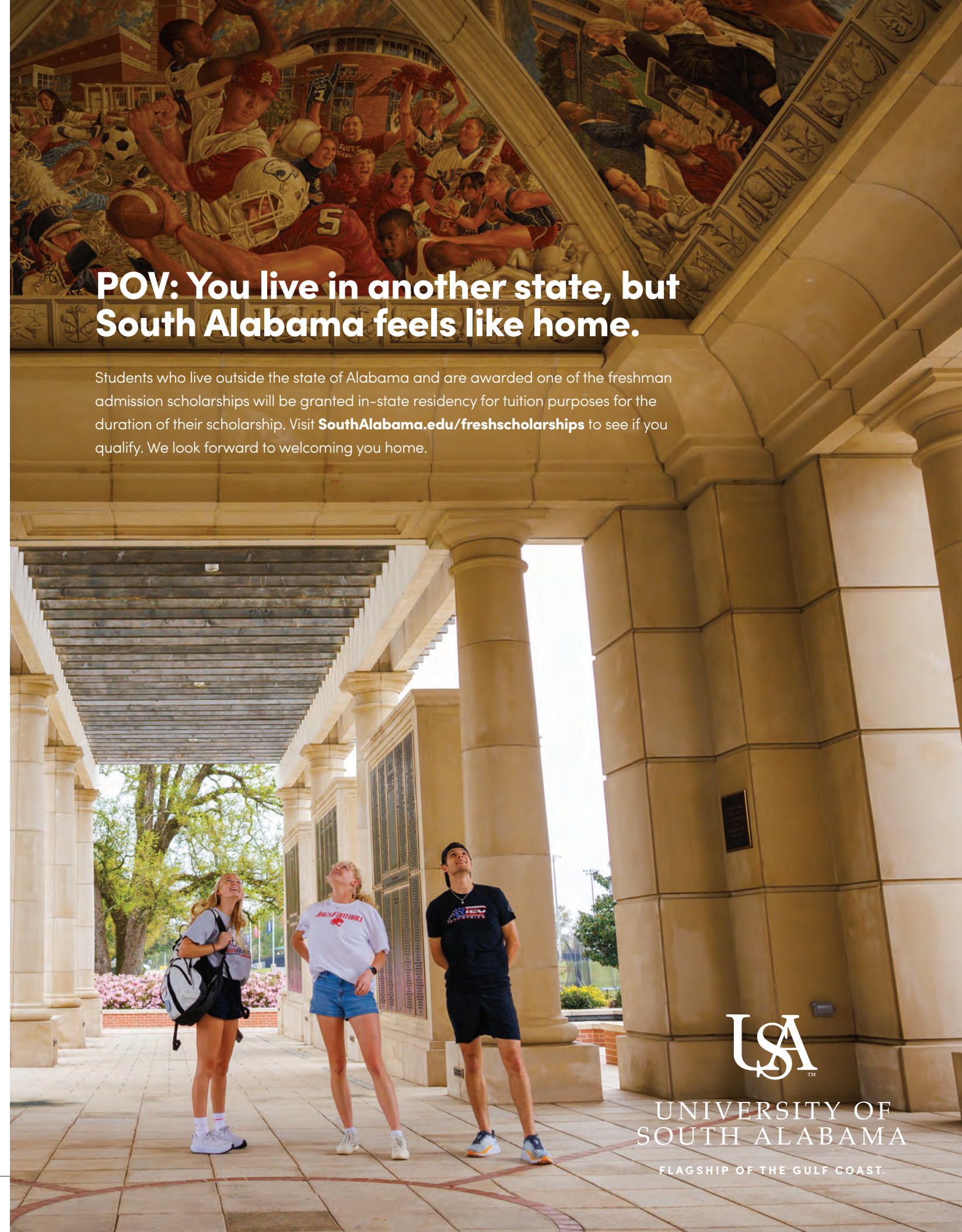
She describes various levels of education as they were described to her: as an undergraduate you are given the questions and taught the answers; as a master's student you are given the question and have to find the answers; and as a Ph.D. student, you find the question and then figure out the answer.

In that continuum, an MBA is designed to help students recognize problems in the workplace and then identify solutions.

Students need to understand their goals, she says. Once they do, she can help them find the path to reach those goals. For those who prefer to continue developing their engineering expertise, graduate work in engineering is likely a good fit. And for those who aim to climb the corporate ladder, an MBA can be a good first rung.

## POV: You live in another state, but South Alabama feels like home.

Students who live outside the state of Alabama and are awarded one of the freshman admission scholarships will be granted in-state residency for tuition purposes for the duration of their scholarship. Visit [SouthAlabama.edu/freshscholarships](https://SouthAlabama.edu/freshscholarships) to see if you qualify. We look forward to welcoming you home.



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# Course Change

**SOUTH PH.D. CANDIDATE MAGGIE DAVIS BRINGS EXPERIENCE AS A SOCIAL WORKER TO HER STUDY OF MANAGEMENT IN THE MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS.**

After earning a master's degree in social work, then counseling patients in medical and treatment facilities, Maggie Davis began working in social work administration and as a consultant for nonprofit organizations.

Then she decided to make a change and pursue a Ph.D. in business management.

She pursued a graduate business foundation certificate and then applied to the Mitchell College of Business doctoral program at the University of South Alabama.

"I thought it was a long shot," Davis said, "but members of the faculty had an appreciation of diversity and thought my background provided the basics for the research I wanted to pursue."



Her concentration is business management with a focus on organizational behavior and leadership. She's co-written articles with Dr. Matt C. Howard that have appeared in the *Journal of Health Psychology and Computers in Human Behavior*. She recently defended her dissertation, which draws on social cognitive theory to explain how employee narcissism can lead to positive and negative workplace outcomes.

Davis is one of many doctoral candidates at South with professional training and management experience in other fields.

"It's quite valuable because often they end up doing research in their areas of expertise," said Dr. William Gillis, chair of the Department of Management. "They have a much better grounding in the real-world application of academic theories."

After completing her Ph.D., Davis would like to teach and continue her research. In the fall, she began a position as a visiting instructor at the University of West Florida in Pensacola. Her husband, Dr. Justin Davis, is a professor of business administration at the university. They live in Pensacola Beach with their two children.

"Most of my time is spent doing research and spending time with my family," Davis said. "My daughter enjoys dance, and my son surfs and practices jiu-jitsu."

Teaching business is a new experience for her. Davis spent the summer preparing for her fall classes. Her background in counseling lends itself to giving thought to her students' challenges and frustrations.

"This age group, people in their early 20s, is one that I've worked with previously," Davis said. "I think it gives me a unique perspective, a level of patience, and a useful lens through which to see them."

Davis grew up in Americus, Georgia, and earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Kennesaw State University north of Atlanta. She earned a master's degree in social work from Ohio University and became a licensed clinical social worker in Pensacola, where she counseled everyone from individuals struggling with addiction and criminal behavior to hospice patients and their families.

"If you had told me 10 years ago that this is what I'd be doing, I would have laughed. The path I'm on is not exactly what I planned — and I love to plan everything — but I am incredibly grateful for the way things turned out."

—MAGGIE DAVIS

An interest in dark personalities led her to the choice of narcissism for her dissertation topic. Narcissistic personality disorder is statistically rare; however, the subclinical levels of narcissism are more common and can significantly impact organizations. Davis studies the differences between grandiose narcissism, marked by extreme confidence and self-esteem, and vulnerable narcissism, where confidence is more fragile.

"In our society, we look at traits as good or bad, but it is much more complicated than that," Davis said. "What the literature explores, and what my dissertation shows, is that there are aspects of narcissism that can be very positive for organizations. I am also examining how to manage the negative aspects of narcissism."

As a social worker in Pensacola, Davis spent time as an interim director of a social services organization. She also consulted with other nonprofit agencies, writing grant proposals and developing programs. She likes to joke about the winding "Ph.D. journey" that led her to the University of South Alabama.

"If you had told me 10 years ago that this is what I'd be doing, I would have laughed," Davis said. "The path I'm on is not exactly what I planned — and I love to plan everything — but I am incredibly grateful for the way things turned out."

"The running joke among people who know me is: Once I finish this degree, what's next? I might go and get my license in a vocational career; I'm not sure yet. I'm a little exhausted with being a student, but I have the desire to learn and keep learning."





## A Different Kind of NUMBERS GAME

JAMES SNOOK/SPOKANE INDIANS

**TROY DIXON WAS DRAFTED BY THE TEXAS RANGERS AND PLAYED TWO SEASONS IN THE MINOR LEAGUES.**

Troy Dixon came home to the University of South Alabama and redirected his professional focus from baseball to accounting. Big change? Not really. In both careers, it's all about the numbers. And he's kept a connection to the sport.

Dixon, 26, attends the Mitchell College of Business and plans to graduate in spring 2025 with a degree in accounting. He really does love working with numbers. He also values the security that accounting offers. "I want to get the tool set that I need, the skill set," he said. "I know I'll be able to get a job."

He has deep ties to Mobile. His parents, Tyrone and Tanya Dixon, met while attending South. He was a standout football running back and baseball shortstop at Mobile's UMS-Wright Preparatory School, where his mom teaches history and geography. His dad earned a business degree and works in management for a delivery company.

South offered Troy a football scholarship. He made a "long-term decision" to accept a baseball scholarship elsewhere instead. Football injuries had nagged him in high school. Physically, baseball seemed a better bet for a professional career.

Besides, one of his new teammates was T.J. Dixon, his older brother, who is now an assistant softball coach in the Southern Conference.

It's an athletic family. The patriarch, Tyrone, a native of Grand Bay, Alabama, southwest of Mobile, played baseball at South. He holds school career records for stolen bases and doubles and is a member of the South Alabama Athletic Hall of Fame. Tanya, originally from the Bahamas, was a tennis star. Tyrone, T.J. and Troy all played minor league baseball after being drafted by major league teams out of college. Their other brother, Trez, is a personal fitness trainer. Little sister Tianna plays college tennis.

After Troy's junior year, the Texas Rangers drafted him. He set out on what he hoped would be the path to the major leagues.

In college and in the pros, he played second base or shortstop most of the time, sometimes center field or left field. He was fast and drew a lot of walks, giving him excellent on-base percentages. But hip injuries led him to give up his baseball dreams after two minor-league seasons.

"Once I saw that my body wasn't going to take it all the way there, I wanted to just go ahead and redirect my energy and not waste any time," he said.

"Baseball forced me to focus on mastering mechanics and the art of performance. It took discipline to create a routine to be prepared every night for the game. I'm now able to bring that same attention to detail to the classroom."

—TROY DIXON

Dixon hasn't abandoned the game. "I give baseball lessons on the side and do a little personal training. I would love to turn that into a business. They say accounting is the language of business. After being so focused on sports for a really long time, I want to concentrate on business and just learn how money works. It has always attracted me."

In business as well as sports, his family has shown the way to success. "I come from a lineage of hardworking people of faith," he said. "As children we were taught to set and achieve goals."

As an adult, he appreciates his parents' discipline and encouragement — which continue to this day. "You can't sit around too long here without getting asked, 'Hey, what's your plan?'" he said, laughing.

He's undoubtedly making Mom and Dad proud. He works an overnight shift at a Planet Fitness gym in addition to his coaching and training gigs, all while maintaining his class work.

"Baseball forced me to focus on mastering mechanics and the art of performance," Dixon said. "It took discipline to create a routine to be prepared every night for the game. I'm now able to bring that same attention to detail to the classroom."

He also brings a lot of perspective to the youngsters who come to him for baseball training. Like his younger self, they fantasize about going away to win glory and riches on the diamond.

"I want to set a good example," he said. "I try to teach the kids I coach that you don't necessarily have to have a career in sports."

He came out of high school "ready to leave town and stay away forever." Now he's back at home and back at school, working toward new goals at the same university where his parents fell in love and embarked on their own life journey together.

"This," he said, "is definitely the place to be."



# A Great Service

ACCOUNTING STUDENTS IN THE MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS VOLUNTEER TO HELP PREPARE FREE TAX RETURNS THROUGH APRIL 15.

Margaret Bradford, a graduate student in accounting at the University of South Alabama, looks forward to tax season.

That's when she and other students help people file electronic tax returns. They're part of a nationwide program called VITA, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance. Students gain accounting experience, while clients get free help with their forms.

Bradford, the 2023 site coordinator for VITA at South, remembers helping a fellow student during her first year.

"When I told her she would be getting back \$500, she just started crying," Bradford said. "She was working her way through school, doing three jobs, and she told me that money meant she wouldn't have to pick up any extra shifts during final exams to pay her bills.

"That's when I fell in love with this program. When you go into accounting, you don't always think it'll make a difference, but you can, in a small way."

"That's when I fell in love with this program. When you go into accounting, you don't always think it'll make a difference, but you can, in a small way."

—MARGARET BRADFORD

The University VITA program, funded with Internal Revenue Service grants, is open to anyone who earns less than \$73,000 a year and runs through April 15. It usually takes about 90 minutes for people to fill out a standard 1040 tax return, then have it double- and triple-checked by accounting majors.

The first South clients on Feb. 1 were James and Beverly Donald, a retired couple from Mobile. This was their third year utilizing VITA.

Beverly Donald learned about the volunteer program when she worked in bookkeeping for USA Health at the Strada Patient Care Center.

"I was glad I found it," Beverly said. "Before we came here, we were paying to get it done."

The Donalds chatted with Bradford while their tax returns were prepared. She remembered them from last year, and the year before that.

Bradford apologized for taking so long to check their information: "I just want to make sure it's perfect."

The Donalds laughed.

"We're retired, so we have plenty of time," James said. "We're free as a bird."

VITA was founded in 1969 as an IRS initiative. Over the last half-century, the program has expanded to several thousand locations across the nation, including at libraries, community centers and universities.

VITA came to Mobile in 2008. Dr. Russ Hardin, now interim chair of the accounting department in the Mitchell College of Business, encouraged students to volunteer with an organization that operated out of the Mobile Public Library.

South began its own VITA site in 2016. Two years later, the program had its busiest year, with students preparing more than 100 tax returns.

"It provides a great service," Hardin said, "and of course it helps our students gain experience. We let students run the whole VITA site."

Businesses that prepare tax returns often charge \$200 to \$400 for the service. Many forms are simple, though each case is different, and finances vary.

"With elderly people, it does get a little complicated, with retirement benefits and donations to charity," Bradford said. "So that's great experience for our students."

Bradford grew up in Clarke County, Alabama, where her father owns a sand and gravel company. Working for the family business helped her decide to study accounting in Mobile.

"It's something I understand, something I'm good at," Bradford said. "It's like my second language."



# BUSINESS CLASSES

A FORMER FLIGHT ATTENDANT FROM INDIA STOPS CIRCLING THE GLOBE AND STARTS A NEW CAREER AS AN MBA STUDENT IN THE MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS.



As the only child of a couple from a traditional Indian community, Snehal Adekar resisted narrow roles for women and yearned to see the world outside the city of Daman, north of Mumbai.

When she was just 18 years old, she began a career as a flight attendant for the Emirates airline. Her world changed. She was based in Dubai and flew to the great cities of Asia, Europe and North America.

"It was fun — a lot of fun," Adekar said. "I've been everywhere, 54 different countries. My favorite city was probably Tokyo. Amazing infrastructure and street life."

During her years with Emirates, she earned a bachelor's degree in business from Pune University in India. When the coronavirus pandemic grounded the airline industry, she decided to continue her education and start a new life in the United States.

She applied to the graduate program in the Mitchell College of Business at the University of South Alabama and expects to earn her master's degree in business administration in 2024. She has a long-term goal of earning a Ph.D. and becoming a college educator.

"I've always been open to new people and new opportunities," Adekar said. "That's something I got from being a flight attendant."

As a graduate student, Adekar, 29, works with professors on different research projects and business assignments. She finds business education in America to be less theoretical and more practical than in India.

"She's an incredibly driven and motivated person — she goes 400 percent all of the time," said Dr. David Turnipseed, a management professor in the Mitchell College. "I'm so happy to have her as a graduate assistant. Her work is just impeccable."

Even halfway around the world, Adekar remains close to her family. Her father has a small tire-repair business, while her mother is a schoolteacher.

"Every single day, the very first thing I do is call my mom," she said. "She needs to know everything. Every single detail."

But her daughter's home is America now. She enjoys living in Alabama. She likes the people of Mobile.

"That's the best part of South," she said. "You can ask people for help and they will step up for it, every single time."

Adekar drives a 12-year-old Volkswagen and lives off campus with her dog, Bella. She keeps busy with work and school. She does Pilates and makes her own fun.

"If I'm at home," she said, "I'm probably at my computer with some kind of masala music, dancing my heart out."

Before choosing business management, Adekar thought about studying international relations. It was not for her. She says she's not a political person.

She has no regrets about her time as a flight attendant. She wouldn't trade that experience for anything. At the same time, she was ready to make a change in her life.

"Toward the end, and during COVID, I got tired of it," she said. "You start thinking, you know, how long am I going to be sitting in a jump seat, getting up to give people water?"

At South, Adekar has become involved with the Graduate Student Association. She gets to mix with classmates from other academic disciplines. There's a lot to learn.

"It's important for students to leave their comfort zones and find what's out there," she said. "It's always better to get involved in something serious. I love to see what other people know and do."

This summer, she hopes to land a business internship. She looks forward to working in management after graduation. Another goal for Adekar would be helping others follow in her footsteps.

"I'd like to do something with my life, help students who want to pursue a career here," she said. "If I could help five young women from India, that would be something."

"I'd like to do something with my life, help students who want to pursue a career here. If I could help five young women from India, that would be something."

—SNEHAL ADEKAR





# PRIME JOB

**KYLE TURK '22 LAUNCHES A CAREER AT AMAZON AFTER A SUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIP AT THE ONLINE RETAIL GIANT.**

When Kyle Turk took a part-time job at an Amazon sortation center just outside of Mobile, it was the first step to an internship, then a full-time job, at one of the world's largest companies.

As a Mitchell College of Business student studying human resource management, Turk built on his experience and education while working at the Theodore facility.

"One of my managers asked me about my interest in becoming an area manager with Amazon," Turk recalled. "I took a look at the application and ran with it."

All the way to a fulfillment site in Petersburg, Virginia, where Turk landed an internship this past summer as an outbound ship dock manager.

Once at the Amazon facility, Turk quickly acclimated to his new role. The demands of the position kept him busy, with most days consisting of briefing other managers, meeting metrics and standard efficiency rates, and helping his team scan packages and load trucks. He leveraged his experience with the company to craft a process improvement plan, which he skillfully presented to management at the close of the experience.

"I enjoyed the daily challenge that the internship provided," Turk said. "There was always something going on that needed to be done or improved. My attention to detail had to be sharp to ensure that I was not missing the little pictures that created the big picture. I also had to understand how to function as a member on a team with other managers who were from completely different backgrounds. I learned so much in a short time span from every manager there."

"I took pride in bridging the connection between some associates in my section and senior management, which raised the morale and productivity in the ship dock and made us one of the best ship docks in the Eastern region during Prime Week."

— KYLE TURK

During his time in Virginia, Turk used problem-solving skills he honed at the Mitchell College of Business, while also taking advantage of lessons taught in the classroom, particularly those he learned from Dr. Treena Finney, professor of management.

"I am most proud of the impact I made on all associates in my department," he said. "One of the key goals I had was getting to know the superstars of the section and helping them move forward in their careers. I took pride in bridging the connection between some associates in my section and senior management, which raised the morale and productivity in the ship dock and made us one of the best ship docks in the Eastern region during Prime Week."

His experience, and his degree, earned Turk a job offer. After graduating from South in December, Turk headed to Florida as area manager at an Amazon site in Deerfield Beach.

Success, delivered.



# EAST MEETS WEST MEETS SOUTH

**AN EXECUTIVE-IN-RESIDENCE IN THE MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS SHARES HIS EXPERIENCE MANAGING CHEMICAL PLANTS AND WORKING IN CHINA, JAPAN AND INDONESIA.**

As a management instructor and executive-in-residence at the Mitchell College of Business, Daniel Leonardi offers students insight and experience from a career that carried him across the United States and throughout the Far East.

With the BP corporation, Leonardi helped build and manage petrochemical plants during an Asian boom that transformed the modern world of business and manufacturing.

"China was just gangbusters growth," he said. "Indonesia was highly growth-oriented. Everybody was excited, fired up, wanting to do things bigger, cheaper, faster, better. And that's kind of how I'm wired. So it was the perfect fit. It was an enthusiastic, optimistic time. We did a lot of things I was very proud of."

After retiring, Leonardi and his wife moved to Mobile, and he began teaching management and business strategy courses at the University of South Alabama. Most of his students are juniors and seniors preparing for graduate school or careers in business. His challenge is teaching long-term planning to students focused on their first job or internship.

That's where Leonardi likes to begin.

"You're starting a new job today," he tells students at the beginning of a semester. "For the first six weeks, most of the information is going to come from me to you. In the second six weeks, it's going to be a little more balanced. You now know how to do things, and you're going to start feeding it back to me, and I'm going to feed more back to you. And then for the last six weeks, frankly, it's going to be mostly from you to me. It's just like starting a job."

Leonardi earned a master's degree in chemical engineering before getting his MBA from the University of South Carolina. He emphasizes the importance of technical expertise, along with diversity of thought and experience,

and the power of taking the long view. He talks about combining a strong work ethic with effective interpersonal skills.

"The thing I like about business is that it's definitely a team sport," he said. "Every idea I ever had, somebody on the team could make it better. Or somebody could figure out how to make it a reality when I couldn't."

During his career, Leonardi managed petrochemical plants from Decatur, Alabama, to Merak, Indonesia, to Zhuhai, China. He also spent a year in Tokyo, Japan. In Zhuhai, he became president of the world's largest polyester intermediate chemical plant, which generated nearly \$2 billion in annual revenues and employed nearly 2,000 during construction and more than 650 when operating. In Naperville, Illinois, Leonardi served as vice president for petrochemicals research, technology and licensing.

Along the way, he flew more than 2 million miles with American Airlines. Yet somehow he never completely got over his fear of flying. That's one reason he became a helicopter pilot in his spare time.

Today, Leonardi lives along Dog River with his wife, Linda. One of their two daughters is a graduate student studying history at South.

None of his corporate experience made him less nervous when he faced his first class in the Mitchell College of Business. Leonardi credits Dr. William Gillis, chair of the Department of Management, and Dr. Alvin Williams, interim dean for the Mitchell College of Business, for guiding him into academia.

Over the last three years, he's become more comfortable in the classroom.

"My lecturing has shifted a bit," Leonardi said. "My slides are wordier than they used to be. It used to be a bullet point

"Every idea I ever had, somebody on the team could make it better. Or somebody could figure out how to make it a reality when I couldn't."

— DANIEL LEONARDI

and then I'd talk for 10 minutes. Then I found some research that suggests people retain 40 percent more material if they both see it and hear it."

During classes, in between topics, Leonardi enjoys telling really bad jokes. Corny jokes — dad jokes.

"I get a mixture of pity laughs and groans, but to me it's all about keeping it light and loose," he said. "It really is fun teaching these students. I'm delighted to be here."

Leonardi enjoys writing letters of recommendation for top performers in his classes. He can't help but think of them as prospective employees. Is this someone he would hire?

Recently, he did a guest lecture for an international business class. He described the pros and cons of living and working overseas. He talked about how, even in vastly different cultures, people remain the same.

Students seemed to appreciate his experiences.

"The best part is that I must have gotten a dozen questions," Leonardi said. "It was fantastic."







**ADCOCK, KING SPEAK AT EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP SERIES**

Two executives — one from a federal relations, advocacy and advisory firm and the other a local bank president — spoke during the fall to Mitchell College of Business students, faculty and staff as part of the College's Executive Leadership Series.

Sam Adcock, executive vice president at Crossroads Strategies, shared lessons from successful efforts to bring Airbus to Mobile. Attracting the company based in Toulouse, France, to begin operations on the Gulf Coast paved the way for commercial aircraft production in Mobile. Adcock shared insights about working with multinational corporations and offered advice for students who are launching their careers.

Sidney King, president and CEO of Commonwealth National Bank in Mobile, shared insights on the history of one of the nation's few African American-owned banks. King reflected on the bank's impact on the economic, cultural and social life of Mobile and the Gulf Coast.

**NEW STAFF JOIN THE MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**

The Mitchell College of Business welcomed three new staff members this past fall.

Dionne Castor, assistant director of marketing and communications, joined the Mitchell College in December. Previously, she was a communications manager for Fairfax County, Virginia; director of communications for the City of St. Louis; and an account director at D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles Advertising in St. Louis. Castor is a native of St. Louis.

Jessica Franks, coordinator for experiential learning, joined the Mitchell College in November. She previously was the coordinator of First Generation Scholarships at the University of Alabama, where she was also an instructor. She is from Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Brenda McDonald, assistant to the dean, joined the Mitchell College in September. She previously was an accountant with USA Health, the CFO for Mostellar Medical Center in Bayou La Batre, Alabama, and an accountant for Mobile County Public Schools. She is a native of Mobile.

**LAWREY, STUDENT-MANAGED INVESTMENTS FOCUS OF WEBCAST**

Dr. Chris Lawrey, director of the Mitchell College of Business Jaguar Investment Fund and assistant professor of economics and finance, recently joined Nicole Torrico, program director of the Intentional Endowments Network, to discuss the structure, value and impact of student-managed investment funds. Ken Redd of the National Association of College and University Business Officers moderated the webcast.



DIONNE CASTOR



JESSICA FRANKS



BRENDA MCDONALD



DR. CHRIS LAWREY



DR. KELLY WOODFORD

**WOODFORD SPEAKS AT GULF COAST HR CONFERENCE**

For the 21st straight year, Dr. Kelly Woodford presented the annual Legal Update to the Mobile Society for Human Resource Management's annual Gulf Coast HR Conference. More than 100 human resource professionals attended the November meeting. Woodford is associate dean and professor of management at the Mitchell College of Business.

**SABRE CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON DATA ANALYTICS**

More than 100 people from academia and industry along the Gulf Coast gathered in November for the second annual Business Analytics Summit hosted by the South Alabama Center for Business Analytics, Real Estate and Economic Development, or SABRE.

Speakers from Amazon, Aker Solutions and APM Terminals Mobile shared insights about trends in the field, tools to enhance personal and professional data analytics skills, bridging communication gaps, operations intelligence and supply chain management. At the close of the event, those in attendance had an opportunity to network with school officials and industry representatives.





# 3 People | 3 Questions



**JOHN MACLATCHIE**  
MBA STUDENT

**WHEN FACED WITH A CHALLENGE, WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING?**

For external challenges, mentors offer a source of knowledge from direct experience and have helped me a great deal in problem solving. The harder challenges in life I think are internal, the day-to-day struggles we all go through but no one talks about. What helps? I've found that while nothing is a cure-all, routine high intensity physical exercise helps to change my state of mind, writing helps sort out conflicting thought patterns, and doing an activity just for the sake of enjoyment helps to refocus my attention.

**YOU ARE PUTTING UP A BILLBOARD. WHAT DOES IT SAY AND WHY?**

"The Matrix Is Real" with a subtext of, "Read Great Books to See Beyond It." Learn about the world through good writing and don't pass judgment until you understand something from multiple points of view. We all have much more to learn about the world, and the best way I found to do so is by reading books. Fight against ignorance and increase your knowledge through a variety of topics, such as science, history, religion, philosophy and people.

**WHAT IS THE MOST UNDERRATED BUSINESS LESSON?**

Over the past four and a half years I've been doing a variety of marketing and consulting for local and e-commerce businesses. During that time I found that the most underrated business lesson is to learn and practice discipline. It is an important lesson that helps you to grow personally and professionally, and I believe that we all can benefit from practicing it.



**YING JOHNSON**  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ECONOMICS,  
FINANCE AND REAL ESTATE

**WHEN FACED WITH A CHALLENGE, WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING?**

My mom. She is a very strong woman. When she was 12, she lost her mother and went through lots of hardships. For example, she was exiled to a rural area and was not allowed to go to college because her family owned land and a business. Then, in her 60s, she taught herself to become an herbal doctor. One of her patients texted her that she was pregnant. This patient was told by many doctors that she will never be able to bear children. But only three months under my mom's care, she was pregnant. Recently, she tried to save her neighbor's life using acupuncture. There are many stories like this. My mom is an amazing, strong woman with lots of wisdom, and she is the one who kept me going.

**YOU ARE PUTTING UP A BILLBOARD. WHAT DOES IT SAY AND WHY?**

"Meditation." I believe meditation is important for spiritual ascension. I started practicing meditation two years ago and have experienced lots of health benefits, in addition to higher levels of consciousness. Looking inward, we will find we have access to higher states of consciousness and become aware of our spiritual gifts such as intuition, creativity, compassion, etc.

**WHAT IS THE MOST UNDERRATED BUSINESS LESSON?**

Those taught in real estate classes. The real estate market was about 13 percent of U.S. GDP in 2021. However, not many business schools offer classes in real estate. Students could benefit tremendously from real estate classes, from being trained about regulations, norms and laws in the housing market to how to finance by comparing various mortgage options.



**MELISSA MORRISSETTE**  
CO-OWNER OF LLB&B INC. REAL ESTATE,  
MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS EXECUTIVE  
ADVISORY COUNCIL CHAIR

**WHEN FACED WITH A CHALLENGE, WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING?**

I am a very solutions-oriented person. In my occupation as a Realtor, I get a property under contract to sell, but that is just the beginning of the process. From that point forward, until I get the contract to the closing table, there are so many details that have to be handled. It is much like putting all the pieces of a puzzle together. In challenging circumstances, I am driven to find the solution. I would rather attempt to do something than to do nothing at all. For me, the need to find a happy solution to a challenging situation motivates me.

**YOU ARE PUTTING UP A BILLBOARD. WHAT DOES IT SAY AND WHY?**

My billboard would say, "BE KIND! It costs nothing." I think we are living in an extraordinary time in history where there is so much angst in the world and so little understanding of the fact that we can have differing views and coexist. I believe being kind and having consideration for those around us no matter their views and beliefs is losing its appeal. Whether you know someone or not or like their views or not, exhibiting kindness is easy, and it's free.

**WHAT IS THE MOST UNDERRATED BUSINESS LESSON?**

The most underrated business lesson is keeping in contact with past customers. In my business, you have a transaction, and the deal is done. They are a super source of referrals for new business from their friends or colleagues. So while you are looking to build a new book of business, don't forget your past customers.

## VICTORIA LEWIN

SENIOR, BUSINESS  
MANAGEMENT WITH  
A CONCENTRATION IN  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Recipient of the Carl N. and Jewel O. Melton Endowed Entrepreneurship Scholarship and Regions Bank Endowed Scholarship



# INVEST IN THE COLLEGE

“Receiving these scholarships means more to me than the monetary value that they hold. They serve as a tangible reminder of the gifts God has given me. I am now blessed with the opportunity to further my vision of completing my degree. I am honored and forever thankful for the generosity of receiving these awards to proudly represent the Mitchell College of Business.”

—VICTORIA LEWIN

FINANCIAL SUPPORT  
DRAMATICALLY IMPACTS THE  
LIVES OF THE STUDENTS IN  
THE MITCHELL COLLEGE OF  
BUSINESS. YOUR SUPPORT  
MAKES US WHO WE ARE  
TODAY AND DIRECTLY  
AFFECTS TOMORROW'S  
BUSINESS LEADERS.

## THREE AREAS OF PRIORITY FOR THE COLLEGE INCLUDE:

### STUDENTS

The enrollment, education and graduation of outstanding students is of paramount importance to the Mitchell College of Business. Employers and other external constituents benefit from inspired graduates entering the workforce. In order to attract these students, the Mitchell College must offer competitive scholarships. The Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative matches any endowed undergraduate scholarship gift dollar-for-dollar.

### ACADEMIC ENHANCEMENT

Advances in technology, changes in classroom design and active-learning teaching methods have drastically changed the educational environment. In order to maximize learning outcomes, the Mitchell College must incorporate these advances into the classroom. Join us as we embark on a campaign to update classrooms and other Mitchell College of Business learning environments.

### THE INTERNATIONAL EMPHASIS PROJECT

Our students will enter an increasingly complex and competitive global economy. Research and experience show that students who participate in global immersion opportunities are better prepared for competition in the global economy. The goal of our international emphasis project is to ensure the affordability of study-abroad opportunities for all interested students.





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MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS  
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