



NELSON RUSCHE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

RUSCHE REVIEW



» HIGHLIGHTS



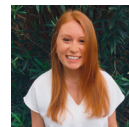
Marketing student walks runway at New York Fashion Week



Newly tenured professor has a story to tell



Professor had students tracking and interpreting COVID-19 data



Weathers claims top research honors

FORMER HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP GEORGE FOREMAN VISITS SPORTS BUSINESS STUDENTS

Two-time heavyweight champion boxer, gold medalist, businessman and Houston pastor George Foreman visited the Rusche College of Business in February to speak to students enrolled in the sports business program.

Foreman, an East Texas native, successfully transitioned from a Hall of Fame career in the ring to a big career in sales, making millions endorsing an assortment of George Foreman Grills.

Foreman said the most important things a person can have are their name and their word, assets that allowed him to have a multi-faceted career – preaching, business and boxing.

Having fought icons like Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, boxing was certainly the foundation of his fame. But even Foreman, whose professional boxing career spanned nearly 30 years, knew when it was time to hang up the gloves and do something else.

“I knew I couldn’t box forever, so I went into business,” he said to students.

Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the college of business, appreciated the opportunity to have someone of Foreman’s caliber on campus.



Dr. Scott Gordon, university president, George Foreman and Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the College of Business.

“It was an amazing opportunity to have Mr. Foreman here to share his knowledge and insights with our students,” he said. “It was an honor to meet him, and having him available as a speaker served as an incredible asset

for our very popular and fast-growing sports business program.”

SFA President Scott Gordon was in attendance and presented Foreman with a distinguished guest speaker award.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Greetings, friends.

I hope that everyone in our Lumberjack family is in good health and doing well. Our thoughts are with all of our friends and family impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here in the Rusche College of Business, we are doing well, and we are busy preparing for the start of the fall semester. In response to the pandemic, we made the switch to all online instruction after spring break, and this has continued through the summer. Though a monumental task for our faculty, students and staff, this transition has gone quite smoothly, and we are now squarely focused on continuing to advance our mission by giving our students the exceptional education experience they deserve this fall.

In this edition of the Rusche Review, you see many stories on the outstanding accomplishments of our students and faculty throughout the spring semester, and I hope you will take the time to enjoy them all. I suspect at first glance you will notice one glaring omission in this edition – a general and overarching article on the impact of, and response to, the COVID-19 pandemic. After a closer look, you will find that there was no need to write this story, as it has been written for us by the college's students, faculty and staff. You will notice an array of articles, some clearly centered on events occurring prior to COVID-19, and many others that have taken place as the pandemic unfolded. Throughout all of these stories you will find repeated examples of the fierce determination and commitment to excellence that Lumberjacks possess. The Lumberjack COVID-19 story is the underlying story of this entire edition of the Rusche Review, and it was written for us by Lumberjacks determined to excel, no matter what the circumstance.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our Rusche Review, and, as always, axe 'em, Jacks!

All my best,
Tim Bisping, Dean

MARKETING STUDENT WALKS RUNWAY AT NEW YORK FASHION WEEK

Jared Hamilton's interest in modeling started his freshman year, when he joined SFA student group Fashion N Motion. This is when the Dallas native started modeling and walking runways and eventually began looking for agencies and opportunities for professional work. In December of his senior year in the Rusche College of Business, he got his first big break. A friend sent him an Instagram page called Fashion Gallery NYFW – as in the glitzy New York Fashion Week. Hamilton thought to himself, "Just DM the page and see what happens." So, he did. The next thing he knew he was on the phone with a head producer in New York, and soon thereafter was booked for attendance at the February event.

His payment was 10 tickets. Nothing else was guaranteed. He invited his friends, who came to cheer him on. But he got a bit discouraged when he wasn't receiving nods for fittings or for walks. But all that changed on his last day. Celebrity LA stylist Jamar Hart called his name.

Hamilton, slim and 6-foot-1, shimmied into a white jacket with a faux fur collar, put on a pair of shades, and walked the runway. Maybe he didn't work for one of the iconic brands like Oscar de la Renta, but he was on the runway in New York during fashion week, and he closed down the show in which he walked. It was all part of Hamilton's plan, something he had envisioned, even if the entire experience was decidedly unexpected and surreal.

Hamilton, a former nursing student who studied abroad in La Rochelle, France, graduates in August with a degree in marketing. He'll continue to mine the opportunities within fashion and modeling, but if it doesn't



Jared Hamilton, a marketing major in the Rusche College of Business, walked the runway at New York Fashion Week. Photo courtesy of Trey Taylor, @livenmphotos.

work out, he said he'll be okay. He's learned how to handle himself in the \$6.7 trillion foreign exchange market, trading in international currencies. He is a co-partner in the Trade House Investment Group, under the IM Academy umbrella. The foreign exchange gives him the freedom and time to live his entrepreneurial life.

Looking ahead, he sees something big, even if he's not exactly sure of what it will be. Grounded by his personal mantra – gratitude is the source of success – he's confident he'll find what he's looking for. But when it's time to reminisce, he'll always have those memories from New York Fashion Week.

"It was a great moment," he said.

SPORTS BUSINESS DEGREE GAINING TRACTION WITH STUDENTS, WORKPLACE



Chris Bentley, left, of the Houston Texans.



Sloane Evans at a Houston Roughnecks home game.



Blake Stock teeing off at a golf course in Puerto Rico.

Editor's Note: After this article was written, Sloane Evans lost her job with the XFL's Houston Roughnecks because the league folded due to COVID-19. Evans has since accepted the position of Director of Corporate Partnerships with the Houston SaberCats of Major League Rugby.

The sports business program in the Rusche College of Business is one of the newest in the college, but it's also among the largest. With more than 30 graduates in the workplace and high placement rates, including those at professional and collegiate organizations across the state, the growing department is now at about 240 students.

Students have to complete all of the business foundation courses. This includes the basics of accounting, finance, management, marketing, economics, business law, and business communication, just like any other business major. Then they take courses such as sports analytics, sports marketing, sports economics, sports and entertainment law, sports sales/promotion, and a required internship.

Offered as both a major and a minor, the program is the fourth largest in the business college and is led by Dr. Jason Reese, sports business director and associate professor at SFA.

"When looking for schools, high school students are recognizing the need for a business degree in sports,"

Reese said. "Being that we are unique to have a sports business program in an AACSB college of business, students are attracted to our program. At the end of the day, sports organizations, whether they are professional, college, youth or a nonprofit, they all are businesses. These organizations need highly trained graduates who know the sports industry."

Since the program admitted its first students in spring 2016, its graduates and their careers are newly minted. But if the early results are any indication, the major is here to stay.

Sloane Evans '17 and '19 is corporate partnerships activation manager for the Houston Roughnecks of the newly formed XFL. She works with a sprawling array of sponsored assets – radio, signage, video boards, in-game promotions, marketing in and out of the stadium, print, social media, website, email, giveaways, events, player appearances, tickets and suites. The laundry list comes with hard deadlines that keep her hopping.

And the Katy native says she couldn't be happier. Evans finished her

Sports Business Degree Now Offered 100% Online

The Rusche College of Business is now offering students the option to finish their Sports Business Bachelor of Business Administration completely online. Known as a completer program, the degree allows SFA students the opportunity to finish all of their required courses online through SFA.

Students will continue to have the flexibility of taking core curriculum courses from any institution in any format including online, in person, or through virtual technology. The advantage of the completer program is that it allows students flexible options. Prior to the new changes, students had to attend some classes in person during the last two years of their degree. The changes now allow those courses to be taken online.

"This program is perfect for the individual that cannot make it to Nacogdoches for classes or who wants to learn at their own pace," said Dr. Jason Reese.

NOTABLE SPORTS BUSINESS GRADUATES

Chris Bentley – Houston Texans

Blake Stock – Professional Golfer

Wyatt Franks – Fishing

Eric Aguilar – Rice University

Sloane Evans – Houston Roughnecks

Kent Fulkerson – Dallas Renegades

Chris Wilkerson – Long Snapper

Isaiah Yates – Texas Rangers

Taylor DuRee – University of Houston

MBA in fall 2019, and two weeks later was working for the team. Just two weeks after landing the job, the team had its first home game. Stress. Pandemonium. Drinking water through a firehose.

Evans wasn't an athlete in high school or college, but grew up watching sports. Beyond the actual games and matches, Evans said she developed an interest in what was going on behind the scenes, the business side of the industry. She'd originally wanted to be a sports agent, hence her early plan to earn a law degree instead of an MBA. But during her undergraduate years, the plan changed. And that was due to the sports business major's internship requirement, which for Evans meant a stint with collegiate athletics promotions company Learfield IMG College. The experience was a watershed.

"I realized I loved working in corporate partnerships," she said.

Another important part of her undergraduate studies was the sports promotion course, where she found her love of sports sales and sponsorships. She realized she wanted to work on a bigger stage than college. Professional sports in a big city was where she wanted to be. Conveniently, hometown Houston had it all – family, friends and a professional franchise.

"I'm obsessed with football," she said. "I am going to stay in it for as long as I can."

Evans' classmate, professional golfer Blake Stock '18, is currently living in North Texas and is on the All-Pro tour. He hopes to eventually make it to the Korn Ferry level, the stepping stone to the PGA. He's giving himself two years. If he makes

Korn Ferry, he'll remain on tour and continue chasing his shot at the PGA. If not, the Waco native will transition to life as a former professional athlete.

Stock, who played on the SFA men's golf team from 2016 to 2018, is not yet sharing tee times with major winners, but he's a touring professional athlete, and there's something to be said for that. Part of his success is due to his education in the sports business program. He knows how to develop a business plan and pitch it to sponsors and investors. Without funding, the actual golf part of the equation is impossible.

"I'm still playing, so it's working out," he said.

During his college days, Stock remembers making cold calls, at Reese's recommendation, for SFA athletics, trying to sell tickets to football and basketball games. He didn't enjoy doing it at the time – picking up the phone and calling strangers – but in retrospect, it was a good experience. To understand sports, you have to understand what goes into it off the field.

If Stock doesn't wind up hoisting the Wanamaker Trophy, he'll have plenty of fond memories of competing in picturesque places like Puerto Rico, Florida and Southern California. When it comes time to get a "real job," he'd like to work either as a marketing rep for a professional sports team or in the PGA's front office. The organization is moving its headquarters from Florida to Frisco, Texas, just a few miles down the road from where Stock lives. If he heads the PGA's way for a job, Stock is hoping the sports business degree will give him a leg up.

"There's not many schools that offer that degree," he said.

As Stock tries to make it to his sport's top tier, Chris Bentley '18 is in year two as a ticket sales associate with the NFL's Houston Texans. He handles high-end products – season tickets, hospitality packages and suites. The work is tough. Sales usually is. But when it comes to asking people to spend money, he's no rookie.

Back in 2018, when Bentley was a senior at SFA, Reese encouraged him to sell tickets to the Battle of the Piney Woods between SFA and Sam Houston State. Since the football game was played two hours away from campus at NRG Stadium in Houston, and since SFA was on a seven-game losing streak at the time, tickets weren't necessarily the easiest thing to sell. But that's what Bentley liked about the job. It wasn't easy.

"That set the stage for my position with the Texans," he said. "There's no question it's a grind, but you have to keep on keeping on – I cannot be afraid of the word 'No.'"

While a student at North Carolina State University, and not really sure of what he wanted to do, a family member on his father's side told Bentley about the SFA sports business program. It sounded intriguing, so he made a quick decision.

"I packed my bags and headed to Nacogdoches," Bentley said.

His ultimate goal is to be a Division I athletic director. But for now and into the foreseeable future, he said there's absolutely nothing wrong with selling tickets for the Texans.



From left, marketing sophomore Ethan LeGare of Dallas and marketing junior Hank Harrison of South Padre Island.

SFA BASS FISHING CLUB, WITH HELP FROM BUSINESS STUDENTS, WINS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

For the first time since 2006, SFA's Bass Fishing Club won the Abu Garcia College Fishing National Championship.

The competition was held in February on the Harris Chain of Lakes, part of the Ocklawaha River basin in Central Florida. This is the third national championship victory in the club's history.

Marketing sophomore Ethan LeGare of Dallas and marketing junior Hank Harrison of South Padre Island weighed in the biggest bag of the day at 20 pounds, 8 ounces, giving them a total weight of 56 pounds, 5 ounces. They beat the Sam Houston State University team by an ounce.

BUSINESS STUDENT PLANNED ALTERNATIVE COMMENCEMENT WHILE AWAITING SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

Editor's Note: SFA's Annemarie Price and Tyler Heizelman of Wichita State University were among six team finalists in the Washington Media Scholars Foundation competition that began with 385 entrants. At the conclusion of the competition in June, Price and Heizelman each received a \$500 scholarship. Price's advisor was *Dr. Marlene Kahla*.

Annemarie Price finished the spring semester back home in Katy, where she was safe and sound, and where the coffee was good. She sat on the couch and took online classes in the company of her two dogs, a Great Pyrenees named Astro and a Golden Retriever named Travis.

Price, a recent Rusche College of Business graduate with a minor in graphic design and a 3.8 GPA, was in the running for a national scholarship through the Washington Media Scholars Foundation. Having made it through two qualifying rounds to the finals, Price and her teammate, Wichita State University-based Tyler Heizelman, vied for a share of the \$18,500 award that would be announced at a banquet in D.C.

Back in the spring, all should have been good in Price's world. But it wasn't.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated disruptions, Price was uncertain of the future, even if plenty was already known. Employers were taking a wait-and-see approach to hiring. Her walk across the commencement stage at Johnson Coliseum will have to wait until a date that's yet to be determined. She didn't get to say a proper goodbye to her classmates and professors. The virus dashed all that.

With her coursework complete, she enjoyed SFA's virtual graduation ceremony on May 30, which for her included commencement-style robes for her pets. Not quite what she had in mind at the beginning of the year, but it was fun.

And then there's her family. Both of Price's parents have underlying health issues, making them susceptible to the



Recent graduate Annemarie Price finished out her college career from home in Katy. Photo Courtesy: Robert Breitenstein of Allthingsrnb.

virus. And her sister, a '17 graduate from SFA's Dewitt School of Nursing, is in hazard's way working at Memorial Hermann in Houston.

Indeed, COVID-19 arrived at Price's front door knocking quite loudly.

Price hasn't been on campus since March, when she posed for her senior photos and collected a few personal belongings from her residence hall. She didn't want to leave. But during spring break, as SFA and universities across the country shifted to online and remote learning, she knew she had no choice.

"I respect the decision, and I support doing what we can to make people safe," she said. "I get it."

While the transition to full-blown distance learning was successful for Price, it was not all together satisfying. Price is a people person. She was an intern for the College of Business' social media team, an officer with the Community Assistant Honors Council with Residence Life and an officer with SFA's interdepartmental Advertising Club. As a senior, she was accustomed to seeing a lot of familiar faces in class and in the halls. The unceremonious separation was acute.



For me, one of the reasons I love SFA is that you can make close connections with professors and the people in your classes."

- Annemarie Price, recent graduate

"The years I spent on campus were the best years of my life. I was deeply saddened that I wouldn't be returning to classes and spending my final days as a student in Nacogdoches," she said.

Even though the virus upended the culmination of her college career, and even though her family remains under threat from the virus, she's been able to keep everything in perspective. She's adaptable and resilient. And though the job market is tight, at some point an employer will recognize her passion and give her a chance.

For the broader public, a valuable lesson – one that could make the world a better place – can be learned.

"People are going to hug friends a little harder, spend time with the people they care for more often, and be thankful for the things we took for granted – like walking through a grocery store with fully stocked shelves," Price said. "The coronavirus has made it difficult to predict what the future will look like, or determine how to prepare for it; even so, we have to keep moving forward and face things as they come, and do it to the best of our ability."

PROFESSOR AND STUDENTS TRACKED AND INTERPRETED COVID-19 DATA

The spring semester’s special-topics class in business communication at SFA started out as a crash course in data visualization, with students tracking financial and logistics information as well as the occurrence and location of wildfires, both nationally and in Texas, using Tableau software.

A data junkie who has made a career out of turning opaque statistics into usable business intelligence, associate professor Dr. Jamie Humphries is at his best when tracking something big, something arcane that can be polished, packaged and brought to the conference-room table.

So, it was no surprise that when COVID-19 emerged as an all-consuming pandemic generating a global avalanche of data, that Humphries would realize the opportunity for his students. Quickly plugging into the public Johns Hopkins University database, continually updated with correlated data from 30 global sources, Humphries asked his students

to create custom, interactive COVID-19 dashboards.

Once the basics were in place, students were asked to be inventive, to start benchmarking and tracking adjacent data like Wall Street trading to see which stocks crash and those that sizzle during a pandemic, fever charts for hotel stays and, of course, the virus’ curve and its associated death and infection rates. The more granular the better.

Though the COVID-19 project was not on the syllabus at the beginning of the semester, it became a graded assignment. And it also provided a golden opportunity for students to experience what it’s like in the private sector post-graduation.

“You have to pivot,” Humphries said. “You have to find something new.”

Creating customized dashboards to track a virus the size of COVID-19 was great for the three business and two forestry students enrolled in the class. By the time it was over, they were qualified to take the Tableau software exam for

desktop specialist and were halfway through their preparation to qualify as a certified associate, both sought-after credentials in multiple disciplines.

Humphries, in only his second semester at SFA, said the COVID-19 project tapped into the best impulses of his students.

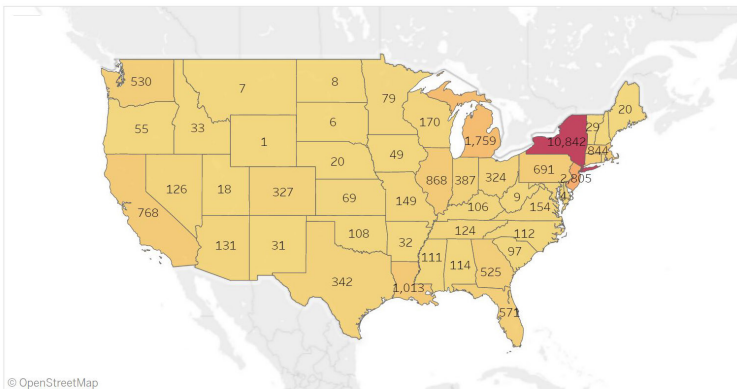
“These students are a lot smarter than what we give them credit for, and they can be creative,” Humphries said. “You don’t have to ask them to do it. They just do it.”

Once COVID-19 transitions into recovery and the data becomes historical, Humphries said it will still have a great deal of value for students learning the foundations of data visualization. He plans on returning to the pandemic issue and introducing new topics this fall.

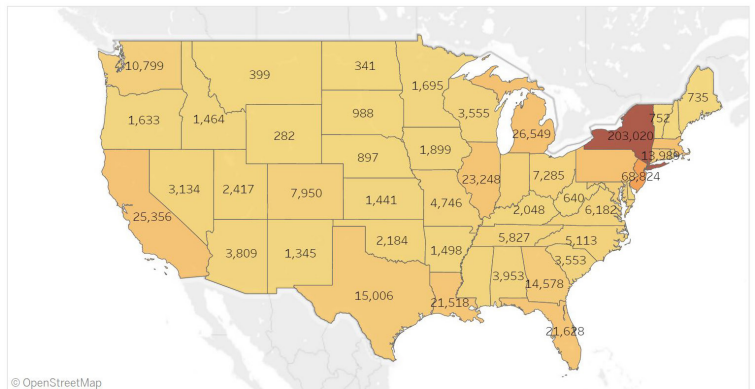
Regardless of the topic – pandemic, the stock market, wildfires or the opioid crisis – the goal of data visualization is always the same.

“Take data and turn it into a story,” Humphries said. “No one wants to look at a spreadsheet.”

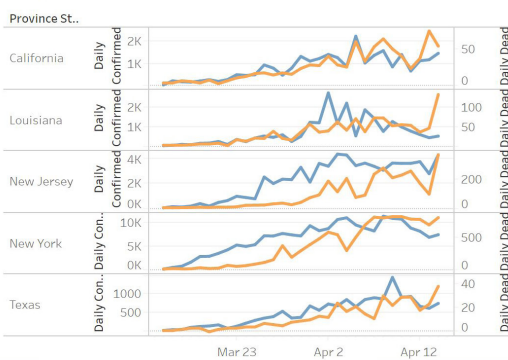
Deaths in Lower 48



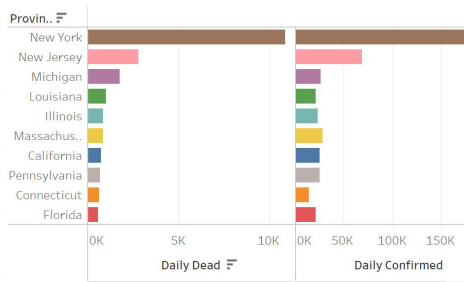
Confirmed Cases in Lower 48



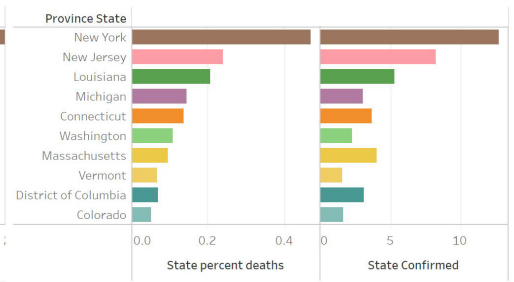
Daily Counts



Top Ten States Affected by Cases



Top Ten States Affected by Population %



Under the guidance of Dr. Jamie Humphries, students created interactive dashboards to track and interpret COVID-19 data. This image reflects visualizations created in the spring

BUSINESS STUDENTS WIN NATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMPETITION

Students in the Rusche College of Business pushed through the disappointment of a canceled in-person conference in Nashville to produce a winning case for the Society for Advancement of Management. Presenting via the online conferencing platform Zoom, SAM Team 2020 – Mikala Groshong, Patrick Poole, Kenneth Luenser, Melody Johns and Daniel Rowland – won first place in the written case competition and second place in the oral case presentation in the annual 2020 SAM International Business Conference.

In addition to generating the presentation, a big part of the SAM experience is the travel. In the past, the conference had been held in places like Las Vegas and Washington, D.C. This year’s students were looking forward to visiting Music City. But in March during spring break, the world changed. The COVID-19 pandemic took over, and conferences across the country, including the one in Nashville, were either canceled or salvaged with the use of Zoom.

The students had been working on the case since January, so they weren’t going to let anything, including COVID-19,



Front: Mikala Groshong, back row from left: Patrick Poole, Kenneth Luenser, Melody Johns and Daniel Rowland.

get in the way, said associate professor of management Dr. Gina Harden, faculty advisor for the Society for Advancement of Management.

“It became obvious we weren’t going to Nashville,” she said. “Instead of being thrown off track and losing focus, they kept working. They transitioned to Zoom and prepared as professionally as they could. I’m terribly proud of them.”

In addition to the national accolades, their SAM chapter won first place in the Campus Chapter Performance Program and team members won numerous individual awards.

Regional Outstanding Student: Melody Johns and Daniel Rowland

National Outstanding Student: Mikala Groshong

Outstanding Advisor: Gina Harden

Campus Chapter Performance: first place in Large Division

Extemporaneous Speech: Daniel Rowland, first place

Written Case: first place

Knowledge Bowl: Mikala Groshong, third place

Case Competition: second place

Collegiate Skills Competition: second place

Individual Overall: Mikala Groshong, third place; Melody Johns, second Place

BON VOYAGE: STUDENTS CRACK BOOKS IN EUROPE

BROOKELIN BAKER – LA ROCHELLE, FRANCE

“I studied abroad in La Rochelle, France. It is a beautiful town along the west coast with a gorgeous port and some small beaches. The town is full of cute cafes and bars and is just small enough to be able to bike anywhere you need to go. While there I got to meet people from an array of cultures at my school and learn the French culture firsthand from my French friends I made in class. My favorite part was the friends I made and the fresh bread I got to eat every day from local bakeries!”



Brookelin Baker in La Rochelle

TAYLOR PERRY – LISBON, PORTUGAL

“I studied abroad in Lisbon, Portugal. I went through a provider program (API), so I went with other students from all over the United States. We went on group trips and got to learn about Portuguese history and experience the culture firsthand with our coordinator, Carlos. Lisbon is a fun city that’s the perfect mix of modern and traditional. The Portuguese people were the most giving people I have ever met and made my experience really feel like home. It was without a doubt the best time of my life, and I will for sure be going back one day.”



Taylor Perry in Lisbon



I feel blessed to have been chosen for the scholarship and want to make everyone who got me there proud."

- Sarah Bone, graphic designer



Sarah Bone is a graphic designer with a lifelong love of art and a new-found appreciation for business.

THE BUSINESS OF ART: RUSCHE STUDENT LANDS GRAPHIC DESIGN SCHOLARSHIP

Sarah Bone listened to her father’s advice. Himself an artist, he told her to do what she loved, and to figure out a way to make a career out of it.

The younger Bone, a lifelong creator of art and a graphic design major, figured out how to put dad’s advice into action. She switched her major to a Bachelor of Arts, a move that gave her the option to add a minor in marketing from the Rusche College of Business.

The subtle shift in academic direction is working out fine. Bone just received a \$5,000 Skyline Displays of Houston Graphic Arts Education Scholarship for the fall semester through the Advertising Education Foundation of Houston. The nonprofit awards scholarships to those working on undergraduate or post-graduate degrees in advertising, communications, interactive marketing, journalism,

radio/TV, commercial art, public relations or related fields.

For Bone, who spends the better part of her days in the Adobe Creative Cloud with Illustrator, InDesign and Photoshop, the scholarship opportunity was low-hanging fruit that had to be picked. She was encouraged to apply at the behest of marketing professor Dr. Marlene Kahla and graphic design professors Peter Andrew and Daniel Anguiano – a clear indication that business and art can work hand in hand.

While Bone still enjoys the fine-arts side of her life, she’s increasingly interested in marketing and advertising, the work she said will give her a salaried foothold in the workforce after graduation. So far, dad’s advice to Bone, backed by her advisors, has proven sage. All that remains is for Bone to make good on all of it.

FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

MARIE KELLY

Marlin C. Young Teaching Excellence Award

NICOLE BRANTLEY

Teaching Innovation Award

DR. CAROL WRIGHT

Outstanding Service/Experiential Learning Award

RAYMOND JONES

Outstanding Intellectual Contribution Award

JOSE VEGA

Outstanding Researcher Award

BECKY DAVIS

Undergraduate Research Mentor of the Year

NATHAN KIRKPATRICK

Distinguished Service Award

EMILIANO GIUDICI

Distinguished Faculty Member Award

PROMOTIONS

DR. RAJAT MISHRA

Professor, Tenure Awarded

EMILIANO GIUDICI

Professor of Finance



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS FORMS PARTNERSHIP WITH EAST TEXAS BRANCH OF FASTENAL

The partnership is part of the College of Business' growth initiatives where companies have the opportunity to support the college while collaborating on mutually beneficial programs. Details of the partnership include signage, career and internship prospects with students, corporate branding, class visits and more. Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the College of Business, said the role of the partnership is important in expanding job and internship possibilities for students, while providing Fastenal exclusive access to branding and recruiting opportunities.

"Joining forces with Fastenal allows us to provide another avenue by which students can develop professionally and explore career opportunities," Bisping said. "Our goal is to adequately prepare them for life outside the academic arena. Corporate partnerships, like the one we have with Fastenal, allow us to continue to provide a real-world business environment and expand programs and opportunities for our college as a whole."

Cooper Terry, district manager of the Fastenal East Texas branch, agrees that the partnership will allow for more possibilities for both the college and the corporation.

"We have worked with the Rusche College of Business for over 20 years, and we are excited to take the next step in building our relationship for the future," Terry said. "We support the programs and innovative learning within the college, and we are pleased to become official partners."

Fastenal joins Hajoca and Khol's on the list of College of Business corporate partners. For more information, contact Bisping at (936) 468-3101 or bispingto@sfasu.edu.

BUSINESS STUDENTS FARED WELL AT THE ANNUAL LUMBERJACK ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS CEREMONY



THE SFA WAY AWARD, ROBERT TROUT – GENERAL BUSINESS MAJOR

This award is given to a student leader who is an outstanding steward of the five root principles of The SFA Way: respect, responsibility, caring, unity and integrity.

"Right before I graduated in May, just as I thought it was all over, I received the SFA Way Award. It was an honor, and the finishing touch to my time here. I have to thank all the friends I've made, especially in SAA, the AARC, and the Rusche College of Business, for being a part of my journey."

– Robert Trout



THE HIGHLIGHT AWARDS, SPORTS BUSINESS SOCIETY

This accolade is given to student organizations that stood above the rest in how they were able to articulate their organization's successes in the Certified Student Leader endorsement areas of communication, cultural competence, decision making, influence, organization and teamwork.

"The Sports Business Society is tremendously excited to receive the Highlight award this year. As SBS continues to grow every year, we are excited for the future."

– Brett Holland, Sports Business Society President.



TOP 23 FRESHMEN

These students went above and beyond in their first year at SFA to get involved in student organizations, take on leadership roles, and help improve their campus and surrounding community.

"I am honored to have received these awards, but without the help of several people at SFA, I wouldn't have been able to achieve as much as I have. They taught me that as you keep working, ask questions, and just try your best, you're guaranteed not to fail." – Lena Brown

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS FACULTY PRESENT RESEARCH ON AUGMENTED REALITY JOB FAIR

It was a scramble at the end, but two Stephen F. Austin State University Rusche College of Business faculty members were able to transition their research project to an online format in time to present it at the Business Education Research Conference in Boston earlier this month.

Utilizing Zoom, Drs. Ashley Hall and Carol Wright participated from Nacogdoches – Hall from her home office, and Wright from the SFA campus – to showcase to a national audience the results of their fall pilot study, “Augmented Reality in Business Classes,” of dozens of SFA students, most of them business majors.

Hall and Wright found that as augmented reality and virtual reality continue to increase in K-12, it will continue to filter up through higher education and into the business world. VR is a fully immersive, computer-generated environment, whereas AR uses common devices like smartphones to allow users to experience a new environment but not be fully immersed in it. While students and faculty are open to the application of AR, overall familiarity with its use and its practical application remain issues, but will likely improve with more immersion and research, according to sources cited in the study.

“Using AR and VR in a business class is important due to its inclusion in K-12 schools and how businesses are incorporating AR in a variety of ways, including advertising and employee training,” the study concludes. “It is possible that many of our students may find their chosen field of business implementing AR programs with both customers and employees, so it is important that our students are aware of what these programs are and how they function.”

For Hall and Wright, who cited 18 academic sources in their study, the use

Results
based on 57 post-study responses on the perception of the use of AR:

31.6%

Excellent – I wish every class used it.

35.1%

OK – It was fun, but sometimes difficult to use.

31.6%

OK – I endured, but prefer other methods.

1.8%

Horrible – AR and VR should never be used in education.

just because it’s new and cool,” Hall said. “We don’t want to be trendy. The technology has to have a concrete benefit.”

Hall and Wright wanted to follow up with the study this semester, but that plan was scuttled by COVID-19. However, the professors are considering a second, similar study in the fall. The pilot program, implemented in fall 2019, was an AR assignment – a simulated virtual career fair interview – offered in four business classes, three at the undergraduate level and one at the graduate level.

The virtual job fair was created through Flipgrid. Common employment interview questions from five people were recorded. Participating students responded to these questions with recorded answers. With AR, the video Q&A appeared as if the interviewer and the student were in the same room. The study was managed through the use of QR codes and mobile devices such as tablets and phones.

In a pre-study survey, half of the participants said they had never used AR or VR. In the same pre-study survey, nearly 88% of respondents said they had never used AR or VR in a school setting. In the future, those percentages are likely to trend downward as AR and VR become increasingly popular in education and in business. Universities will play a big role in the transition.

“Even if college students do not have previous education experience with AR or VR, they will likely encounter it in advertising or in the workplace,” the study concludes. “As such, educators should strive to prepare students for the constantly changing workforce they will enter by considering immersive technologies, such as an AR assignment, in their classes when appropriate.”

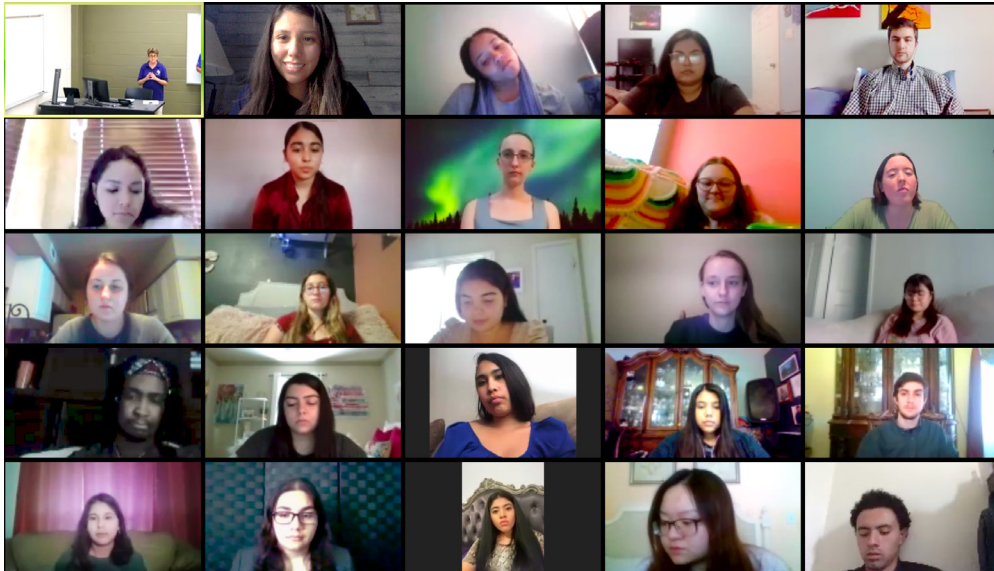


Utilizing Zoom, Drs. Ashley Hall, left, and Carol Wright presented the results of their fall pilot study, “Augmented Reality in Business Classes,” to the Business Education Research Conference in Boston.

of VR has its place in education and in business. But its application has to serve real-world ends. The majority of participating students agreed, as 51% said they see how AR and VR could be used in professional settings such as sales, skills training, simulations or oral presentations.

“We like to try new things, but not

CAREER SUCCESS PASSPORT WINNERS CELEBRATE AWARDS



Career Success Passport scholarship winners for the 2019-2020 year attend a “virtual awards ceremony” via Zoom on April 30 to learn about and celebrate their awards.

The Career Success Passport hosted by the Rusche College of Business is a professional development and career readiness program for undergraduate Business majors. A total of \$50,000 is awarded annually to qualified participants. Freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors compete within their classification for performance-based awards. The top point earner in each classification receives \$2,500, while the

next 10 participants from each classification receive \$1,000 each. The 2019-2020 top winners were:

- **LENA BROWN**, Top Freshman
- **MY PHAM**, Top Sophomore
- **CLAIRE SAUNDERS**, Top Junior
- **FRANCIA OLIVARES BRISENO**, Top Senior

2019-20 PARTICIPANTS

TOP FRESHMAN **Lena Brown**

Jack Adams	Micaela Flores
Reyna Cordova Benitez	Liza Goodwin
Ian Cormier	Linh Le
Brady Deese	Nhi Le
Analise Flatt	Demonica Watkins

TOP SOPHOMORE **My Pham**

Danniella Arishaba	Madison Horton
Matheus Carneiro Santos	Ashley Rodriguez
Jennifer Chavira	Isaac Salas
Olivia Escobedo	Jose Torres
Austin Evett	Martarosa Velazquez

TOP JUNIOR **Claire Saunders**

Miguel Carlos	Ron Parker
Christopher De La Cruz	Chelsie Rodriguez
Elena Dotson	Imani Rodriguez
Nadya Durham	Angie Rubio
Joseph Mabwa	Stephanie Velez

TOP SENIOR **Francia Olivares Briseno**

Cody Evans	Kennedy Jones
Allan Fiallos	Laci Logan
Jose Gamez	Jennifer Lucio-Aleman
Khayln Grant	Josephine Unger
Mikala Groshong	
Syairah Hayden	

LEARNING FROM LEADERS SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION ANNOUNCED FOR FALL

The Rusche College of Business created a new scholarship program for the fall semester. The Learning from Leaders Scholarship Competition, developed by the college’s Executive Advisory Board, has awards totaling \$10,000 through two sessions, one in June and one in July.

Each session was designed to have four winners, with the first-place finisher earning a \$2,000 scholarship and three finalists earning \$1,000 each.

The purpose of the scholarship is four-fold: to help business students explore new avenues of professional success, maintain and enhance the relationship between

students and the college during a time of remote course delivery, provide financial assistance to a limited number of students while incentivizing fall enrollment, and reinforce the differentiating value of the college to business students.

From a list of readings/podcasts recommended by members and colleagues of the advisory board, students chose one they found most impactful and then developed a short video on the topic of the book/podcast, why they chose it, general thoughts on the book/podcast, and how they plan to apply what they learned. Each approved student video will

be posted on the college’s social media accounts.

Contestants may promote the video to garner as many views, “likes” and shares as possible. At the end of each session, the college will identify the four videos with the most social media traffic. These videos will be evaluated and a winner and finalists determined. Students have an opportunity to double their awards by competing in both sessions, but entrants must have a separate submission for each session.

For more information, contact Gina Small at smallgina@sfasu.edu.

SCHOLARSHIPS ARE THE FOUNDATION OF BUSINESS STUDENT'S COLLEGE DREAM

Jose Torres is flourishing at Stephen F. Austin State University. The 20-year-old sophomore is making good friends and good grades, and as a recipient of five scholarships, plans to make it through college without being strapped with debt.

As both of his parents are immigrants, the first-generation university student doesn't take anything for granted. Torres knows he could have taken the path of least resistance and gone to work in a Houston warehouse – earning a paycheck, paying bills – the usual grind. Perhaps that path would have worked out, but it wouldn't be the same as having a degree in business communication and corporate education from SFA's Rusche College of Business.

Indeed, Torres is well aware that he's given himself a great opportunity and that it's one that wasn't available to his parents.

"It's one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life," he said of choosing school over the workforce. "For my parents, college was not an option. They couldn't even finish grade school because they had to make ends meet for their families."

To understand where Torres is and where he's headed, it's important to know where he came from. His mother, Maria, went to work after the first grade, and eventually came to the United States from El Salvador, fleeing the civil war there. His father, Joaquin, only made it through the second grade. In his teens he immigrated from Mexico to find work in Houston. The couple, who have both become U.S. citizens, met at an apartment complex where they both lived. They got married and had five children: Jorge, Maria, Carla, Jose and Natalie.

These days, Torres' father works as a supervisor at a plastic bag manufacturing plant, where he's been employed for more than 20 years. His mother is disabled, and the couple does not have the resources to pad their son's collegiate career with luxuries or, for that matter, certain necessities. Torres doesn't have a vehicle, so getting back to Houston – in times of an emergency or a global pandemic – isn't easy. And the list goes on and on.

"It's tough trying to keep up with everything," he said of managing school and family needs all at once.

Torres' older sister Maria has a degree in biochemistry, and his parents encouraged him to consider college, as well. Torres initially considered a bachelor's in philosophy with a subsequent degree in law, but by the time he enrolled at SFA, business was what he wanted to study.

While in high school, Torres took a good look at scholarships, and wound up landing five of them: The Rusche Educational Scholarship naming him a Rusche Scholar, Regents Scholarship, Wade and Karen Jones Scholarship, Nelwyn Cordell Stephens Scholarship, and The Chapelwood Foundation Scholarship. It was these scholarships, and a 27-student-per-class average, that convinced Torres to choose SFA over two other schools on his wish list.

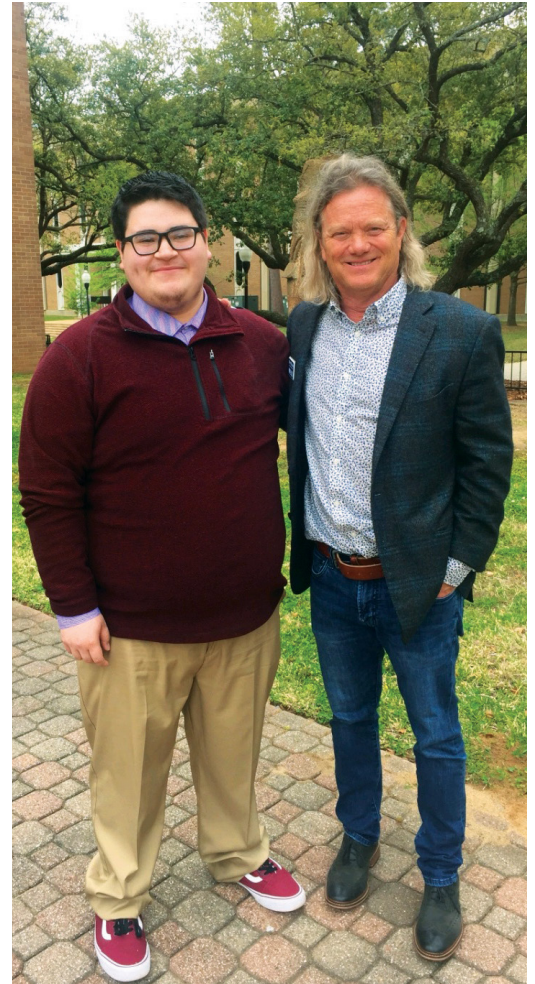
"Without the help of scholarships, I would not have gone to SFA," he said. "A lot of students couldn't go to college without financial assistance of some kind."

Torres grew up in the Spring Branch area of west Houston. But when it was determined that his youngest sister, 13-year-old Natalie, was both deaf and mute, the family moved to the Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District, which offers K-12 services for students with auditory impairments.

Torres and the rest of the family rallied around Natalie, making her plight theirs.

"When we found out she was deaf, we all started learning the basics of sign language," Torres said. "We all found common ground where we could come together and help."

The entire family is conversationally proficient in American Sign Language. When there are big press conferences on TV, like the many that have been broadcast for the COVID-19 pandemic, Torres finds himself watching the sign language interpreter, not the person who is actually speaking. In addition to his ongoing mastery of ASL, Rusche coursework, and the typical life of a college student, he is learning Braille.



Sophomore business student Jose Torres, left, with mentor Mike Parham, the owner and CEO of supply company Pepco.

Torres loves SFA's leafy campus, the people he's met, the professors who mentor him, and the fact that in Nacogdoches he's far enough away to live his own life, but close enough to get back home for breaks. As his degree emphasis is on business communication, his hope is to find work in public relations for the oil and gas industry. He is a participant in the college's Executive Advisory Board mentorship program and is partnered with Mike Parham, the owner and CEO of supply company Pepco.

Torres is set to graduate in May 2022. He expects to see both his parents and all four siblings at commencement.

"My parents were extremely happy that I got accepted at SFA," he said. "If God permits, everyone is going to be there."

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS WELL REPRESENTED IN SCHOOL OF HONORS

Business students continue to do the extra work, and reap the extra benefits, of being in the School of Honors.

Nearly 100 students, or about 10% of the total School of Honors membership, were enrolled in the College of Business this spring. The students' grades tend to be north of a 3.5 GPA, with a dozen holding 4.0s.

The School of Honors encourages its students to think globally, and offers study abroad scholarships of up to \$2,000 toward a fall or spring semester trip, and up to \$1,000 for a summer session, provided the trip results in a minimum of three hours of earned college work. Students have traveled all over Europe and studied in Vietnam, Australia, Tasmania, China, Ghana and Brazil.

Honors students must complete no fewer than six credit hours of honors coursework each academic year, and maintain a GPA of at least 3.25. The school supports original research and provides perks such as an honors-only computer lab where students have free Wi-Fi, printing and photocopying.

"Honors draws from across the university," said honors director Dr. Michael Tkacik. "But there are certain qualities that one often sees coming out of a particular college. For example, the College of Business students are especially driven and often have strong 'soft skills,' such as verbal communication and writing."

Tkacik said business students are especially adept at group work.

"Their honors projects can be quantitative or qualitative, depending on which department they come from, but they all tend to do research on real-world issues," he said. "They are concerned with immediate employment, though we do have some undergraduates who are jointly enrolled in SFA's business master's programs. Not surprisingly, they are problem solvers, and you see their entrepreneurial spirit."

HERE'S WHAT A FEW OF THE RUSCHE STUDENTS HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF HONORS:



ANNA WILKE, ACCOUNTING, LUFKIN

"I joined in order to push myself academically. Something I have always enjoyed is not only learning but learning well! Something I love about the honors school is they allow you to not only take unique classes, but you also have an expectation to do honors contracts. In those honors contracts, I have extended my research into the accounting industry. I have actually enjoyed every project I've done. As much as an extra assignment sounds like a hassle, my honors contracts have brought me closer to my professors and closer to my future career."



VEDA MIZE, SPORTS BUSINESS, ARLINGTON

"I am in the School of Honors because I took advanced classes in high school, and I thought I would enjoy the challenge of advanced classes in college. Honors at SFA is a tight-knit community of students that shares the same views of learning that I do. By being in honors, I have been given access to smaller classes and more personal relationships with my professors. Being in honors classes does require some extra study time, but the benefits are worth it."



KAILYN SOUTHERLAND, ACCOUNTING, NACOGDOCHES

"I am in the School of Honors because it is a legitimate and well-run group. I feel like I am a part of an honest organization that respects and appreciates the hard work honor students devote to their school."



LAUREN GARCIA, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, WYLIE

"I am in the School of Honors to challenge myself academically and to get the most out of my college experience. I have made so many connections, from professors, students and career professionals in and outside of SFA, by putting in a little extra work. Honors allows you to be independent and really dive into subjects that you are interested in, and present information in a unique way."



JOSEPHINE UNGER, BUSINESS ECONOMICS, NACOGDOCHES

Participating in the School of Honors drove me to succeed. I was able to work on research projects that were more interesting to me and tailored to my future career. Being an honors student looks good on your résumé and shows that you were dedicated to your education and committed to getting the most out of your college experience.

NEWLY TENURED COLLEGE OF BUSINESS PROFESSOR HAS A STORY TO TELL

Tenure doesn't come easy to university faculty members – it routinely requires years of education, teaching experience and research that leads to numerous papers and presentations.

Dr. Rajat Mishra is no exception to this rule – his own personal journey to tenure involved three degrees, seven years as a faculty member and an 8,200-mile journey from his native Nepal to Texas. And when it came time in April for the SFA Board of Regents to review his dossier, everything was in place: teaching, research, service and the support of Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the Rusche College of Business, and Mishra's department chair, Dr. Matthew Lindsey.

"I was not surprised, but I was happy," Mishra said of the award, which was accompanied by a promotion from assistant to associate professor.

At 38, he's got the sure footing he needs to plot his long-term future. The basics are already in place – teaching several courses in operations, project and supply chain management, mentorship and research. But with tenure, he's looking to be a bigger part of the administrative side of academia by dedicating more of his time to positions of service.

He doesn't mind that he left the private sector behind, where his degrees in engineering and management could command huge salaries in the international market.

"I always wanted to be a professor," he said. "I have a love of academia."

Mishra has been in the United States since 2006, residing all but one of those years in either the Dallas area – he has a master's and a doctorate from the University of Texas at Arlington – or Nacogdoches, where he's lived since 2014. He served as a visiting assistant



Dr. Rajat Mishra was recently awarded tenure in the Rusche College of Business.

professor at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut after earning his Ph.D., but New England was just a bit outside his comfort zone. When the opportunity presented itself at SFA, he took it and never looked back.

He told his brother in San Francisco and his parents and sister in Nepal about being tenured. They're proud of him. He achieved what he set out to do. But as Mishra moves deeper into his academic career, there's something outside his professorship that continues to elude him.

He's trying to finish a book he's been working on for at least seven years now. This summer, since he doesn't have classes, and since international travel is hit-and-miss due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he at least wants to make a dent in the manuscript. It's about his experiences leaving Nepal and carving out a new life in America.

Mishra has a story to tell. From his well-earned place in Nacogdoches, he'll tell it.

"When I first came here in 2014, I knew I would want to retire here," he said. "I have no plans to go anywhere else."

MUSTANG CAT

LUMBERJACKS WILL SOON BENEFIT FROM A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH MUSTANG CAT

The Stephen F. Austin State University Rusche College of Business recently secured a corporate partnership with Mustang Machinery Company, Ltd., a company that sells and rents construction equipment and engines and operates under the name Mustang Cat.

The partnership allows Mustang Cat the opportunity for exclusive access to branding and recruiting possibilities within the Rusche College of Business. It also provides students within the college a platform to increase their network while pursuing job and internship opportunities. Details of the partnership include corporate branding, signage, class visits, student prospecting for jobs and internships, and more. Dr. Tim Bisping, dean of the college of business, said partnerships like the one with Mustang Cat provide another avenue for students to succeed.

"Partnering with Mustang Cat allows more opportunities for our students to expand their professional skills and explore career options," Bisping said. "Our goal is to provide a real-world business environment for our students, grow programs, and continue to offer as many opportunities for our students as possible. Corporate partnerships, like the one we have with Mustang Cat, allow us to do this."

Austin Propes, parts manager of Mustang Cat, feels confident in the partnership.

"Mustang Cat employs many talented alumni from SFA and being involved with the university helps with our ongoing recruiting efforts," Propes said. "As a family-owned local company, supporting a local university like SFA is something Mustang Cat is happy to do and very proud of."

Mustang Cat joins Hajoca, Khol's and Fastenal on the list of Rusche College of Business corporate partners. For more information, please contact Bisping at (936) 468-3101 or bispingto@sfasu.edu.

WEATHERS CLAIMS TOP RESEARCH HONORS WITH EARNINGS ANALYSIS OF TEXAS BILINGUALS

Karina Weathers had to dig through the voluminous American Community Survey for about three months. The Census database, updated annually, has facts and figures on just about every aspect of American life, from educational attainment to employment and income, from housing and occupancy to ancestry and race. Weathers needed the data for her School of Honors research project, “Do Bilinguals Earn More in Texas?”

But the survey is a maze. Getting in and out with the right information takes a brave and prolonged effort. Not just anyone can do it. But that’s what makes Weathers special. The international business and modern languages major, using various data models as well as Excel features like pie charts, percent polygons, histograms and pivot tables, was able to crunch out her honors research project while remaining top of the class in her regular coursework. At the behest of faculty sponsor Dr. Rebecca Davis, she submitted the project to the Undergraduate Research Conference. Turns out it was the right decision. She won Top Scholar accolades for the Rusche College of Business, beating out seven interdepartmental competitors to join six winners from across SFA’s five other colleges.

Project planning began in August and was completed in December. Looking back at the process, it shouldn’t be a surprise that Weathers, a 3.86 GPA student, generated a winning piece of research. It’s what Weathers found that was unexpected. She analyzed the economic advantages associated with bilingualism for Texans from age 18 to 64. Her findings? On average, bilinguals earn an estimated 13% less than English monolinguals. According to Weathers’



Karina Weathers won Top Scholar accolades for the Rusche College of Business with her School of Honors research project, “Do Bilinguals Earn More in Texas?”

research, “high levels of variation in income persist among knowledge of different languages,” meaning some languages command a higher marketplace premium than others.

“I actually expected to find the opposite,” she said, referring to the 13% bilingual disparity. “I was kind of shocked at what I found.”

A fluent Spanish speaker who learned it at home from her mother, a native of Mexico, Weathers also studied abroad in Madrid, Spain, giving her a local as well as an academic understanding of

the language. She works on campus at the Disability Services Office and is also a teaching assistant for SFA 101, a freshman course that introduces students to university life.

For now, Weathers is focused on getting a job in project management or consulting. Casting a wide net, she said she’ll go wherever the job search takes her. She’ll probably head back to school for an MBA, but only after she’s been in the field for a few years.

“I want to see what’s out there first,” she said.