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WOODBURY UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
Where Your Legacy Begins
Fall 2023 Newsletter



SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF 7th ANNUAL ROTATING EXECUTIVE IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM

School of Business Rotating Executive in Residence Team Fall 2023				
9/12/23 (Tue: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm)	9/20/23 (Wed: 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm)	9/27/23 (Wed: 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm)	10/3/23 (Tue: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm)	10/11/23 (Wed: 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm)
				
Noam Lotan, MBA <i>Investor and mentor to multiple tech companies</i>	Paul Herman <i>President of The Herman Company (Real Estate)</i>	Tracy Hernandez <i>CEO, LA County Business Federation (BizFed)</i>	Nick Mitchell, JD <i>Executive VP, Chief Legal Officer at Logix Federal Credit Union</i>	Mary Akpovi, MBA, PhD., CPA <i>Founder & CEO, Mary O. Akpovi, CPA, Inc.</i>
10/19/23 (Thu: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm)	10/24/23 (Tue: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm)	11/1/23 (Wed: 1:00 pm – 4:00pm)	11/9/23 (Thu: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm)	11/14/23 (Tue: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm)
				
Melissa Lintinger, MBA <i>Senior VP of Production Finance, NBCUniversal's Television Studios</i>	Ahdee Abramson, MBA <i>Entrepreneur Investor Teacher</i>	Shawn Morey, M. RED <i>Entrepreneur, Realtor and Principal Broker at Dwell Real Estate group</i>	Wayne Ward <i>Sr VP and Regional Manager, California Bank & Trust</i>	Jane Skeeter <i>CEO and Founder, UltraGlas, Inc.</i>



This fall marks the 7th year that the School of Business has successfully completed its semester-based rotating Executive in Residence program. The program is aimed at offering business and other interested Woodbury students access to local professionals for insights, career advice, and mentorship. Ten Board members from a wide range of Los Angeles-area companies generously donated their time for one-on-one sessions with students to answer career-focused questions. Along with sharing their valuable

experience, they assisted students in establishing connections in the industries in which they work, including entertainment, real estate, banking, accounting, investment, non-profit industries, and others.

The EiR program has been successfully implemented since fall 2017 and is currently in its seventh consecutive year. The benefits of this program have been described in various outlets, including AACSB's prominent [BizEd Magazine](#).

ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT ORGANIZED *MEET THE FIRMS 2023*



As is the case every Fall semester, the School of Business' Accounting Department held its annual *Meet the Firms* event, this time again in virtual format. The choice for this format was based on enabling representatives from a variety of firms to attend optimally. The firms that participated in this year's event were:

Ernst & Young, LLP; Hutchinson and Bloodgood, LLP; Internal Revenue Service (IRS); Moss Adams, LLP, Berson Financial Group, Inc., Neumeister & Associates, LLP, and Frishta Amala CPA & Tax Services.

Aside from the external executives, Woodbury accounting alumni and current EY employees, Harry Krkryan, Ruxandra Badilas, and Dana Small, shared valuable insights about the profession. The firm representatives provided insight on the various positions that could be aspired, the advantages and challenges to expect, training periods in large organizations such as the IRS, Artificial Intelligence and its effects on the accounting profession, and more. All company reps shared their contact information for the students to use if interested in an internship or job.



COMMEMORATING HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH



TWO INSIGHTFUL ENTREPRENEUR LECTURES



SAMMY SUCU'S DREAM CLOTHING AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Sammy Sucu, MBA alum (Class of 2014) and Founder/CEO of DreamClothing streetwear, honored us with his entrepreneur story on November 8th. Upon earning his



KEVIN MATOSSIAN: FAILURES ARE THE GREATEST LESSONS!

Born and raised in California, Kevin Matossian learned at an early age that there is a business opportunity

MBA from Woodbury, Sammy first took a sales and PR job at a local furniture company. Yet, working for a boss did not feel gratifying as he did not receive the recognition he had hoped for. So, in his spare time, he started selling hoodies, which he initially purchased and had printed locally.

Sammy then started to develop some catchy designs focused on mental health. Mental health was something he came to understand throughout his own turbulent youth as a critical need for doing well. His clothing company "DREAM" grew as he started supporting non-profit organizations that advocated mental health.

Read more about Sammy's entrepreneurial story [here](#).

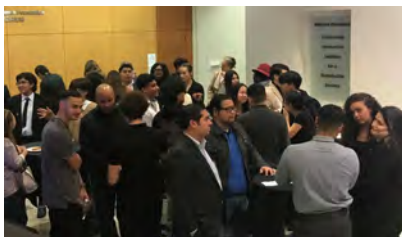
in almost anything, as long as you're open to the options. In his entrepreneur lecture, held on November 29 for Woodbury University faculty and students, Mr. Matossian reflected on his early beginnings as a 10-year-old entrepreneur. He soon learned the success recipe for entrepreneurship: Observe a problem, formulate a solution, and give it your all!

Early on, Kevin learned that marrying your passion with your entrepreneurial talents is a great recipe for success. He ran several lucrative businesses and some failed ones, and eventually founded *Silver Crest Entertainment*, an entity responsible for several successful productions, such as "LOST", "September Dawn," and "Mourning Rock".

Read more about Kevin's entrepreneurial story [here](#).

THE CREATIVE MINDS CONFERENCE 2023

On Thursday, November 16th, the seventh annual Creative Minds Conference was held in the Fletcher Jones' Auditorium. This event, which is considered one of the School of Business' flagship events, is a joint initiative from the School's Advisory Board, the Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization (CEO), and the Dean's Office.



This was the second year that students from local community colleges were invited to attend, and thereby network with business leaders and participate in the "So You Think You Can Sell?" contest. A large group of students from Pasadena City College and Los Angeles Valley College contributed to the contest by enthusiastically showing off their selling skills





“So You Think You Can Sell” brought about the amusement and admiration it never misses to instill in the audience, as they listened to the widely diverse one-minute sales pitches of the brave participants. Between the two rounds of the selling contest, there was a round of Kahoot!, which enabled all participants to compete for some appealing gift baskets.



Woodbury University winners were:

1. Bahja Smalls (\$1,000.00, donated by Advisory Board member Ahdee Abramson)
2. Spencer Harden (\$750.00, donated by Advisory Board member Neil Sherman)
3. Deven Momi (\$500.00, donated by Advisory Board member Andre van Niekerk)
4. Raoof Alsagga (\$250.00, donated by Advisory Board member Jane Skeeter)
5. Eric Villicana (\$250.00, donated by Advisory Board member Noam Lotan)



Community College winners were:

1. Levi Medina (\$250.00)
2. Ethan Tran (\$2000.00)
3. Johnny Vo (\$150.00)
4. Elijah Brown (\$100.00)
5. Ella Bogen (\$100.00)

The above prizes 1 through 3 were sponsored by School of Business' Advisory Board member Nick Mitchell, and prizes 4 and 5 by Prof. Jack Condon.

Read more about the Creative Minds Conference 2023 [here](#)





WAYNE WARD NAMED LEADER OF INFLUENCE BY LA BUSINESS JOURNAL

School of Business Advisory Board member Wayne Ward was recently named a 2023 Leader of Influence in Banking by the Los Angeles Business Journal. The award recognizes leaders for their exceptional influence, professional achievements, notable accomplishments, and community leadership in banking. Mr. Ward was given the honor for his significant contributions to the Los Angeles community, in addition to his career milestones and professional impact within California Bank & Trust (CB&T), one of California's leading banks.

Mr. Ward currently serves as the Senior Vice President & Regional Manager for Greater Southern California at the California Bank & Trust. He is a well-known industry expert who has broad and extensive leadership experience in financial services in both government and private sectors.

Wayne manages 14 business banking offices throughout West Los Angeles, the South Bay, and the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys. Read the article [here](#).



Summit: Akpovi atop Mount Kilimanjaro.

MARY AKPOVI HIKES TO THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT KILIMANJARO

Dr. Mary Akpovi, member of the School of Business' Advisory Board, may have formerly retired from her position as a partner in the CPA firm she co-founded, but she remains active in finding new heights in life.

In September, she climbed to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain and the world's tallest free-standing mountain, rising 5,895 meters (19,340 feet) above sea level in Tanzania.

Dr. Akpovi is still working part-time as an accountant, but she devotes even more time to charity. She is planning to travel to Romania and Moldova in December to distribute much-needed winter-clothing, shoes, first-aid packages, and more to Ukrainian refugees who fled there.

Dr. Akpovi has served on our School of Business Advisory Board since 2021.

[This article appeared in the November 6 edition of the Los Angeles Business Journal]





ALUMNI - STUDENT EXCHANGE PROJECT

On October 12, the School of Business Alumni Advisory Council, in collaboration with the School's Activity Director and Dean's Office, organized the third alumni initiative for this calendar year: **Connect & Reflect**, an alumni-student meet and greet event.

Alumni from the past 60 years (1960's through the 2020's) attended the event, and got to connect with their fellow Woodbury graduates, but also had a chance to interact with current and prospective students. In a comfortable atmosphere, strangers from a wide range of age groups and professional backgrounds became friends and exchanged contact information toward future collaborations. The event was organized under a Halloween theme, and the food and raffle prizes added to the general sense of comradery and affinity.

This fall semester also marks the inauguration of a new alumni-student mentor program, spearheaded by the School's alumni advisory council.

A small group of alumni has teamed up with student mentees from multiple majors by way of test running the development and potential success rate of this constructive effort. Both, the students and their alumni-mentors expressed their satisfaction with the connection and indicated that they want to continue this program in Spring.



SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ALUMNI ADVISORY COUNCIL ELECTS LEADERSHIP TEAM

The School of Business' Alumni Advisory Council, which was formed in Fall 2022 with the goal of enhancing the bond between alumni amongst one another and the School of Business, has elected a leadership team. After one year of planning and collaborating on three successful alumni events, the Council has now elected their inaugural Chair and Vice Chair. Sofia Toro (Class of 1998) will serve as Chair.



Alice Rogers (Class of 1958) will serve as Vice Chair. Sofia and Alice will work with the School of Business Dean's Office to provide leadership to the Council, develop initiatives aimed at increasing alumni engagement, and find new and exciting ways to further engage our current students with our alumni to provide them with a vast network for years to come.

Read more about the new alumni leadership team [here](#).

ACCOUNTING ALUMNA LILIT DAVTYAN ELECTED WOMAN OF IMPACT AND CEO OF THE YEAR!

Accounting alumna Lilit Davtyan (Class of 2012), who serves as the CEO of Phonexa, recently received multiple prominent honors:

The Los Angeles Times named her the 2023 CEO of the Year in the midsize-large company category. The distinguished honor was announced at the 2023 Inspirational Women Forum and Leadership Awards hosted by LA Times B2B Publishing at The Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles on Wednesday, November 7.

In November, Davtyan was also named a finalist for the “The 2023 Tech Trailblazers Awards” in the Female CxO Trailblazer category. The Tech Trailblazers Awards is an independent UK-based global awards program dedicated to the enterprise technology startup ecosystem and is now in its 12th edition.



Earlier this year, Davtyan was recognized as one of the esteemed honorees for the 2024 Women of Impact Awards by Women Impact Tech. Read more about Lilit’s accomplishments [here](#).

(Adopted from https://phonexa.com/news_and_press/los-angeles-times-names-phonexas-lilit-davtyan-ceo-of-the-year-award-winner/)

MBA ALUMNA SHAHIEDAH SHABAZZ TAKES ON LEADERSHIP ROLE IN INCBA

Shahiedah Shabazz (MBA Class of 2013), who also holds a JD from Harvard Law School, recently became the Executive Director of INCBA, the International Cannabis Bar Association, which is the world's Leading Resource for Cannabis Law, Education, and Community. INCBA was formed in 2015 by a group of lawyers who saw a need to educate and connect with other cannabis industry lawyers for the purpose of providing excellent, ethical, and advanced legal assistance to this growing industry. In her role as executive director, Shabazz establishes strategic partnerships, organizes symposia and webinars in the US and Canada, and cultivates membership growth.





Shahiedah also serves on the Board of Directors at Habitat for Humanity Chicago. In her free time, Ms. Shabazz volunteers at Women Build, Habitat for Humanity Chicago's annual event that brings women together to build homes for future women homeowners. There, she spends her days nailing in waterproofing and shingle starter strips on roofs.

FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SERIES

In February 2023, the School of Business initiated a virtual "*Thought Leadership*" Series, which is presented every last Thursday of the month. In the Fall semester, the following faculty members shared their leadership thoughts:



Dr. Svetlana Holt:
From Mindless Empathy to Conscious Compassion

On August 31, Dr. Holt conducted a mindfulness-focused talk that took a discerning approach toward "the right kind of empathy" by exploring the complexity of the subject and revealing new strategies for effective, ethical decision- and policy-making and management. The view to explore in this talk was "cautious," careful empathy. Dr. Holt discussed a case for empathy in a free market economy, the anatomy of empathy, cognitive versus



Dr. Mark Lampert:
A Discussion on STEAM and Why WE Need Business Majors Within the Entertainment Industry

On September 28, Dr. Lampert examined the importance of STEAM. STEAM education is an approach to learning that uses Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics as access points for guiding student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking.

Dr. Lampert explained why fields such as entertainment and technology need people



Dr. Brett Kawada:
Career Paths with Your Accounting Degree

On October 26, Dr. Kawada presented an interactive session, with guest speakers from a variety of accounting-related professions and in multiple parts of the world.

The purpose of this session was to provide those who have an interest in accounting with some career-suggestions, which may assist them on their path toward making the proper decision.



affective empathy, the dangers of mindless empathy, and ways to recognize and counteract them to reduce bias in decision-making.

Misplaced empathy can be one of the leading motivators of inequality and immorality in society. Far from helping us to improve the lives of others, it is often an irrational emotion that appeals to our narrow prejudices. It muddles our judgment and, ironically, often leads to cruelty.

Consequently, limiting our impulse toward irrational empathy is often the most compassionate choice we can make. The talk discussed ways not to rely on mindless empathy, but to draw instead upon a more distanced compassion.

who understand business from management to accounting and marketing. To illustrate this, he showed the video "AUTOMATICA-Robots Vs. Music" by Nigel Stanford, which has over 24 million views.

This presentation was intended to bring greater awareness on STEAM within those listening live to the presentation. It asked for the thoughts by the faculty to enhance the need for future students to achieve a business major.

The presentation and discussion further validated that those with a business degree could serve as the glue that bonds the STEAM personnel in the entertainment world to create successful productions.

Some of the options that were discussed in this presentation included:

- Working as a CPA at a Big Four firm;
- Working as an executive at a private company, and
- Earning a PhD and becoming a professor and scholar.

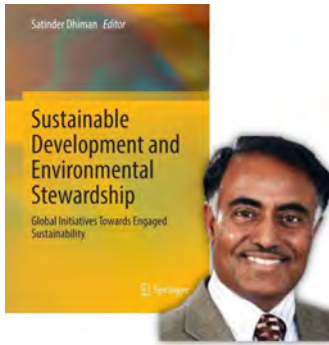
Dr. Kawada's guests comprised a team of invited former students, former classmates, and former colleagues from his corporate world experience. The invited individuals shared their genuine views on their career journeys with the attendees.

DR. JOAN MARQUES PUBLISHES PALGRAVE HANDBOOK ON WORKPLACE FULFILLMENT, WELLNESS, AND GROWTH

In September 2023, Dr. Marques' latest edited volume, "*The Palgrave Handbook of Fulfillment, Wellness, and Personal Growth at Work*", was published by Palgrave MacMillan. With contributions from a global cluster of 47 scholars, this book offers readers broad perspectives on the potential nature of work as a gratifying vocation. It will serve as a horizon-expanding reference for those researching topics related to meaningful work and workplace fulfillment and thriving



DR. SATINDER DHIMAN PUBLISHES COMPILATION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Dr. Satinder Dhiman recently published a timely compilation titled, “*Sustainable Development and Environmental Stewardship: Global Initiatives Towards Engaged Sustainability.*” This work was published by Springer and builds on recent advances in the theory of sustainable development and links it with environmental stewardship in a dialectical manner, as envisioned by global scholars in this emerging field. Environmental stewardship deals with practical issues of ecosystem management and governance to address changes in socio-ecological systems to sustain the supply and availability of ecosystem services by society.

PROFESSOR BENDONI TAKES ON TIKTOK CONSULTANCY

Prof. Wendy Bendoni recently became a TikTok Digital Culture Consultant for their E-Commerce Operation Team. She met the TikTok team after conducting a lecture at WWD MAGIC.

Wendy will be using social networks and AI audience Intelligence tools to make her predictions. The project started in August and will run until Spring 2024.



DR. JOAN MARQUES PUBLISHES IN JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS



In October, 2023, Dr. Joan Marques, Dean, School of Business and Professor of Management, got an article published in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, an A-level peer-reviewed journal, as listed in the Australian Business Dean’s Council, an AACSB supported journal database. Dr. Marques served as the lead author in the article, titled, “*Drawing on Eastern Spiritual Traditions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as Guideposts in an Increasingly Unpredictable World.*”



The article is co-authored by Dr. Payal Kumar (India) and Dr. Tom Culham (Canada) and examines three Eastern spiritual traditions in search of common guidelines addressing contemporary issues related to social unrest, imbued by inequity and injustice. The areas of review included Buddhist psychology, Daoist philosophy, and Hinduism. The article suggests some powerful common behavioral and ethical guidelines, to steer away managers from hyper-individualism and self-centeredness to a greater and consistent respect for the unity among all beings.

PROF. WENDY BENDONI DELIVERS KEYNOTE SPEECH AND SERVES AS EXPERT PANELIST AT LUXURY BRAND CONFERENCE

On November 30th, Wendy Bendoni gave a keynote speech titled, “*New Frontiers of Luxury- The Business Model*” based on her doctoral research on luxury watch marketing, including the multidisciplinary perspective of co-creation through immersive technology.



Prof. Bendoni also served as an expert panel member during this event. It all happened at the 27th annual “International Watch Marketing Day”, organized in the International Watchmaking Museum in Switzerland.

SUPPORT OPPORTUNITY: THE WOODBURY UNIVERSITY SOCIAL JUSTICE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Woodbury University has launched a new Social Justice Scholarship Fund that will provide scholarships to undergraduate students from underrepresented groups. This scholarship, as well as the School of Business' Dean's Fund and the Atlas Diversity and Inclusion Fund will financially assist students who are in need of support in obtaining their higher education with us. Your kind support is very much appreciated.



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