

WOODBURY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Where Your Legacy Begins

Fall 2025 Newsletter



The Creative Minds Conference 2025



"So You Think You Can Sell" Winners, Judges, MC and WUSB Dean

Woodbury University's School of Business just organized its ninth fall flagship event for 2025: *The Creative Minds Conference*, featuring "So You Think You Can Sell?"

This year, an additional competitive edge was added to the networking purpose of the event, whereby two prizes @\$500 were donated for a staycation in the Hampton Inn Burbank, by owner-manager Sundeep Vaghashia, member of the school's advisory board.

The winners of the staycations were: **Natalie Nunez** and **Rihanna Mejia**.



Winners networking competition

"So You Think You Can Sell" was a great experience again, with students showing off their selling talents, oftentimes to great hilarity of the audience.

The winners this year are:

1st Place: **Hank Lam** (\$1,000 sponsored by advisory board member **Ed Spiegel**)

2nd Place: **Oliver Landers** (\$750 sponsored by advisory board members **Tina Alleguez** and **Noam Lotan**)

3rd Place: **Jerri Hemsworth** (\$600 sponsored by alumni advisory council member **Ruxandra Badilas**)

4th Place: **Cole Sparks** (\$500 sponsored by advisory board member **Neil Sherman**)

5th Place: **Nexx Herrera** (\$250 sponsored by WUSB **Prof. Paul Sabolic**)

6th Place: **Lilian Castellanos** (\$250 sponsored by WUSB **Prof. Paul Sabolic**)

The judging panel consisted of seven dedicated associates: six advisory board members and one alumni advisory council member. Panelists were: Tina M. Alleguez, Ruxandra G Badilas, CPA, Dr. Michael Cusumano, Sheldon Eskin, Nowell Grossman, Ed Spiegel, and Adriana Waddell.

Woodbury University's School of Business' Dean's office, faculty and staff express their immense gratitude for all those who made this possible. Hearty congratulations to all the winners of the evening!



Networking competition in full swing



Audience enjoying contest

WUSB - Rotating Executives in Residence – Fall 2025

9/18: 10:00am – 1:00pm	9/23: 1:00pm – 4:00pm	10/01: 10:00am-1:00pm	10/09: 11:00am – 2:00pm	10/14: 1:00pm-4:00pm
				
Lilit Davtyan Founder, CEO, CPA, MBT Forbes Business Council Member CHIEF Member	Sundeep Vaghashia President and CEO, VBanks Management, Inc. Real Estate & Hospitality Professional	Wayne Ward Sr. VP & Regional Manager, Greater Southern California West Region California Bank & Trust	Nowell Grossman Senior VP, Production Finance, NBC Universal Television	Noam Lotan Investor and Financial Advisor Mentor to multiple privately held Technology Companies
10/22: 10:00am-1:00pm	10/30: 11:00am-2:00pm	11/04: 12:00pm-3:00pm	11/12: 11:00am-2:00pm	11/20: 10:00am-1:00pm
				
Ahdee Abramson Serial Entrepreneur Founder, Pet Ventures, Educator	Ed Spiegel CEO and major shareholder, Cast & Crew Entertainment Services (Ret.)	Tina Alleguez Entrepreneur Managing Partner at Alleguez, Newman, & Goodstein LLP.	Shawn Morey Entrepreneur Realtor and Principal Broker, Dwell Real Estate group	Emil Davtyan Founder and Managing Attorney Employment Law D.Law

This fall marks the 9th 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. As is the case every semester, 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 professional 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.

WUSB's rotating EiR program has been operational since fall 2017. The advantages of this program have been described in various outlets, including [AACSB's Insights](#).

Connect & Reflect - Return to Campus Networking Event



On September 18, School of Business students, future students, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends came together to network and celebrate the start of the fall semester. Connect & Reflect has become the School of Business' leading inaugural event in both the fall and spring semesters.

The gathering was invigorated with a human bingo game, unique faculty introductions ("two

truths and a lie"), Woodbury trivia, and a raffle along with pizza, cookies and chips. Participants commented that they enjoyed making new friends and rekindling old connections. We look forward to the Spring version of this event, planned for late January 2026.



School of Business Internship Workshop

As has been the tradition for decades now, all Woodbury undergraduate programs require an internship to allow students work experience and exploration of their professional interests.

This past month, the School of Business hosted an Internship workshop led by our Internship Coordinator, Dr. Wendy Bendoni. The session guided students through the whole internship journey, from launching their search and strengthening their professional networks to creating a strong first impression and transforming connections into real opportunities. The workshop was a great success, and based on high student interest, will be offered again this coming Spring.



Hacking Your Life - Fall '25 Alumni Webinar

On October 22, the School of Business' Alumni Advisory Council presented a webinar that discussed ways to leverage the tools needed to reinvent yourself and capitalize on your passion. The webinar was presented by School of Business alumni *Ruxandra Badilas*, *Matthew Gilbert*, *Dr. Joan Marques*, *Matthew Middleton*, *Mariya Palanjian*, and *Sabrina Taylor-Encarnacion*. The infographic below captures a summary of the points brought forward in this webinar.



WUSB Welcomes Three New Advisory Board Members

WUSB's advisory board has been an active advocate and support team to the School of Business over the past 15-plus years. Our advisory board members accommodate our students through career advice, sponsoring events that sharpen students' insights in the needs of society, and providing a strong multi-industry network in support of WUSB's societal impact. We are proud to introduce the following new board members:



Sheldon J. Eskin is the founder of The Law Offices of Sheldon J. Eskin, a law firm serving Glendale and the surrounding communities. Following his diverse legal career, Sheldon transitioned his practice in 2010 to Estate Planning; Trusts and Estates; Trust Administration; and Special Needs Trust Planning.

Sheldon also has a robust entertainment background and has been an active volunteer in the legal community. He is a founding member of the Entertainment section and a member of the Editorial Board for the San Fernando Valley Bar Association as well as the Past President of the Alumni Association and Past Representative of the Board of Trustees of Woodbury University.



Adriana Waddell is Vice President, Production Finance at the Universal Studio Group. Her experience in the production finance realm within the entertainment industry dates back more than a decade. Prior to her current position, she served, among others, as Director of Production Finance at the Universal Studio Group, Production Accountant at Universal Television LLC and at NBCUniversal International Studio.

Given the strong interest of our students in the entertainment industry and the broad presence of this industry in Los Angeles, Ms. Waddell's entry to the board is highly appreciated.

Adriana Waddell holds a 2001 - 2005 BS in Business & Management, Finance from Woodbury University.



Jeff Neumeister is an experienced forensic expert and consultant in accounting, cryptocurrency, and financial advisory services. He is the managing partner at Kelly+Partners Advisory Services and a partner at Crypto Tax International Pvt. Ltd.

Over his 24 years of professional experience, he has worked in firms ranging in size from large international entities to smaller regional practices. He has been a recurring speaker for conferences, webinars, private events and teaches in undergraduate and graduate programs.

Jeff holds six Masters and two Bachelor degrees, among which an MBA from Woodbury University, and an MPAcc from Emporia State University.

Industry Voices at WUSB

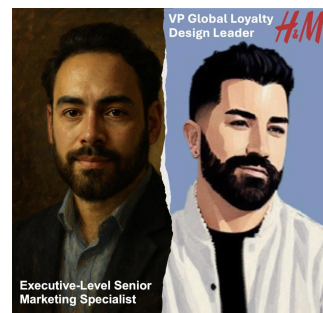


Guest Speaker Spotlight: Vice President, Marketing – Disney Consumer Products

As part of the Fashion Marketing Field Experience course offered by Dr. Bendoni and open to all School of Business students exploring creative industries, some real-world insights were shared into how top brands produce high-impact marketing content. The following executives shared valuable insights with our students:

- Lauren Gallo, Vice President of Marketing for Disney Consumer Products, guiding global brand storytelling and consumer engagement. Ms. Gallo's career includes standout leadership roles at Nike, Snapchat and Apple. In her conversations Ms. Gallo was particularly inspired by our students' curiosity pertaining to building a career that means something.
- Mario Moreno Sears, VP of Global Loyalty Programs and a strategic leader behind the H&M Membership Loyalty Program across the Americas. He shared with students marketing concepts and strategies around today's consumers and his insights into global loyalty strategy, leadership, and the future of customer experience.
- George Heras, an executive-level senior marketing specialist who works with Fortune 500 companies, gave our students a first-hand understanding of the fast-paced world of modern marketing. Drawing from his experience producing award-winning campaigns,

Mr. Heras demonstrated how creative vision, operational discipline, and budget awareness come together to shape high-performing brand storytelling. He also demonstrated how AI is transforming modern creative workflows, and shared valuable perspectives on platform strategy across YouTube, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Amazon Music.



Faculty Colloquia

This fall semester, the School of Business organized two faculty colloquia. Dr. Svetlana Holt, professor of Management hosted both events.

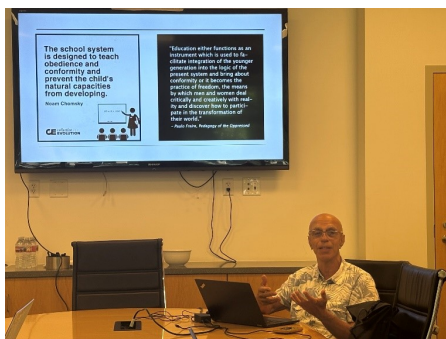
The first colloquium was held on September 23rd. The participating faculty members were:

- **James Warton** (School of Architecture), who presented “*Advancing Structural Synthesis and Emerging Material Technologies*” A survey of HKS | LINE led research outcomes tethered across professional practice, industry partnership, and academic engagements.”
- **Dr. Satinder Dhiman** (School of Business), who presented “*Does Justice Really Pay? Plato’s Challenge to Unbridled Self-Interest in the Republic.*”



The second colloquium was held on October 21st. The participating faculty members were:

- **Dr. Eugene Allevato** (Liberal Arts), who presented, “*Resisting Conformity in Education: Rethinking How Students Learn.*”
- **Dr. Wendy Bendon** (School of Business), who presented, “*Cultivating Critical Thinking in the Age of AI: Rethinking Pedagogy for the Modern Classroom (An Open Discussion).*”



Alumni Updates



Karina Mardirossian (MOL 2013, MBA 2016) just accepted a position as HR Business Partner at Netflix.

Over the past seven years, Karia gained rich HR experience in leading positions at Activision Blizzard and Riot Games, with her most recent position being senior business partner.



Oscar Barcena (MRKT 2014, MBA 2019) recently stepped into a new role as Project Manager at Los Angeles Metro!

During the past six years Oscar led a variety of initiatives including facilitating the launch of the Transit Ambassador Pilot Program. He is very excited about this new opportunity!



Sabrina Taylor-Encarnacion (FMRK 2007, MOL 2009) recently stepped into a new role as Associate Vice President of Undergraduate Admissions for both the University of Redlands and Woodbury University!



Revina Avanisian (MGMT/FINA 2009) accepted a new position as Head of Financial Strategy, Planning and Analysis - Office of the CFO at NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory

Alumnus Spotlight: Hadi Lamah

Hadi Lamah earned his MBA at Woodbury university in 1985. At the time of Lamah's education, Woodbury University was located on Wilshire Blvd, in Downtown Los Angeles. Hadi attended the institution as an international student, and experienced his own set of challenges to complete his education, but is proud and satisfied that he succeeded.



After initially finding employment in automobile sales, Hadi shifted to the insurance industry, and, thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit that is a second nature to most Woodbury University business students, he gradually built up to the point that he started his own business. Hadi decided to stay in Los Angeles and is currently the successful owner-manager of HLP Insurance Services, which he founded in 1988. HLP specializes in Risk Management, Underwriting, Sales and Service Medium to Large Personal and Commercial lines insurance accounts.

Mr. Lamah attended a recent alumni gathering (picture left) on the Woodbury campus and we hope he will visit more often.



Alumna Spotlight: Kristy Armas

At the “Women of Achievement” Pageant, held from November 20-23 in Irvine, **Kristy Armas** (MBA 2013) entered as Mrs. Elite California and left as the Talent Winner, Fitwear Winner, People’s Choice Award Recipient, and was crowned as Ms. National United States.

This pageant is not about physical beauty, but about the beauty captured in achievement. The mission statement explains that this pageant is about high achieving women who are doing things in the community for the betterment of all. The event enables these women to have a voice, rather than be silenced.

With her status of Ms. National United States, Kristy will be able to make appearances at events, make public service announcements, share about her platform and much more.

Kristy is currently the philanthropy officer at Union Rescue Mission - Los Angeles. She always had a warm heart for the non-profit sector and served before in development positions at City of Hope, Los Angeles Mission, and Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science.

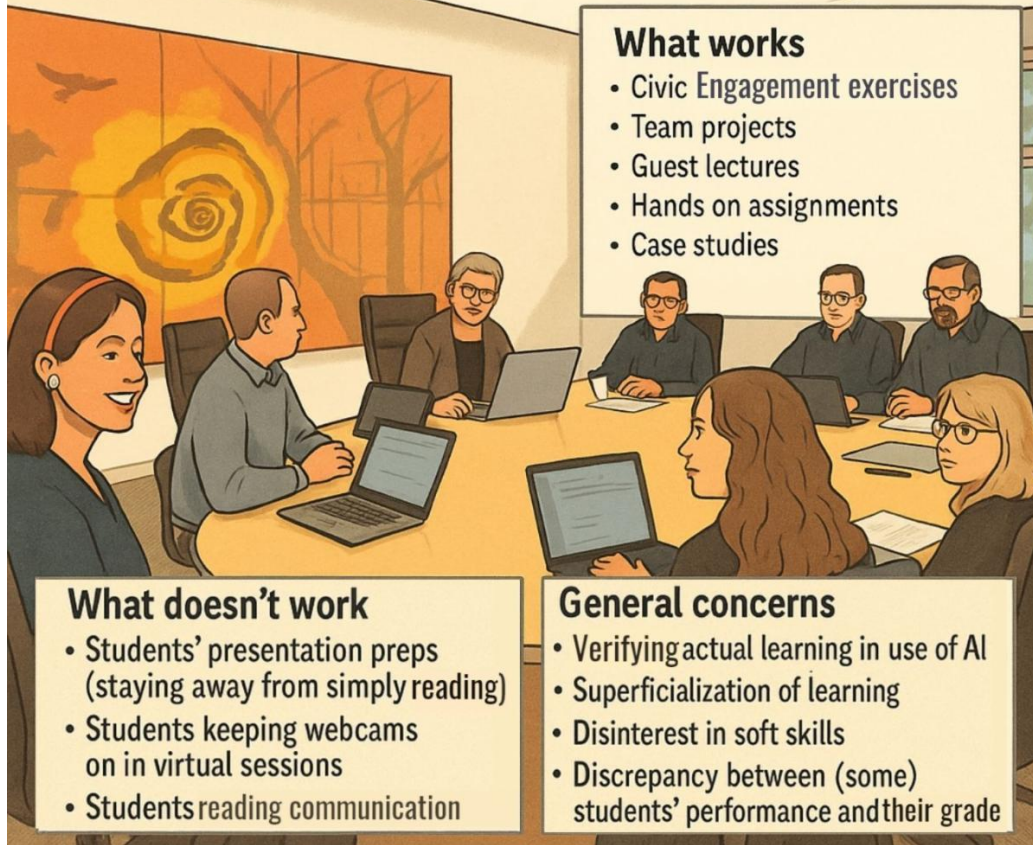
Surrounded by extraordinary women leaders with mission, vision, and purpose, Kristie stood out through her leadership talent and extraordinary accomplishments.



Faculty Best Practices

As part of our AACSB accreditation related practices, Woodbury University’s School of Business Team had its Fall’25 Faculty Best Practices meeting. We use these semester gatherings to share common (and unique) experiences and learn from each other how to approach these. The infographic below displays some of the common points we brought up this semester.

WUSB's 2025 Faculty Best Practices Observations



Thought Leadership Presentations



On September 4th, **Dr. Adam Wood**, Professor of Management, presented a webinar titled ***From Data to Decisions: Strategic Data Use in Evidence-Based Initiatives***. In his talk, Dr. Wood shared with attendees how to source and assess data for better results. He also provided practical strategies viewers could use to locate and analyze evidence for their questions.

On September 25th, **Dr. Satinder Dhiman**, Professor of Management and chair of MBA and Accounting, presented a webinar titled, ***Leadership Lessons from the Ring of Gyges: Justice, Ethics, Power, and Corruption!*** In his talk, Dr. Dhiman critically examined the ethical and leadership implications of the Ring of Gyges myth as presented in Plato's philosophical masterpiece, *The Republic*, Book II. This presentation took the view that true leadership stems from a high internal moral compass, not external enforcement or consequences. Only then it can result in the wise use of power by the leaders.





On October 30th, **Dr. Svetlana Holt**, Professor of Management, presented a webinar titled, ***Cultivating Conscious Compassion in Business Students: From Theory to Application***. In her talk, Dr. Holt discussed the practical experience of applying the "Ethical Lens Inventory"(TM) as a framework for refining our students' moral agility. She thereby provided examples about how this practice sharpens students' moral insights and enhances their involvement in the ethics course.



On September 24th, **Dr. Joan Marques**, Professor of Management and Dean, School of Business, served as an invited guest speaker at the University of Redlands' Banta Center for Ethical and Purposeful Leadership.

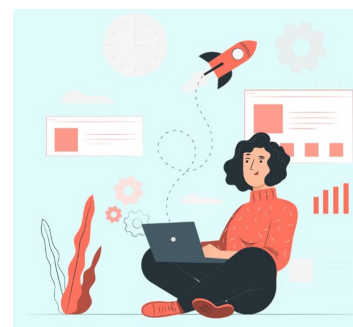


The presentation - summarized in the infographic above - was titled "***Leading from the Inside Out: How Diversity, Purpose, and 5 Inner Wisdom Drive Career Success.***"



SUPPORT OPPORTUNITY: THE STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS SUPPORT FUND

Please consider supporting our student entrepreneurs by donating to the [student entrepreneurs support fund](#)! This fund honors and encourages the efforts of budding entrepreneurs, who are students at Woodbury's School of Business, or are members of one of the School of Business-headquartered professional student organizations.



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