

# WOODBURY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

*Where Your Legacy Begins*

Summer 2024 Newsletter



## Summer Speaker Series *Cherishing Change: Making Lemonade*

This year, the School of Business organized its seventh summer speaker series. The series was broadcast between July 31 and August 9, and the presentations focused on sharing the power of perseverance and constructive changes that did not seem positive at first. The speakers were members of the School of Business advisory organs: four from the School of Business Advisory Board, and one from the School of Business Alumni Advisory Council. All speakers were entrepreneurs, representing a variety of industries, including real estate, health care, marketing, and finance. The presentations can be viewed [here](#).

### Cherishing Change:

*Making Lemonade*



Paul Herman



Ahdee Abramson



Shawn Morey



Mariya Palanjian



Michael Cusumano

**Join us!**

Wednesday, July 31 -  
Friday, August 9

**WU  
SB**

Woodbury University  
School of Business



## School of Business 2024 Alumni Reunion

On Thursday, May 30, 2024, the School of

Business hosted its 3rd Annual Alumni Reunion.

The event was organized by the School of Business Dean's Office with support from the School's Advisory Board, the School of Business' Alumni Advisory Council, and the University Alumni and Advancement Department. The event included a sit-down dinner, an alumni keynote speech, alumni awards, silent auction, and raffle.

As with each of the past year's reunions, the Dean of the School offered alumni awards in the areas of Distinguished Alum, Devoted Alum, and Flame-keeper.



- The **Distinguished Alum Award** was granted this year to Mr. Emil Davtyan (Class of 2008) and Mr. Jeff Neumeister (MBA Class of 2011).
- The **Devoted Alum Award** was granted to Ms. Sofia Toro (Class of 1998) and Mr. Charbel Ghaby (Class of 2014).
- The **Flame-keeper Award** was granted to Mr. Samuel Armstrong (Class of 1973 - pictured above).

Read more about the 2024 School of Business alumni reunion [here](#).

## Alumni Advisory Council Webinar

On June 13, two alumni with proven track records in accounting and finance joined forces to educate an eager audience about retirement preparation. Charbel Ghaby, Wealth Management Advisor at WestPac Wealth Partners, and Jeff Neumeister, Managing Partner at Kelly Partners, discussed a number of critical issues, starting with the emotional distress that retirement can bring, coupled with the fear that oftentimes exists on whether one can even afford retiring, or whether coming out of retirement will be an option. The two strategists addressed often raised questions about either dying too soon, living longer than expected, being confronted with illness, facing market volatility and inflation, and more. Some of the valuable pieces of advice Ghaby and Neumeister shared were:

- Keeping a cheat sheet with important telephone numbers, which may be useful for your beneficiaries to access in case of your passing
- Getting your accounts organized. Treat your assets as a business and be alert on the need to keep information updated so that you avoid getting wrong people benefiting from current assets.
- Get informed regularly about your retirement plan: every company has to provide access on retirement plan details to their employees. Use this opportunity.
- Keeping abreast of the tax technicalities when moving out of one state into another for the purpose of reducing the cost of living.
- Get yourself informed about the difference between a regular and roth IRA (individual retirement account), and which one might be preferable in your case.
- Familiarize yourself with your options for when you can take Social Security and know that ever year you delay taking your Social Security between ages 62-80 results in an increase in the amount you receive.
- For business owners:

A promotional graphic for a webinar. At the top, it says "WOODBURY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS" in white text on a dark blue background. Below that, it says "Alumni Advisory Council is Hosting a Webinar" in white. The main title is "Retire with Confidence Strategies for Individuals and Business Owners" in white. To the right of the title are two headshots of speakers: Charbel Ghaby and Jeff Neumeister. Below the headshots are their names and credentials. At the bottom, it says "Thursday, June 13th 2024, 4:00 PM - PST" and "BIT.LY/WUSB-webinar". There is a "FREE ACCESS" button and the WUSB logo.

### WOODBURY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Alumni Advisory Council is Hosting a Webinar

**“Retire with  
Confidence  
Strategies for  
Individuals and  
Business  
Owners”**



**Charbel Ghaby**  
RICP®, CFP®  
MBA, Class of 2014  
Wealth Management Advisor  
WestPac Wealth Partners

**Jeff Neumeister**  
CPA/ABV, CHA, MAcc,  
MBA, Class of 2011  
Managing Partner,  
Kelly & Partners

Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup> 2024, 4:00 PM - PST  
[BIT.LY/WUSB-webinar](https://bit.ly/WUSB-webinar)

FREE ACCESS



- The government provides tax credits for encouraging employees to save. Many companies have an auto-enroll feature instated, which employees will have to opt out if if not interested.
- Keep optimal transparency and dialogue with your team members to keep trust and satisfaction alive.

The session was very well-attended, and several requests were made to have a similar session in the near future.

## Woodbury Becomes AWS Academy Member

Woodbury University is pleased to announce that we are now a member of AWS Academy! AWS Academy is an Amazon Web Services (AWS) program that provides higher education institutions with a ready-to-teach cloud computing curriculum, built by the experts at AWS. This partnership will offer our students free access to foundational



cloud computing courses, significantly enhancing their learning experience. Beginning this Fall, students can enroll in courses that teach in-demand cloud skills, allow them to solve business challenges based on actual industry scenarios, and help to prepare them to pursue industry recognized AWS Certifications and in-demand jobs.

Woodbury offers computing programs in Computer Information Systems, Computer Science Data Analytics, Design Computation, and Applied Computer Science Media Arts.

## WUSB Welcomes Two New Advisory Board Members



**Ed Spiegel**

Ed graduated from Woodbury, with an accounting major, in 1960. He practiced public accounting for years and was as a partner in a large local firm. He left public accounting and joined a company that provided payroll services to film and television production. He became the CEO and a major shareholder, expanded its services, formed additional companies and grew Cast & Crew Entertainment Services and Subsidiaries into one of the largest companies of its type in the industry. Ed has been an active member of the Woodbury Board of Trustees for 20 years and has



**Sundeep Vaghasia**

Sundeep Vaghasia is an accomplished entrepreneur, transformative team leader, and astute visionary. He is most prominently known for his experience in real estate investment and development, hospitality management, commercial and residential real estate management, and internet technology. Sundeep serves as President and CEO of VBanks Management alongside his father, who is the founder and chairman. VBanks is involved in several community outreach programs, but it's also apparent in their company mission, organizational values, and customer service efforts as well.

served on Boards and Committees of several other non-profit organizations.

Sundeep is also extensively involved in volunteer projects.

## STUDENT NEWS

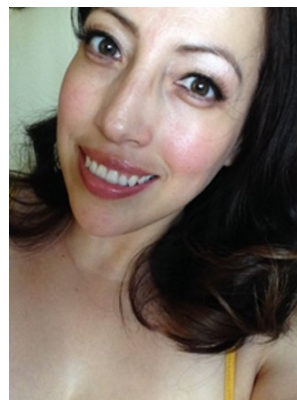


### ***Rozalia Hovhannisyan lands Internship at Burbank Chamber of Commerce***

As part of the ongoing collaboration between the School of Business and the Burbank Chamber of Commerce, Rozalia Hovhannisyan successfully applied for an internship at this dynamic workplace. Rozalia is a current MBA student, who intends to gain the most intricate real-life experience while going through her educational journey. Upon evaluation and approval from the Chamber's CEO, Jamie Keyzer, Rozalia could embark on this position and is now the Chamber's new intern.

Rozalia is involved with a wide range of fascinating tasks, including maintaining and updating the membership directory, connecting with new and existing members, cultivating monthly business connections, updating the Chamber's stakeholder database, and assisting in a number of additional operations.

Woodbury University's School of Business and the Burbank Chamber of Commerce maintain a close and multidirectional collaboration, which includes the opportunity for our students to intern at this organization. This partnership enables students to expand their network and obtain critical experience for their career.



### ***Colleen Barboza Lands Internship at City of Pasadena***

Colleen Barboza, BBA Management student, is currently interning with the Economic Development Department at the City of Pasadena. Colleen's journey to securing this internship began with a proactive search for opportunities close to home on the City's website. She took the initiative to contact the Human Resources Department directly to inquire about potential internships for college students. Based on the HR representative's advice, Colleen emailed various departments within the City to express her interest in a summer internship.

Colleen ensured a professional approach, which paid off when a representative connected her with the Executive Director of Economic Development. Within a week, she got an interview, and shortly afterward, was offered an internship position!

As a long-time resident of Pasadena, Colleen considers working with the Economic Development Department an incredibly exciting and fulfilling experience. This internship has allowed Colleen to apply her academic knowledge in a real-world setting, and she is eager to continue learning and growing in this role.



## ***Emil Davtyan named 2024 CEO Visionary***

**Emil Davtyan** (Class of 2008), who is not only an alumnus from our Business Program, but also a member of the School of Business Advisory Board, has recently been named one of Los Angeles Times' CEO Visionaries for 2024. The announcement was made in the Los Angeles Times' fourth annual edition of C-Suite magazine.

Qualifications for inclusion in this year's awards were based on a set of qualities including intuition, resilience, and (the) ability to lead. Nominations were recommended by peers and colleagues based on the nominee's ability to "inspire their employees, connect with consumers, and push their companies to achieve ever loftier goals."

Emil is the founder and managing attorney at Davtyan Law Firm, also referred to as D.Law.



## ***Jocelyn Ramirez is Pivoting her Business Focus to Consumer Products***

**Jocelyn Ramirez** (MBA, 2010) has been selected by Enthuse Foundation and 1919 Investment Counsel for their Business Tools Grant opportunity to support her small business, Todo Verde! Jocelyn considers these wins critical in helping to keep her business growth going!

Jocelyn recently also got access to much needed small business capital to pivot her business focus to consumer products!! TMC Community Capital is an affordable, safe, online microlending for underserved business owners.

Jocelyn, who has published an excellent cookbook "*La Vida Verde*", was also recently included in the podcast "Beyond the Hustle" where she provided insights on how storytelling can elevate your business to new heights.

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## ***Alveen Shirinyans Becomes Deputy Chair of the ICC Armenia Arbitration***

Alveen Shirinyans (BBA, MGMT, 2013), who completed her JD at Loyola Law School after her Woodbury graduation, recently accepted the position of Deputy Chair of the ICC Armenia Arbitration and ADR Commission at ICC Armenia.

Along with the position as a delegate to the ICC Global Arbitration and ADR Commission, this role will further solidify Alveen's commitment to the promotion of arbitration and ADR in Armenia and the wider region.





*Mr. Samuel Armstrong and Dr. Barbara Armstrong*

## ***Flamekeeper Samuel Armstrong Shares Words of Wisdom***

At this year's School of Business alumni reunion, Mr. Samuel Armstrong (Class of '73) received the prestigious "Flamekeeper" award. Mr. Armstrong has an impressive track

record of military service and sportsmanship, and returned to college at a later stage in his life to cultivate his business acumen and, specifically, his entrepreneurial skills.

His formal career as an LA County Probation officer enabled him to support his wife through Optometry College, while also running a dry-cleaning service, and eventually expanding into the residential rental business, a profession that comfortably supports the couple till today.

When asked what insights he could share with younger readers of the newsletter, Sam came up with the following:

- If you want to accomplish something, it would not be uncommon to run into roadblocks. You could let that discourage you. However, if what you want to do is important to you, then you must figure out ways around those roadblocks and not let yourself be emotionally or physically dragged down. It does not mean this is easy to do, it just means that you have to do it to get what you need or rearrange your needs to something else that will work.
- Although education is not the only way to succeed in life, I have seen many people do well without it, this was not the case for me. I found my challenges much harder to work around before I had graduated from Woodbury College, with my B.S. in Business Management. This educational background and my B.S. Degree, proving my accomplishments to the world, opened many of the doors that I had been struggling to pass through for many years. If your doors are different, you might need a different direction, but this worked well for me and changed my life.
- Be cheap at the beginning. Save and invest your money instead of showing off to the world. You can gradually show off once your foundation is firmly set. Get that special something as a reward to be acquired only after you have achieved your foundational goals. Yet, do not deny yourself everything. The occasional splurge to go to a movie and also buy popcorn is valid.
- Choose your friends well. Do not spend a lot of time with people whose values are not shared by you. Find people who would rally round you if you were in need. Make yourself worthy of that action. Be sure that you are willing to do that favor for them in return.

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## **FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS**

***Dr. Adam Wood, Dr. Svetlana Holt and Dr. Joan Marques  
publish in Organization Development Journal***

***Assessing the Impact of Transparency in Organizations*** is the title of a new article, written by Drs. Wood, Holt and Marques. The article discusses the phenomenon of transparency, which



marks contemporary performance in both

personal and professional realms. The authors observe that the quest for increased transparency has not omitted organizational performance. In this article, Wood, Holt, and Marques review transparency in different formats and contexts of human performance, examining its advantages and disadvantages and considering various manifestations of the phenomenon in voluntary versus involuntary forms, as a source of mistrust and social shaming, as a performance booster, as a way of exerting control, as a public relations mechanism, as a revenue enhancer, and as a moral quandary.

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## **Woodbury Management Faculty Team Presents at Academy of Management's 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**

Between August 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, four of the School of Business' Management scholars attended the Annual Academy of Management (AOM) conference to conduct their peer-reviewed and accepted presentations. This prestigious conference is the world's largest congregation of management scholars. This year's conference was held in Chicago under the theme "*Innovating for the Future*". The following presentations were conducted:



Dr. Joan Marques coordinated two panel symposia: "*Mindful Innovation: Impacting Individual and Collective Flourishing*" and "*Future-Focused Innovation through Ancient Traditions.*" She also coordinated a Professional Development Workshop (PDW) titled, "*Guided Meditation Practices Toward Inner-Balance, Inclusion, and Innovation,*" to which Dr. Satinder Dhiman served as one of the co-presenters. She further co-presented a PDW with two external scholars, titled, "*Mentoring with a Spiritual Angle.*" As incoming chair of the Management, Spirituality and Religion Division of AOM, she was also involved in all MSR-related formal strategic and membership-focused sessions.

Dr. Satinder Dhiman coordinated two presenter symposia: "*Managing for Uncertain Endeavors: Employing the Lesser-Practiced Knowledge for Radical Innovation*" and "*Purposeful Innovation: Leading Organizations to Foster Peaceful Co-existence*". In the last-mentioned symposium, Dr. Joan Marques also served as a co-presenter. He also participated in a Professional Development Workshop (PDW) titled, "*Preventing Parallel Spiritual Pandemic Innovative Insights and Practices from the Bhagavad Gita.*"



Dr. Adam Wood and Dr. Svetlana Holt successfully collaborated on a Professional Development Workshop titled, "*Restoring the 'Positive' Back into Positive Work Cultures.*"



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## ***Decoding the Gen Z Luxury Consumer: Insights from Professor Bendoni's Superlative Interview***

Professor Wendy Bendoni, Assistant Professor of Marketing & Fashion Marketing at Woodbury University, was recently featured on the prestigious Superlative Podcast by *aBlogtoWatch*.



In this interview, hosted by Ariel Adams, the founder of *aBlogtoWatch*, Professor Bendoni delves into the evolving values of Gen Z luxury consumers. She provides invaluable insights for watch collectors and luxury brands on what truly matters to this next generation of discerning buyers, highlighting the trends and motivations shaping the luxury market's future.



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## ***Dr. Joan Marques Publishes in Journal of Values Based Leadership***

Based on insights she developed last year, and presented on multiple forums, Dr. Marques wrote an article titled, "*Leadershift Today: Balancing Ego and Altruism*", and had it published upon peer review in the Journal of Values Based Leadership, JVBL.

This article addresses a behavioral dichotomy that seems to be a prerequisite in proper leadership

performance in today's world, especially in organizational settings that cultivate a culture of wellness and reciprocal progress. While the involved concepts - ego and altruism - are generally familiar human traits, the need for a shift from one to the other once leadership has been attained, has not been discussed as such before. This article therefore aims to evoke within leaders the awareness of the need to shift their mindset, and therefore their behavior, from ego-driven to collective-focused once elevated into a leadership position.

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## ***IMFEST - "Advancing knowledge of XR, bridging global gaps, empowering youth, and fostering equity in the eco-tech landscape"***

On June 26th, 2024, Professor Bendoni joined as a speaker at IMFEST's initiative to unite industry and academic leaders for meaningful climate action. IMFEST, the



world's largest online platform dedicated to climate dialogue, promotes clean energy and water access within African communities, fosters critical discussions on climate change, and guides companies toward sustainable transitions. This June, Professor Bendoni contributed to the launch of IMFEST's groundbreaking event, which



included key players like Virtual Switzerland, the Network for eXtended Realities (XR), and the climate movement We Don't Have Time, a tech startup leveraging social media to hold leaders accountable for climate action. The IMFEST Foundation, based in the Netherlands, is committed to advancing knowledge of XR, bridging global gaps, empowering youth, and fostering equity in the eco-tech landscape, focusing this year on empowering youth, tackling climate change, and connecting global innovators. IMFEST drives climate action through these efforts, unleashes Africa's potential in emerging technologies, and collaborates on creating a sustainable future.

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## ***SUPPORT OPPORTUNITY: THE WOODBURY UNIVERSITY SOCIAL JUSTICE SCHOLARSHIP FUND***

Woodbury University has launched a [Social Justice Scholarship Fund](#) that provides 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](#) 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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