



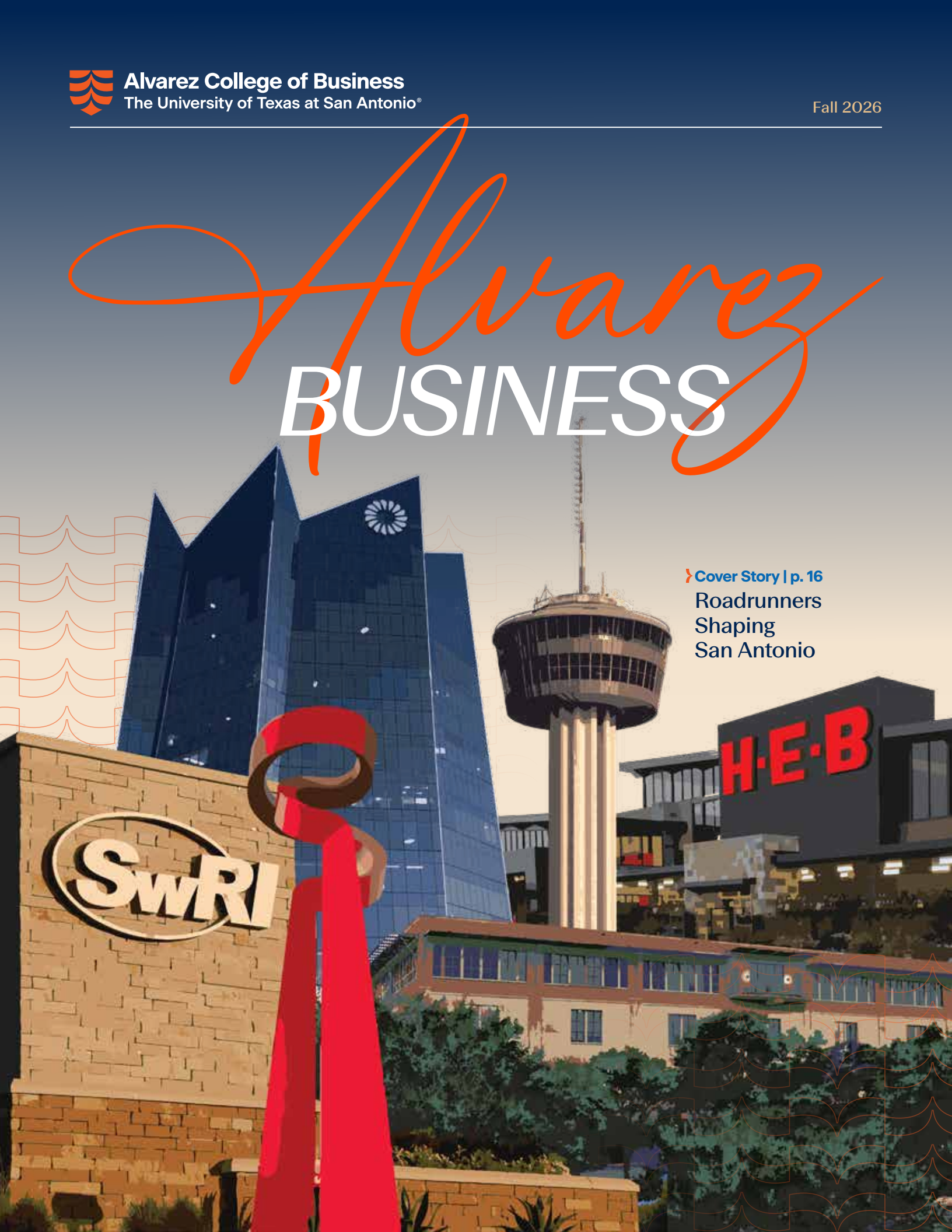
Alvarez College of Business
The University of Texas at San Antonio®

Fall 2026

Alvarez BUSINESS

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**Roadrunners
Shaping
San Antonio**



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Dean's Message

Welcome to the latest edition of **Alvarez Business**, the alumni magazine for the UT San Antonio Carlos Alvarez College of Business! In our 3rd edition, we are excited to showcase some of the unique stories of our 48,000+ alumni — shining a spotlight on their successes to inspire others.

Jonathon Halbesleben

In this issue we celebrate three alumni who are contributing to the business landscape of San Antonio. Entrepreneur **Ann Bohl Deacon**, '84 is the founder and CEO of Deacon Recruiting and Lux Concierge. Recognizing the value of relationships, she runs one of the largest executive search firms in Central Texas. As vice president of corporate sales and retention with Spurs Sports & Entertainment, **Mike Setser**, '97 is loyal to the values-based organization which has remained true to its San Antonio roots. Driving impactful change **April Ancira**, MBA '03, vice president of Ancira Auto Group, sees her purpose in life as helping others. UT San Antonio, as well as the greater San Antonio community, have benefited from her vision. These Roadrunners are building more than successful careers; they are helping shape a more vibrant San Antonio for generations to come.

Our alumni also contribute to our classroom experience and our students' professional development in meaningful ways as well. We highlight two stories showcasing how alumni are impacting the lives of our current business students. In the first, we share the story of the college's first student-managed fund, and how business alumni are partnering with faculty member **Ron Sweet**, MBA '91 to provide students with meaningful real-world experiences. Then, we highlight the college's Mentorship Program and the impact that a group of nine H-E-B employees and alumni made while serving as mentors this past academic year.

From engineer to business leader, **Walt Downing**, MBA '86 had an innovative 52-year career in the technology industry. Downing recently retired as the executive vice president and chief operating officer



Jonathon Halbesleben, Dean

Bodenstedt Chair and Tom C. Frost
Distinguished University Chair for
Business Excellence

at Southwest Research Institute. Finally, alumni **Susan Thibodeaux**, '85 and **Oladapo Olaleye**, MBA '09 discuss their approaches to giving smarter by unlocking the power of matching gifts.

Throughout this issue, we will provide you with some exciting updates on our progress as well. We continue to be recognized for our academic programs including a recent No. 80 ranking for our part-time MBA program among public schools by *U.S. News and World Report*. Recognizing the value of online programming for our alumni, we're offering both our MBA and our MS in Business Analytics degrees fully-online this fall.

We are also excited to feature some of the innovative research from our faculty and invite you to learn more about our faculty's research through our new podcast, *Inside Alvarez Business*.

Your support helps us become a world-class business school. Whether you are mentoring a student, presenting a professional development workshop, creating an internship or making a financial contribution, your efforts increase the value of a degree from the Alvarez College of Business for both current students as well as our alumni.

— Around Campus —



Part-Time MBA Program Ranked by U.S. News & World Report

The part-time MBA in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business has been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* in their 2026 Best Graduate School rankings as one of the top 100 public part-time MBA programs in the nation.

“Our focus has been on strengthening the quality, relevance and visibility of the college’s graduate programs,” said **Dan Sass**, associate dean for graduate studies. “This recognition reflects the dedication of our faculty, the success of our students and our commitment to delivering a rigorous and professionally-relevant MBA experience.”

PART-TIME MBA

#80

NATIONALLY FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The *U.S. News & World Report* Best Graduate Schools rankings evaluate programs using criteria such as research activity, faculty resources, student excellence and peer assessments.

College Offers New Graduate Degree in Business Analytics

Designed for today's data-driven business environment, the new Master of Science in Business Analytics degree program prepares students with the technical and strategic problem-solving skills needed to make impactful, data-informed decisions to optimize business processes.

With the first class starting this fall, the program is offered in a hybrid format that allows students to blend in-person evening classes with online learning for maximum flexibility or complete the degree entirely online.

"What makes this program special is that it was designed specifically with AI at the forefront," said **Tianhai Zu**, assistant professor of operations and analytics.

"It's organically part of the program, which makes it very appealing to students who want to leverage this advanced technology."



Scan to learn more about the MS in Business Analytics program.

Students will gain hands-on experience with real-world scenarios like marketing analytics, financial modeling and operations optimization. And, they'll learn how to use industry standard tools such as GitHub, Python, R, Tableau, Power BI and SQL.

"Companies increasingly need more people who can bridge data science with business strategy and business decision-making," said Zu.

In-person students can choose to concentrate in the areas of accounting, economics, finance or marketing. Open to students from a range of academic and professional backgrounds, no prior quantitative or coding experience is required.



We're preparing our students to enter the market with up-to-date skills in demand by employers.

- Tianhai Zu



Two New Fully-Online Graduate Programs Launch



NEW PROGRAMS FOR FALL 2027

Look out for these two new programs launching in fall 2027. Applications are open for both programs.

- MS in Marketing (online)
- Doctorate in Business Administration



*Explore the college's
business programs.*

Beginning this fall, the college offers its first fully-online graduate business degrees. Students can choose between the Online MBA program or the new Online Master of Science in Business Analytics degree.

Designed for working professionals, the programs are ideal for students who want to earn a high-quality degree

without pausing their professional and personal responsibilities. Students can complete the programs in 1-2 years, depending on how many courses are taken each term.

Delivering the same rigorous curriculum as the on-campus programs, there are no scheduled class times, no residency requirements and no campus visits are required.

Alvarez online programs are designed to keep students fully engaged in the coursework and with their classmates. The program is structured with flexible weekly modules, featuring short video lectures and interactive content including real-world projects and applied assignments.

Learn more at online.utsa.edu.



STUDENT-MANAGED FUND PROVIDES REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

by Wendy Frost

Imagine walking into a finance class on the first day and learning that you are responsible for managing a \$2.5 million investment portfolio. That was the scenario that 22 undergraduate and graduate students faced when they began their Securities Analysis Class last fall in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business.

While the course was not new, last year marked the first time students were able to gain hands-on experience working with a real portfolio. The fund that they managed is owned by the University of Texas/Texas A&M Investment Management Company (UTIMCO).

Under the guidance of **Ron Sweet**, MBA '91, professor of practice in finance, students learned what it takes to analyze, value and select investments in real time — skills that mirror what entry-level security analysts do in the field. Students were selected to participate in the class following a rigorous application process.

In nine months' time, the investment portfolio grew by 18.8% (beating the market by .5%) to gain almost \$500,000 in additional income.

"We started off buying exchange-traded funds that matched the sectors in the S&P 500," said Sweet, who is the faculty advisor to the Investment



Society. "Then I divided the class into teams by sectors such as technology, energy or healthcare. Students learned how to do evaluations and analyses of companies, and how to present their investment recommendations."

Students built screening models within their sectors in order to evaluate stocks. From that list, team members would then divide up the top prospects to ultimately determine the three stocks that they'd pitch. As they chose stocks to buy from their analysis, they slowly replaced the exchange-traded funds. Currently they have 42 stocks in their portfolio.

"This course develops several technical skills ranging from financial statement analysis, Bloomberg proficiency, Excel modeling and professional presentations," said **Nicholas Sanderson**, a senior majoring in finance who interned with Frost this summer. "However, I found that the most valuable takeaway was non-technical. Rather, it's the ability to construct a thesis, support it with data and communicate it with enough conviction that the team was willing to act."

Throughout the course of the year, Sweet invited over 100 alumni and

finance experts to participate in the stock pitch presentations. He tapped into his extensive network of business contacts to offer students additional feedback as well as mentorship and networking opportunities.

“Professor Sweet keeps in contact with many Investment Society alumni,” said **Andrew Hernandez**, '22, an equity research associate at Jefferies in New York City. “He asked if we could give feedback on sectors that we specialize in and put me in contact with a student who was working in the real estate sector.”

Hernandez worked with recent finance graduate **Eugene Trevino**, '26 on his real estate sector pitch. During their calls they would discuss the industry and share information that Trevino translated into his final presentation. Trevino also participated in a stock pitch competition at Frost based on this work.

“When I was a student, I wasn’t as aware of an analysts’ role in the stock market, but I would’ve enjoyed hearing more about it firsthand,” said Hernandez. “From my current colleagues, I can tell that by participating in these types of experiences it gave them a leg up earlier on in their learning process.”

Students heard from numerous guest speakers throughout the year as well to expand their industry knowledge. And Sweet also organized several stock pitch competitions where students could present to working professionals in the industry. This past year Frost, Valero and Victory Capital hosted student competitions.

“The speakers helped me get a deep dive into how professionals think and their processes to finding great companies,” said **Andrew Dietz**, a senior majoring in finance. “Most of the speakers started out as UTSA students in the exact position that I am in, so they gave great advice on how to be successful in my future career.”

“The students get to interact with people who are doing this for a living,” said Sweet. “They are not treating them like students, or watering down their responses. They are pushing back like they would normally do during a presentation.”

“Having someone with many years of experience to lean on and ask questions was invaluable,” said **Reed Knapp**, a finance graduate student.

“In certain instances, they gave us great industry-specific information that was very helpful in guiding investment decision-making. It was also helpful to hear how similar their process was to ours, and it reinforced that the classroom learning we were doing was very similar to what is done in practice.”

Beyond the classroom, Sweet has also expanded the opportunity of supporting the student-managed fund by including the participation of the college’s Investment Society. Advised by Sweet, this student organization is devoted to furthering the students’ industry

knowledge to prepare them for careers in high finance.

During weekly meetings, they reviewed the portfolio looking at stock movement to determine buy or sell opportunities. They typically reviewed two to three stocks every week. While most student-managed funds are typically overseen by a small group of graduate students, the strength of the Alvarez fund is that a broad array of students get to be involved in the portfolio either through the class or through the student organization.

“One thing I emphasize is the purpose of finance is not analysis,” said Sweet. “The purpose of finance is to make decisions. If all you’re doing is analysis, which you do a lot in college, that is only part of the process. Our students get a chance to make actual decisions when they determine if we are buying or selling within our portfolio.”

Understanding the implications of their decisions is evident for all students. Sweet reviewed the portfolio with the



Ron Sweet assists students in the Financial Studies Center.



Finance students meet with alumni in New York City.

class weekly, and they could see whose stocks were doing well, and which stocks were underperforming.

“I definitely hear the groans from students when it is shared that their stocks are struggling,” said Sweet. “The students take their responsibilities quite seriously and are quite competitive with each other.”

“It is an environment where intellectual risk has real consequences, and it is something most students don’t encounter until years into their careers,” said Sanderson. “This course compresses that experience into a single year while bridging the gap between academic theory and professional practice.”

While their ultimate goal is to achieve gains for UTIMCO, Sweet emphasizes that isn’t the only objective.

“We are managing a portfolio, but this is also a college class,” he said. “We’re trying to perform well, but we’re also trying to make it an educational experience. We want to get the maximum educational benefit out of this portfolio as we possibly can.”

The student-managed fund marks a milestone in experiential learning for the college’s finance program. It builds on the department’s strong traditions of applied learning through initiatives like the Investment Society’s “Sector Wars,” where students build stock portfolios, and the college’s successful record in the CFA Research Challenge, an annual global competition that tests students’ ability to conduct professional-level financial research.

“A few of the biggest takeaways from the class included how subjective research can be,” said Knapp.

“Many smart people can look at the same problem and arrive at different answers. Another takeaway is that analysis is not done in a vacuum or for the sake of interest or complexity, but it is done to make decisions. You are not pitching for the sake of being highly technical or to have the best presentation, but to communicate your analysis effectively and having a recommendation on a company to present to your boss.”

“Students are doing the exact same thing in this class that they would be doing on the job as an analyst,” said Sweet. “The biggest difference is we’re doing over a semester what you would normally do in a week or two on the job. This gives our students a huge advantage when they go out interviewing for positions. They have relevant skills and experiences as well as pitch decks and recorded presentations to share with potential employers.”

Sweet encourages alumni in this field to give back by listening to stock pitch presentations, guest lecturing in the classroom or hosting pitch competitions at their workplace.



I’m so excited to see our dream of a student-managed fund realized. But we’ll only continue to be successful by engaging alumni and business leaders in the industry to assist us in this endeavor. This is just the start. So much more is yet to come.

- Ron Sweet



Scan to volunteer with the program.

H-E-B MENTORS MATTER

by Wendy Frost

Mentoring is typically a one-on-one activity, but nine H-E-B employees turned it into a team sport when they learned they each were participating in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business Mentorship Program.

“We’d sent mentoring program information to some of the larger employers in San Antonio and asked them to share with their UT San Antonio graduates,” said **Sara Gothelf**, assistant director of alumni engagement. “Nine H-E-B employees applied individually without knowing each other.”

Mentor **Angel Arellano**, ’11, H-E-B brand manager, found out from his mentee, **Emma Herrera**, ’26, that he wasn’t the only H-E-B employee participating in the program. He reached out to Gothelf so he could connect with the other H-E-B mentors.

The result of their efforts was a half-day networking event that the mentors hosted for each of their mentees at H-E-B corporate headquarters in downtown San Antonio.

The event included presentations from H-E-B leaders **Kedar Patel**, ’98, senior vice president for ecommerce, and **Ruy D’Amico**, ’08, business unit director, who shared their experiences working with the company. Students also participated in a speed networking



session where the mentors presented their backgrounds, and the mentees shared information about themselves.

“It was all their idea,” said Gothelf. “It organically developed among the employees. You could feel that the mentors were proud UT San Antonio graduates and proud H-E-B employees. They were just as excited as the students to get the opportunity to get together.”

The event concluded with a presentation on professional development and a meeting with H-E-B recruiters.

“One of the reasons that I was originally attracted to H-E-B was because it was clear to me that education was something that was important to them, and it’s something that’s always been important to me,” said **Jennifer Duplantis**, MBA ’03, top store leader.



Mentor Jennifer Duplantis visits with mentee Abu Aweys.

The college's mentorship program was created to foster meaningful connections between students, alumni and friends of the college. The program began in 2024 with 40 pairs and grew this past year to 105 participants. Sixty-four of the mentors are Alvarez alumni, and nine of the mentors live outside San Antonio.

"As a mentor I've learned about my mentee's experiences and challenges and found ways to connect that back to my experiences as a student so I can share advice with her," said Arellano, who was a Business Student Council member like his mentee. "There's no one path that works for everyone."

The pairs are required to meet monthly through the academic year either in person or virtually. For Duplantis, she struggled at first with the time commitment, but that quickly changed after spending time with her mentee, **Abu Aweys**, a junior management major.

"I'm incredibly busy both professionally and personally," said Duplantis. "It was tough at first, but it became so rewarding over time. Now, any time that I can give Abu, I don't even think about it."



I have been so impressed with the caliber of students that are in this program. I've gotten at least as much out of this experience as he has.

- Jennifer Duplantis

Beyond discussing business topics like project management or how to deal with conflicts within a student organization, some of Duplantis' favorite conversations were about books. They would share favorite books and discuss authors whether it was fiction or self-help business books.

For Senior **Preston Long**, he joined the mentorship program to gain some clarity on his professional pathway as he approaches graduation this December. He not only developed a lifelong connection with his mentor, **Michael Carranza**, a senior supply chain analyst, but he made a lasting friendship with another student that he met at the H-E-B mentoring event.

"Being able to meet with all of the other mentors was really a cool experience,"

said Long, an operations and supply chain major. "Getting a chance to build my network outside of the university was a great opportunity. Having somebody in industry that can talk to you about what the field really looks like, as opposed to maybe what you're getting taught in a classroom, is valuable as well."

Long's favorite memory was when his mentor drew out on a white board the entire organizational structure of H-E-B. He detailed from the ground up what each team does, what his team does and how each operation affects the business model.



Mentor Michael Carranza meets with mentee Preston Long.



Mentor Angel Arellano connects with mentee Emma Herrera.

“He went from a macro to a micro scale of how their business operates,” said Long. “It truly opened my eyes, and it was applicable to not only H-E-B, but any industry.”

The beauty of the mentorship program is that it allows individuals to give back, but at their own pace and schedule. And, for alumni giving back to their alma mater it is personal.

“UTSA is near and dear to me,” said Arellano. “I’m a big believer in always finding ways to give back.”



It has been very rewarding to be a mentor. As you’re mentoring someone, that gives you an opportunity to also think about your journey and realize that what seemed challenging back then has gotten you to where you are today.

- Angel Arellano

Learning from this experience, Gothelf hopes to create more social opportunities like these within the program when she sees other synergies within organizations, interests or majors.

“This program has taught me what students are focusing on, what colleges are focusing on and maybe what I need to be paying a little more attention to,” said Duplantis. “People should consider being mentors because you are literally getting exposure to the next generation of people who are going to work in your industry. Pay it forward by giving back.”

WANT TO BECOME A MENTOR?

Share your strengths and skills with the next generation of business leaders and entrepreneurs by joining the Carlos Alvarez College of Business Mentorship Program.

As a mentor, you’ll gain fresh perspectives, strengthen your leadership skills and make a meaningful difference in a student’s career journey.

Mentors help students build confidence, improve their decision-making skills and enrich their professional journey. By acting as a coach and advocate, mentors offer constructive feedback to provide students with career insights to better prepare them for internships or entry into the workforce.

Examples of Mentoring Activities

- Provide industry insights
- Resume review
- Interview practice
- Discuss business etiquette
- Company tours or job shadowing
- Attend career-related networking events
- Job search skill enhancement



Scan to watch a video about our mentors' program experience.

The program runs annually from September through April during the academic year. Mentors must commit to meeting at least monthly with their student either in person or virtually.



Apply to become a mentor.

AN INNOVATIVE CAREER

by Wendy Frost

Walt Downing, MBA '86 has had a front row seat to the rapid-fire technological changes that have occurred during his 52-year engineering career. He has witnessed everything from the emergence of personal computers to the rise of artificial technology.

But, one thing that didn't change throughout the years was Downing's passion for technology and innovation. Just this spring, Downing retired as the executive vice president and chief operating officer of Southwest Research Institute (SwRI), where he enjoyed a 47-year career with the organization.

Downing established and led SwRI's Aerospace and Training Systems Division before transitioning into executive leadership.

"I started my career as a senior research engineer," said Downing, who received his undergraduate degree in electrical engineering from Southern Methodist University. "In those days we were just beginning to apply microprocessors to different practical applications. I focused on the automated testing of electronics, particularly aircraft electronics."

Quickly Downing's career transitioned from design engineering to engineering management. Recognizing that shift, he began pursuing his MBA at UT San Antonio to better prepare himself for this new future.



"It struck me that in engineering school we spent a lot of time studying theory. But what I learned in my business courses was directly applicable to my work," he said.

While studying in the program, Downing connected with former faculty members **Bill Flannery** and **Woodie Spivey**, who both had similar industry backgrounds in engineering. He later helped advise them when they launched a master's degree in the management of technology in the college.

"The MBA program exposed me to people from all backgrounds and all walks of life," said Downing, who also taught for several years in the college.

"It also helped me develop a long-term perspective, because as I rose through the ranks, it would take longer to see the results and impact of decisions that I made."

Focused on business development, Downing shared that the nature of SwRI's work as an independent nonprofit research and development organization was to utilize technology to solve challenges for others.

"To work at Southwest Research Institute you need to enjoy solving difficult technical problems," said Downing. "Because if they weren't difficult; they wouldn't need us. They could solve it on their own."

Looking back at his extensive career, Downing shared two of his proudest accomplishments. First, he authorized a mobile autonomous robotics technology initiative. The goal was to develop a vehicle that could autonomously drive on the streets of New York City. Achieving that goal in 2008, SwRI later adapted the technology for military projects. His team also worked with NASA on almost every large major space program like the New Horizons mission to Pluto or the Juno mission to Jupiter to develop either instrumentation or computers for their missions.

“Not all scientifically-trained people do well in terms of keeping projects on schedule, meeting budgets and interacting with clients. That is where my MBA became so valuable. If you execute well, then your growth of people and revenue will follow,” he said.

Throughout his career, Downing remained active professionally through his involvement with IEEE, the world’s largest technical professional organization. Getting involved with the organization through a conference that was hosted in San Antonio, he advanced through their ranks and served as president of the Aerospace Electronics System Society. He now is chair of the Lone Star Section in San Antonio.

“If you want to really get anything out of an organization you’ve got to be engaged and participate,” he said. “If you just are a member and pay dues you won’t get anything out of it, but if you get engaged you’ll find you get more out of it than what you put into it.”

Downing has remained connected with UT San Antonio since graduation as well. He serves as an advisory council member to both the Carlos Alvarez College of Business and the Klesse College of Engineering and Integrated Design. He also engages with students through the IEEE student branch and the Robotics Automation Society chapter.

Giving back financially in addition to through his time, Downing established the SwRI-UT San Antonio Scholarship for Children and Dependents of SwRI Employees in 2011.

“The scholarship allowed me to address philanthropy with respect to UTSA, but also benefit this organization that I’ve worked with for so long,” said Downing, who is one of many donors who support this scholarship.

He and his wife, **Sharon**, also partnered with the McNay Art Museum to allow all UT San Antonio students, faculty and staff to attend the museum for free. “UTSA was the only local university

that didn’t have this benefit,” said Downing. “Once again, it allowed us to support both the McNay and UTSA through our giving.”

Reflecting on his retirement, Downing looks forward to spending more time with his three grandchildren, traveling and working around the house. Variety has always been valued by Downing both professionally and now personally as he contemplates this new unstructured time of his life.



It’s been a lot of fun to see the university grow and succeed. By supporting UTSA I’m essentially improving the overall capabilities of our community. UTSA is a great community builder.

- Walt Downing



UNLOCKING THE POWER OF MATCHING GIFTS

by Wendy Frost

In business, the smartest investors know that growth rarely comes from standing still. Success is built by identifying opportunities that amplify returns, leveraging existing assets and multiplying the impact of every dollar spent. The same principle applies to philanthropy.

Through matching gift programs, a donor's investment doesn't simply support scholarships, faculty research or innovative programs — it doubles down on them. Each year, companies set aside millions of dollars to match charitable contributions made by employees and retirees, effectively doubling — or sometimes tripling — the impact of a donor's gift. Yet matching gift programs remain one of philanthropy's most underutilized opportunities.

Susan Thibodeaux, '85, managing director in EY's Oil and Gas Center in Houston, recognized early in her 28-year career at EY the merits of utilizing her company's matching gift program. Contributing smaller amounts earlier in her career, she has increased her giving as she has risen through the ranks.

Wanting to help students in need, she was inspired to establish the Susan Blackford Thibodeaux Endowed Scholarship for accounting majors in 2021. As a scholarship recipient herself, Thibodeaux knew firsthand the impact scholarships play in a student's academic journey.



For the past five years, she maxed out her EY match to meet her personal giving goal. Today, her scholarship now supports two students annually.

"I did a couple of smart things as part of my giving," said Thibodeaux. "First, I made sure I got my match every year from EY. Then, I'd look at my portfolio for stocks with the most gains and used the appreciated stocks for my donation. You get a full fair market value charitable contribution for your stock, and you reduce your tax gains."

Over 1,000 companies sponsor matching gift programs, and some companies will even match gifts from retired employees, part-time employees and spouses.

"I give because education is important," said Thibodeaux, who met with her scholarship students for the first time this year. "I am a lady of faith. I feel that I've been blessed, so I should bless others by giving back."

For **Oladapo Olaleye**, MBA '09, global head of IT business excellence at Nordson Corporation, it was a mentor who instilled in him the philosophy of paying it forward to the organizations that helped shape his journey. As a first-generation immigrant, he recognized the important role that the Carlos Alvarez College of Business plays in helping students achieve their dreams and felt compelled to support that mission.



His desire to give back grew even stronger when he learned that his employer, which shares his commitment to community engagement, offers a generous three-to-one matching program for employee donations.

“As a finance major, I’ve always appreciated the power of the multiplier effect,” said Olaleye, who is a member of the college’s Dean’s Advisory Council.

“When I learned that my company would match my contributions, I saw an opportunity to amplify my impact — transforming each dollar into greater support for the college, its students and its future.”

As part of UT San Antonio’s annual Giving Day event this year, Olaleye sponsored a \$20,000 challenge match, encouraging others to maximize the impact of their gifts while supporting student success initiatives.

“I wanted to inspire others to give and provide them with an opportunity to multiply their contributions, just as I was able to do through my company’s matching program,” said Olaleye.

Witnessing firsthand how the college supports learning opportunities beyond the classroom through these gifts has been especially meaningful to Olaleye.



I’m a huge proponent of empowerment through education. My passion for learning and for supporting and uplifting others is a fire I hope never burns out. We are all humans at the end of the day, and the best thing that I can do is leave the world a better place than how I found it.

- Oladapo Olaleye

WAYS TO GIVE SMARTER

By giving strategically, alumni can maximize their impact to the Alvarez College of Business.

Match Your Gift

Many employers match donations dollar-for-dollar. Notable companies who offer matches include EY, USAA and Marathon.

The process is simple: make your gift, submit a match request through your employer and the company verifies and sends the matching funds.



Scan the list to see if your company offers matching gifts.

Donate Stock

Gifts of appreciated securities may reduce capital gains taxes while maximizing your contribution.

Use a Donor Advised Fund

Recommend grants to the college on your timeline while receiving immediate tax benefits.

Set Up Recurring Giving

Monthly gifts of any amount are easy to budget and create lasting, dependable support.

Explore your options and support the next generation of Roadrunner business leaders.



Contact Cassandra Salazar, senior director of development, to discuss giving options.

ROADRUNNERS SHAPING SAN ANTONIO

by Wendy Frost

UT San Antonio alumni are visionary leaders, entrepreneurs and community advocates. Whether launching companies, creating jobs or supporting nonprofits, our graduates are building more than successful careers; they are helping shape a more vibrant San Antonio for generations to come.



BUILDING MORE THAN BUSINESSES

Relationships matter to **Ann Bohl Deacon**, '84. They are at the heart of her 32-year career as founder and CEO of Deacon Recruiting and Lux Concierge — and a defining part of how she approaches business, family and community.

“Deacon is fortunate to have client companies that have been partners throughout the past 32 years,” said Deacon. “I am an incredibly loyal person, and we have a loyal client base.”

That loyalty extends to her employees, some of whom have been with her for more than 20 years. It also shaped her personal life. A friendship with an accounting classmate at UT San Antonio introduced her to her spouse of 38 years, **Charlie Deacon**.

For Deacon, building relationships has always been more than good business. It is a way of life.

And entrepreneurship came naturally to her as well. Her father was an entrepreneur, and she grew up understanding both the risks and rewards of owning a business.

“I knew at a very young age that I wanted to own businesses like my father,” she said. “I had the dream, but I wasn’t sure where that would guide me.”

After earning her bachelor’s degree in accounting from the UT San Antonio Carlos Alvarez College of Business, Deacon began her career in public accounting. Working as an auditor gave her a broad understanding of business and the opportunity to work



alongside executives and observe what it takes to succeed.

Eventually, she traded accounting for entrepreneurship and launched Deacon Recruiting. Over the past three decades the company has grown into one of the largest executive search firms in Central Texas and one of only four firms in the nation accredited by the National Association of Personnel Services. Deacon was inducted into the organization’s Hall of Fame for her leadership, innovation and contributions to the executive search industry.

“I relied on relationships and people that I knew to launch my first business,” she said.

Today, Deacon Recruiting serves clients ranging from small, privately-held businesses to Fortune 100 companies.

The foundation of that success is trust — something Deacon considers especially important in an industry built on confidential relationships. She takes particular pride in helping professionals navigate their careers while helping companies make strategic hires.

Her mantra: changing one life at a time. That people-first philosophy extends to her employees, whom she calls “Deaconites.”

“It is family first at Deacon,” she said. “I view the Deaconites as my clients. I know everyone and their families personally. They are good people who care about what they are doing for our community and our clients.”

Deacon’s entrepreneurial journey took another turn when a mentee she had known for more than a decade

approached her about starting and funding Lux Concierge. Deacon initially joined as an investor and adviser, but soon became CEO, developing processes and systems and building the company's leadership team.

Founded in 2021, Lux Concierge has since become the largest concierge company in Austin, opening in every major luxury residential high-rise.

"The time and the energy that it takes to start a company is so much greater than anyone thinks," said Deacon. "In the beginning, you live and

breathe it. Start-ups are among my favorite clients because I understand how critical it is to find quality talent — and how impactful that talent is to scaling a company."

Her curiosity and genuine desire to help others have fueled her businesses. Those same qualities drive her commitment to giving back to San Antonio.

"I believe it is important to give back to the community where you live or where you serve, and Deacon serves this community," she said.

Her connection to UT San Antonio remains especially meaningful. Deacon credits several professors with influencing her career and showing her how classroom lessons could be applied in the real world. One of her most memorable influences; however, came from **Beverly Santos**, who led the university's outplacement office.

"She understood how to connect students with companies," Deacon said. "I hope she realized how many students she impacted in a positive way."

Today, Deacon sees herself in a similar role — serving as a bridge between UT San Antonio and the business community. She is passionate about helping students build connections that can shape their careers and broaden their opportunities.

"I am so impressed with the students, not just at the business school, but university wide," she said. "I'm really proud of UT San Antonio. I think they've come a long way and have done a remarkable job in developing young professionals."

Deacon has continued to pay forward the support she received throughout her own career through both her time and financial support. She is a member and past chair of the Dean's Advisory Council for the Alvarez College of Business and serves on the University of Texas Chancellor's Council Executive Committee. Deacon Recruiting also mentors UT San Antonio women student-athletes, and Deacon presents professional development seminars throughout the university.

She and her husband established both an endowed chair and an endowed professorship in the Alvarez College of Business.

For Deacon, giving back is not simply an obligation. It is part of being connected to the place she calls home.



If you live in a community, your job is to better that community. UT San Antonio is a vital part of our community. Why wouldn't I want to give back to the university that has given so much to me as well as to our great city?

- Ann Bohl Deacon

MAKING THE RIGHT PLAY

Growing up, team sports like baseball and basketball were always a part of **Mike Setser's**, '97 life. But, he never imagined they'd also become part of his career.

As the vice president of corporate sales and retention with Spurs Sports & Entertainment, Setser found a way to combine his love of sales and passion for athletics into a 23-year career.

Setser entered college playing baseball at Howard Payne University. He returned home after his freshman year and enrolled at UT San Antonio.

"When it came time to choose a major, my advisor asked about my interests," said Setser. "I've always played sports, and I love talking to people. So, I chose psychology to get a better understanding of human interactions."

Working full time as a bellman at the Hyatt Hill Country Resort while also attending school full time, Setser was unsure of his future. He remembers looking up to the sales team at the Hyatt envying their roles.

"I shadowed the Hyatt sales team to better understand what characteristics were important in this field and realized that one of the basic fundamentals was being able to connect with people — something in which I've always excelled."

Much like sports, sales can be a competitive industry. And Setser's experience leading teams was useful in this pressure-filled environment. After graduation he continued working as a bellman at the Hyatt because he loved their corporate culture, while he gained sales experience at a computer training company.



When an entry level sales role opened at the Hyatt, he jumped at the opportunity. In addition to prospecting for new business, he was responsible for managing trade accounts, which included the Spurs' account. After 18 months he was promoted to a large market sales role; however, he chose to keep the Spurs' account because of the relationships he'd built with their team.

"I managed the Spurs account for five years and became good friends with **Joe Clark**, who was their vice president of sales at the time," said Setser. "I'd gotten to a point in my career with the

Hyatt that I'd have to move to advance. And, my family and my roots were here in San Antonio."

Setser heard about an opening with the Spurs and reached out to Clark, who set up an interview with Spurs leadership. He interviewed for the role on a Monday, and by Friday of that week he was offered the job.

"It was a heck of a time to start," said Setser. "My official start date was June 1, and one month later, I'm floating down the River Walk celebrating their championship win."

His first role with the Spurs entailed selling premium seats, suites and boxes. Currently he is responsible for overseeing the sales and retention efforts for suites and premium boxes; while also managing business development and strategic planning for the premium team. Setser works closely with the Frost Bank Center's food and beverage partner and assists with sales and retention efforts at the private membership Spurs Club. In addition to his core responsibilities, he also collaborates with the procurement team.

"We put a plan together to encourage the procurement partners that we were investing with to also invest back into the team," he shared. "And that launched the next phase of my career as a vice president."

With the Frost Bank Center hosting over 90 events a year, Setser works a lot of nights and weekends visiting with clients, assisting the premium team and continuing to build on longstanding relationships.



"I joined the council when my son was a business student there. It let me see how the business community supports the college, what additional help is needed and how important the university is to the business community."

- Mike Setser

"I love what I'm doing, who I'm doing it with and who I'm doing it for," he said. "The Spurs organization has such a strong culture and values. They've allowed me to grow my career without leaving the organization. They also encouraged me to give back to this community."

For Setser, he's chosen to lean in and support the university that established his business foundation.

Football drew him back to UT San Antonio. He and his wife, **Victoria**, are inaugural season ticket holders.

From there he served eight years on the Alumni Association board. He later joined the college's Dean's Advisory Council, a role he still holds.

Serving now as the president of the Roadrunner Foundation, he felt it was a natural fit given his connection to sports.

"I've never been in a leadership role with a board, so it's been a great learning experience," he said. "The majority of these student athletes are going into the workforce when they're done. It's not only about making sure they have the right resources while they're here; but finding them a place within the business community when they graduate."

Because of his extensive ties to the university, Setser was recognized this year as a distinguished alumnus by the Alumni Association. "Individual awards are hard for me to accept," he said. "I am extremely appreciative and humbled by the Alumni Association's recognition."

Finding joy in the growth and successes of his team members, Setser strives for continual personal growth as well. "One way to do that is by expanding your network and supporting other organizations," he said. "And fortunately, the Spurs have always given me that opportunity. My experience with UTSA has been the same.

"UTSA provided me with the foundation that I needed to be successful."



Mike Setser and his wife, Victoria, visit with Rowdy.

DRIVING IMPACTFUL CHANGE



April Ancira, MBA '03 sees helping others as her purpose in life. It isn't a philosophy that she pursued, but one that has manifested throughout her life.

"As a child I was sensitive and wore my heart on my sleeve," said Ancira, the vice president of Ancira Auto Group. "My parents thought I'd be a social worker. So, how did I end up in this dog-eat-dog car business?"

Working in her family's auto dealership since she was 16, Ancira took on a new role as a salesperson the summer after graduating from Trinity University.

Successfully selling multiple cars her first week, she had an epiphany.

"This is my calling," she said. "I'm going to change the way people feel about buying vehicles. It should be a great day, but too many people are unhappy or fearful of the process."

At the same time, Ancira chose to continue her education and pursue a MBA at UT San Antonio to increase her educational capital.

"My experience at UTSA back then was dramatically different than what

the university offers now," said Ancira. "Classes were only offered at night, and most of my classmates were adults who had full-time jobs. It was rare to see somebody like me who jumped straight in after their undergraduate degree."

Learning from her classmates work experiences and focusing on the application of business theory was eye opening for her. One of Ancira's favorite classes was a leadership course taught by **Mark Phillips**. She enjoyed his artistic approach to dealing with human interactions as opposed to the concrete numbers and solutions that you typically see in accounting and finance classes.

"I had a phenomenal experience when it came to the people I met, and what I got from the classes and the professors," said Ancira, who is a member of the college's Dean's Advisory Council.

Realizing her love of the car industry, Ancira began exploring different ways she could contribute to the dealership. After graduating from UT San Antonio, she attended the National Automobile Dealers Association Dealer Academy.

"My trajectory has been incredibly organic," said Ancira, who met her husband, **Jason**, at the academy. "I was extremely flexible in my journey. I wanted to be in a position that best utilized my talents."

Gravitating to the macro side of the business, she quickly excelled in building relationships within the community and marketing the business.

"All of a sudden, nonprofits were knocking on my door," she said. "And for the first time I was asked to serve on various boards — the first being the Boys and Girls Club."

From there, Ancira began participating in fundraising efforts. Her first



Yvonne Addison and President Taylor Eighmy congratulate April Ancira after receiving her distinguished alumni award.

assignment was with the Salvation Army. They were hosting a holiday Parade of Kettles fundraiser. Ancira was eager to lend her support, and her competitive spirit pushed her to raise several thousand dollars for the effort.

After that experience she began choosing an initiative each year to support. And over the years, the dollars that she raised kept increasing. Nonprofits she has assisted have included the Brighton Center, the Heart Association, San Antonio Sports, the Tobin Center for Performing Arts and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS). In 2022 she was the fourth largest executive fundraiser for LLS, raising over \$350,000.

“The competitive part became addictive,” she shared. “But I do this to give people hope and a pathway forward when they are in need.”

Ancira applies this full-circle philosophy of helping people in need to everything she does including her work with Ancira Auto Group.

“We’re getting people so much more than just a vehicle,” she said. “This vehicle is an appendage to their life — where memories are made. That’s my why for what we do.”

Ancira shared that through her business she is also able to hire employees and contribute to their livelihood. And, the money they earn allows Ancira to open more stores and help even more people. The remaining funds are used to support charitable giving.

“I actually feel a sense of inadequacy when I can’t get something somebody

needs,” she shared. “My goal is to expand the company to a level where I’m able to make transformational gifts.”

UT San Antonio has also been a benefactor of Ancira’s generosity. She has served on the Alumni Association board, as a spokesperson for the university’s first Giving Day and has sponsored numerous events.

But, she credits head football coach **Jeff Traylor** with elevating her support. Ancira is a UTSA Athletics sponsor, and she champions their NIL efforts through 210 Inspired. She is also the co-chair and founder of the UTSA Helmets and Heels fundraiser that exposes women to the game of football.

Through the support of Ancira Auto Group, the Ancira Athletic Ticket Center was established in the Roadrunner Athletics Center of Excellence. And, they’ve pledged to support the new volleyball/basketball training facility.

“I think a defining moment for me though, was when Jeff Traylor called me a booster,” she shared. “Now I think of myself as running around and ‘boosting’ programs at the university in a variety of ways.”

Ancira credits UT San Antonio with training the talent that will impact this community and beyond, and she looks forward to more ways she can continue her support.



To be in a position where you can contribute is a really good feeling. If people feel I can be of use to them, then that is where I want to be. I don’t know if you can ask for anything better to do with your time in life beyond that.

- April Ancira

ALUMNI NOTES

Alvarez Alumni Award Recipients Recognized

Ten alumni from the Carlos Alvarez College of Business were recognized during the 2026 Alumni Awards luncheon this spring. Recipients were honored for their outstanding accomplishments and distinction through success in their professions, service to the college and contributions to their community.

Distinguished Alumni of the Year



The Distinguished Alumni of the Year award was presented to **Nancy Ehrlich Ozuna**, '93, MPA '95 and **Andrew Ozuna**, '91. Nancy is audit partner at Forvis Mazars, LLP. With a distinguished 30-year career at one of the top 10 public accounting firms in the nation, she is the employee benefit plan leader of the firm's professional services group and leads the Austin/San Antonio employee benefit plan practice.

A graduate of Leadership San Antonio, Nancy is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and serves on their employee benefit plan expert panel. She is also a member of the Texas Society of CPAs and serves on the executive board of the San Antonio Chapter of the Texas Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Recognizing the need to give back to her alma mater to help other accounting students thrive, she has volunteered her time as a member of the UT San Antonio Development Board, the Dean's Advisory Council and the college's Accounting Advisory Board. She also served as a member of the UT San Antonio Alumni Association Board from 2014-2019.

Earning her BBA in accounting and a master's in accounting, she was president of Beta Alpha Psi as a student and built strong connections with faculty members and students that she still maintains today.

Andrew is senior vice president and commercial real estate manager at Broadway Bank. With over 20 years of experience in the banking and

finance industry, he manages an active commercial loan portfolio with over \$800 million in loan commitments. As manager of the commercial real estate lending group, he drafted the bank's policy for construction loan administration.

Prior to his current position, he had worked with JPMorgan Chase and Regions Bank, where he served as San Antonio market president.

Andrew is an active member of the Rotary Club of San Antonio, the Real Estate Council and the Urban Land Institute. He has served on the college's Embrey Real Estate Founders Council since 2015. A graduate of Leadership San Antonio, Andrew is vice chair of the City of San Antonio Zoning Board of Adjustments and a member of the Alameda Conservancy.

He holds a BBA in management with a real estate concentration from UT San Antonio and a master's in real estate from Texas A&M University.

Andrew and Nancy Ozuna were awarded the UT San Antonio Alumni of the Year award in 2023. In 2015, the couple were instrumental in leading the university's Sombrilla Fountain Renovation Campaign to bring the iconic fountain back online.

Outstanding Alumnus Service Award

Glenn Errhalt, '88 serves as the assistant vice president for human resources at Randolph Brooks Federal Credit Union. With more than 30 years of leadership experience in the financial services industry, he has built a diverse career spanning employee relations, recruitment, career development, business development, marketing and community engagement. His background includes roles with the Tandy Corporation and The Capital Group Companies.



Guided by the values of service and community instilled by his father, a U.S. Army officer and veteran, Errhalt has been an active contributor to a wide range of professional and civic organizations including the Joint Base San Antonio Employer Transition Alliance, Centurion Military Alliance, the Alamo Heights Optimist Club, March of Dimes and the UT San Antonio Alumni Association.

He also serves on employer career services advisory boards for UT San Antonio, Texas State University, the University of the Incarnate Word and the San Antonio College and Universities Career Centers Association.

Errhalt is committed to mentoring current employees, prospective candidates, transitioning service members, veterans and their families as they work toward their educational and professional goals.

Giving back to his alma mater, Errhalt served on the Board of Directors of the UT San Antonio Alumni Association from 2012-2017. For the past 10 years, he has actively volunteered and supported the college's student success efforts by recruiting students, speaking in classes and volunteering at professional development workshops.

Errhalt received his BBA in management, where he participated in both the ROTC program and the university golf team.

Rising Star Alumnus Award



Ileana Gonzalez receives award from mentor Dan Karam.

Ileana Gonzalez, '16 serves as director of innovation at H-E-B. As a leader in the Emerging Tech & Innovation division, she drives forward-thinking solutions that enhance customer experience and operational efficiency. Her work bridges cutting-edge technology with real-world impact, from AI-driven retail strategies to sustainability-focused innovations.

She previously was CEO of Tech Bloc in San Antonio and led strategic initiatives that connected start-ups, civic leaders and investors, helping to position San Antonio as a competitive hub for emerging technologies. Her work contributed to the development of tech-friendly policies and the expansion of digital infrastructure, directly benefiting the broader community and local economy.

Gonzalez is passionate about expanding access to entrepreneurship and strengthening ties between U.S. and Latin American tech ecosystems. She holds a BBA in entrepreneurship from UT San Antonio, where she served as student body president and was named Ms. UTSA.

Alumni Achievement Award Winners

Jacob Cavazos, '06 is senior vice president and director of Fair & Responsible Banking at Frost Bank, where he leads the institution's enterprise-wide Community Reinvestment and Fair Lending strategy. With more than 20 years in banking, he has led community reinvestment initiatives, corporate responsibility programs and directed philanthropic strategy and grantmaking for corporate and charitable foundations.

He holds a BBA in management and currently serves as president of the Board of Directors for Communities In Schools of San Antonio and previously served as president of the UT San Antonio Alumni Association.

Diana Cuervo, '13, MS '14 is a managing director and portfolio manager at Blackstone in New York City. Her work is focused on asset allocation and portfolio management of insurance clients.

Cuervo is the head of the Hispanic/Latino Network for Blackstone. Before joining Blackstone, she was a vice president at Goldman Sachs working as a portfolio manager. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees in finance from UT San Antonio, where she served as a UT San Antonio Ambassador and Ms. UTSA.

Boriana Damm, '05 is a managing director at EY with 20 years of experience in the financial services industry serving insurance, technology and real estate companies.

Her passion for clients and people has led her to various leadership roles within the firm, and she currently serves as the Service Delivery Center FSO Assurance national

practice leader. She is the past board chair of the San Pedro Playhouse and serves on the college's Accounting Advisory Board. She received her BBA in accounting.

Andrea Giuffrida, EMBA '22, PhD is senior vice president for research and biotechnology at Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, California. He leads the institution's research enterprise and strategic initiatives in translational science, innovation and technology commercialization.

Giuffrida spent two decades at UT San Antonio Health Science Center serving as vice president for research and later vice president for strategic industry ventures. He earned his EMBA at UT San Antonio and holds a PhD in evolutionary biology from the University of Catania, Italy.

Azizeh Sowan, MSDA '17, EMBA '20 is associate dean for strategic initiatives at UT San Antonio Health Science Center. An interdisciplinary-trained nurse researcher with nursing, analytics, informatics and business

backgrounds, she holds multiple national certifications and two national leadership fellowships. Sowan's research focuses on reducing technology hazards in complex systems, emphasizing usability and digital quality metrics. She has served as a consultant for leading technology firms such as Philips Healthcare and Boston Strategic Partners. She earned both her MS in Data Analytics and EMBA from UT San Antonio.

Rob Wicall, '94 spent two decades as The Coyote, the mascot of the NBA's San Antonio Spurs, helping transform mascot entertainment into a powerful tool for fan engagement and brand marketing. His work earned numerous industry honors, including NBA Mascot of the Year in 2005 and 2014.

An entrepreneur, Wicall has worked with a variety of clients as a speaker and consultant for his company, The Whycall Experience. He also authored the book, *Furlosophy*. He is a member of the Dean's Advisory Council and earned his BBA in marketing.



Class Notes

> 2000s <



Chris, '00, MBA '02

CHRIS ROSAS, '00, MBA '02 recently joined Sealed Air Corporation as vice president of global tax, marking a new chapter in his career after more than 25 years of leadership in tax and finance.



Jake, '04

JAKE FALCON, '04 celebrated the ninth anniversary of his firm Falcon Wealth Advisors, which now manages nearly \$1 billion in client assets and serves clients in 35 states.



Zehra, MBA '07

ZEHRA HUSSAIN, MBA '07 serves as a product manager at Amazon, leading analytics initiatives that support AI transformation efforts.



Yvonne, '09, EMBA '18

YVONNE ADDISON, '09, EMBA '18 was selected to serve as chair of the UT System Chancellor's Centurions, a leadership program that engages emerging alumni leaders from UT institutions across Texas.

> 2010s <

BRYAN MORGAN, '15, MACY '15 joined PowerGrid Services, LLC as senior manager of data analytics. He was also named president of the Texas Society of CPAs San Antonio chapter. As part of this chapter, he helped organize a regional accounting careers event that connected more than 140 students from 10 universities with CPA professionals.

ARIEL SILVA, BBA '17 was promoted to senior consultant at Deloitte. A proud mother of three, she has received multiple Outstanding Performance Awards for her contributions and leadership.



NOW AND FOREVER,



Lauren, '18, MS '22

LAUREN RIOS, '18, MS '22 was promoted to lead market research analyst on Frost Bank's Employee Experience Insights team, where she provides data-driven insights to executive leadership.



James, '19

JAMES RANGEL, '19 works at Allegiant Stadium, the home of the Las Vegas Raiders, as a facility engineer. He has hosted events such as Super Bowl LXIII, Wrestlemania, numerous concerts and all Raiders NFL football games.



Sebastian, '19

SEBASTIAN SANDERS, '19 led the Young Billionaires Club to obtain its designation as an official Career and Technical Student Organization by the Texas Education Agency, making it one of only 10 in Texas. The organization has expanded internationally and generated significant economic impact through youth entrepreneurship initiatives.

> 2020s <

MALACHI BRAVO, '21 earned his law degree, passed the Texas Bar Exam and now advises businesses on commercial matters and catastrophic tort claims as a licensed attorney.

TYLER MATHEWS, MA '22 is a senior quantitative risk analyst at USAA Bank Financial Risk Management. He just began a master's program in financial mathematics at Johns Hopkins University.

DENZEL JOYCE, '24

serves as IT director for the Spokane Tribe of Indians, leading technology strategy and operations supporting approximately 700 users across healthcare, public safety, education and administration.



Justin, MBA '25

JUSTIN SIMMONS, MBA '25 joined Invesco Real Estate as a senior associate in portfolio management. He is also pursuing a graduate certificate in philosophy and ethics through the Harvard Extension School and recently helped develop a case study for the National Real Estate Competition.



**Submit an Alumni Note
to be featured!**

I AM A ROADRUNNER.

Alumnus Gained New Perspectives After Achieving Master's Degree

by Jordan Allen



For **William Di Filippo**, '91, EMBA '11, UT San Antonio has played a defining role in both his career and his commitment to giving back and creating opportunity for others.

Di Filippo earned his undergraduate degree in accounting before beginning a career in public accounting. In 1992, he joined Frost Bank, where he remains today as a senior vice president, leading the Management Accounting department.

He began his career focused on product and customer profitability, working with data long before modern systems made it seamless. Over time, his role evolved alongside the industry, expanding into enterprise reporting, analytics and data-driven decision-making. Today, he manages reporting applications used across the organization to support budgeting, forecasting and performance analysis.

"My role has always been about helping management understand what's really driving performance," Di Filippo said.

"It's not just the numbers. It's the story behind them and what that means for the organization."

Di Filippo returned to UT San Antonio to pursue an Executive MBA. "I went back to school to sharpen my skills, meet new people and step outside of my comfort zone," he said. "That program came at exactly the right time for me. It re-centered me, gave me confidence and helped me think more critically and holistically."

After completing the program, Di Filippo stayed closely connected to the university. He served two terms on the Alumni Association Board and later as board president from 2018 to 2020.

"Education is the cornerstone of individual success," Di Filippo said. "UT San Antonio plays an important role in this city, and I've enjoyed seeing the university grow and evolve over the years."

That connection ultimately shaped his decision to give back in a meaningful way. Di Filippo chose to include the university in his estate plans, with the goal of supporting students who return to pursue a second degree. His vision is to create scholarship or endowment support for those seeking growth, clarity and a fresh perspective. His planned gift will help expand access for those looking to continue their education and advance their careers.

"Going back to UT San Antonio gave me a different perspective on my work and on myself," he said. "I want to help create that same opportunity for someone else."

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Research Forum

Supply Chain Training Can Save Lives

by Audrey Gray



A recent study by **Amir Karimi**, assistant professor of operations and analytics, reveals that low-cost training for frontline health workers can significantly reduce medical supply shortages, potentially saving thousands of lives in developing nations.

Karimi's study, which will appear in *Management Science*, evaluated a large-scale initiative in Indonesia designed to keep contraceptives on pharmacy shelves. The study found that training nurses and midwives in basic inventory management reduced "stock-outs" — periods when a product is unavailable — by approximately 30%.

"We have the technology to manufacture these products, but when supply chains break, the consequences are just as devastating as if you couldn't produce these medications at all," Karimi said. "People are not going to have access, and it leads to adverse outcomes like unintended pregnancies, psychological distress and even death."

In many low- and middle-income countries, frontline health workers are forced to balance a "dual role." Though their focus is clinical care, such as administering medication or counseling patients, they are often tasked with managing inventory.

Because these workers are primarily trained for medical tasks, inventory management is often viewed as a secondary priority. This challenge is compounded by infrastructure issues such as poor roads and a lack of local manufacturing, which requires products to be imported and distributed across thousands of facilities.

Karimi's team evaluated the MyChoice Project, which provided inventory management training to health workers across Indonesia. The study compared two delivery methods: off-site training in a traditional classroom and on-site training delivered on-the-job at health clinics.

The results showed that on-site training was not only more effective, but also drastically cheaper. On-the-job sessions reduced stock-outs by up to 43%, compared to a much smaller impact from classroom-based learning.

"If training is delivered in the same setting where the work happens, it becomes more embedded," Karimi explained. "It is experiential learning rather than a theoretical approach that is detached from their day-to-day tasks."

While the study focused on contraceptives in Indonesia, Karimi believes the model could be applied to other essential medicines and regions.

He has already conducted similar research in Senegal and is currently in discussions to design remote training programs. One of those includes a potential app that could further lower costs and expand the program's reach.



My ultimate goal is uncovering actionable insights that public health organizations and governments can use to address inequities on a global stage.

- Amir Karimi

Improving Decision-Making to Optimize Healthcare

by Wendy Frost

How does an overtaxed healthcare system deal with increasing demands to treat chronic diseases coupled with shortages in medical professionals? Beyond medical interventions, research in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business has shown that optimizing healthcare delivery can significantly improve health outcomes.

Research by **Katherine Adams**, a postdoctoral fellow in operations and analytics, and her co-authors developed a prescriptive analytics model that reduced fasting blood glucose levels in diabetics by 25%.

Her paper, “Planning a Community Approach to Diabetes Care in Low- and Middle-Income Countries Using Optimization,” was accepted in the top-ranked journal *Operations Research*.

“Machine learning is typically used for predictive analytics, forecasting something that will happen in the future,” said Adams. “People don’t know enough, in my opinion, about prescriptive analytics, like optimization. It’s about trying to make the best decision you can with the information and resources you possess.”

The field of operations research got its start during World War II when a structured approach was needed to solve large-scale resource allocation problems. It uses mathematical modeling and statistical analysis to solve complex decision-making problems. It is applied across almost every industry including manufacturing, logistics, transportation and healthcare.

For Adams’ paper, she collaborated with NanoHealth, based in India, to address a problem they had regarding the best way to allocate their community health workers to identify and manage diabetes patients.



Using patient data from community health workers’ visits, she developed an optimization framework to maximize glycemic control for that community that accounts for patients’ disease progression and enrollment decisions.

Using data points like initial and current fasting blood glucose levels, blood pressure, body mass index, number of visits and frequency of visits, Adams’ model can help workers decide which patient to visit to better control blood glucose levels for as many patients as possible.

The model also incorporated each patient’s motivational state based on their health changes as well as how motivated they were to stay in the program.

“One of the findings is that modeling the patient motivational state does help us allocate resources more efficiently as it allows us to anticipate drop out decisions,” she said. “In addition to personalizing the visiting decision, the workers can consider the trade-offs when determining the balance between new patient enrollment and management visits.”

By testing this process using NanoHealth data as well as simulated data, her model matched the performance of existing approaches while using up to 50% fewer worker visits.

“A lot of operations research tends to focus on maximizing profit or reducing cost,” said Adams.

We have the knowledge, medicines and treatment options, but why are people still suffering when it is a manageable condition? That is why I’m passionate about this work.

- Katherine Adams



College Podcast Showcases Faculty Research

Want to learn more about the research being conducted in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business? Check out *Inside Alvarez Business*, a podcast dedicated to sharing the stories behind the research.

Hosted by **Jonathon Halbesleben**, dean of the Alvarez College of Business, this podcast features light-hearted conversations with the researchers themselves as they discuss their work, why they became interested in their fields and who they are personally.

The goal is to humanize faculty researchers as well as showcase how the work academics are doing is

relevant to both business leaders as well as the community.

Launched in 2026, podcast topics have included utilizing AI in cancer therapy, improving healthcare through relationships, entrepreneurship, supply chain issues and AI as an accounting partner or competitor.

New episodes come out every month. Stay connected with the college to learn more about how we are empowering the new generation of business thinkers and conducting groundbreaking research to ensure their success.



Listen to the Inside Alvarez Business podcast.



PODCAST EPISODES

AI and the Future of Healthcare

Arkajyoti Roy, associate professor of operations and analytics

Improving Healthcare for Everyone

Stephen Schwab, assistant professor of management

Global Impacts of Healthcare Supply Chain Issues

Amir Karimi, assistant professor of operations and analytics

Economic Impacts of Opioid Crisis and Mental Health

David Beheshti, assistant professor of economics

Qinyou Hu, assistant professor of economics

Is AI Your Partner or Competitor?

Abby Parker, assistant professor of accounting

How Can Entrepreneurship Help San Antonio?

Alex Lewis, Melvin Lachman Chair in Entrepreneurship

Using Data to Make Better Decisions

Katherine Adams, postdoctoral fellow in operations and analytics

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