

# PENN STATE Smeal

MAGAZINE

FALL 2021

## His Defining Moment

Through triumph and tragedy, Mo Mijindadi's time at Penn State Smeal was unexpected and life changing.

Mohammed  
Mijindadi  
'08 MBA

### The Stewardship of Genetic Data

Smeal researchers probe the ethical challenges

### Real Estate in the Real World

Boot Camp prepares students for success

### Breaking Bread, Building Bridges

Smeal alumnus fights for human rights and wins an Emmy

### A Higher Standard

The Fred H. Schaefer Scholars Program in Accounting



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## Smeal

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We welcome alumni news and letters. Please send them to [magazine@smeal.psu.edu](mailto:magazine@smeal.psu.edu).

**ABOUT PENN STATE SMEAL**  
The Penn State Smeal College of Business is a vibrant intellectual community offering highly ranked undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and executive education to more than 8,000 students from around the world. Smeal is a destination of choice for top global organizations seeking talent that will make a positive difference. Through our leading faculty and network of research centers and institutes, the college is a source of knowledge that influences the business practices of tomorrow.

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U.Ed. BUS 22-05



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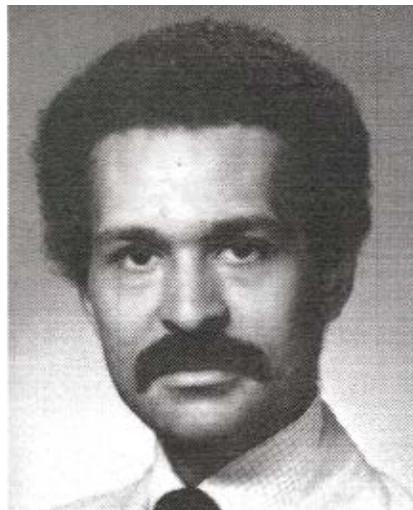
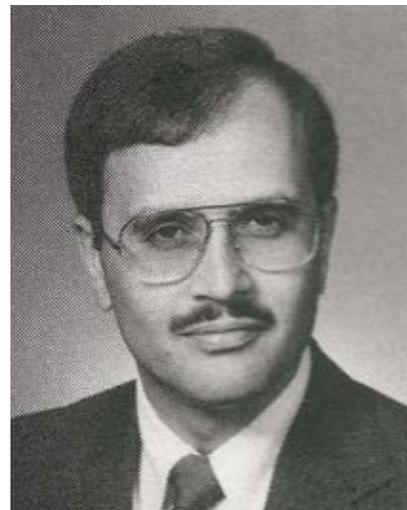
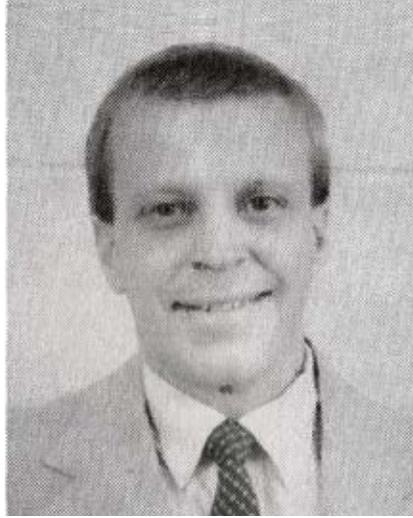
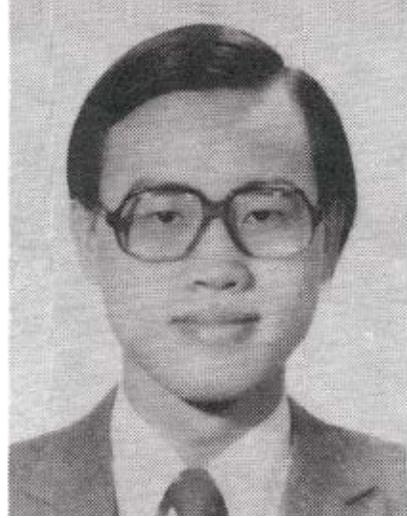
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Cover image courtesy of Mohammed Mijindadi



**SMEAL ALUMNI MEMORIES:**  
Who was your most unforgettable Smeal professor?

Before you made your way in the professional world, you brought your talent, drive, and determination to Penn State and went into business with Smeal. Your first business partners? The faculty members who helped prepare you to make business better — for your organization, your community, and the world.

We'd like to hear about your most memorable Penn State Smeal professor. You might even recognize them here. Send your funniest, fondest, or most foundational memories to [magazine@smeal.psu.edu](mailto:magazine@smeal.psu.edu), and we'll share some of them in an upcoming issue of *Smeal Magazine*.

# Smeal

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**SMEAL DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

We will make a meaningful impact on a society in which too many derive benefit from systemic racism and other forms of prejudice and bias, both implicitly and explicitly.

Using our influence as a global leader in business education, we will strive to make life better for people who experience oppression by virtue of age, religion, disability, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, veteran status, political affiliation, language, family structure, marital status, socio-economic status, geographical background, education, or professional experience.

We acknowledge the global business community as a powerful force for social justice, and we commit to provoking thought, conducting research, sparking dialogue, engaging with others, and preparing future leaders to advance this essential purpose.

Together, we will take action to nurture and promote a culture in which everyone feels safe, valued, respected, and empowered to bring themselves fully and authentically to our campuses and classrooms.

We will:

- Condemn acts of racism, prejudice, and bias
- Actively listen to the concerns of those who experience oppression
- Continuously evaluate our policies and practices regarding hiring, training, recruitment, and pedagogy
- Collectively study the history of racism, injustice, and bias, and pursue contemporary solutions through research and education
- Engage with community leaders to increase diversity and instill a universal sense of belonging on and off our campus.

## What COVID-19 taught us about leadership.

When Penn State shifted to a fully remote environment at the onset of the pandemic, I was confident that we had the people and resources to do so successfully.

Even so, I am reminded of just how important it is to have strong leadership in place before a crisis. I've valued the guidance and counsel of Smeal's leadership team as we've worked through the challenges of the last 18 months. Early on, we made the decision to communicate openly with our students, faculty, and staff. From town hall meetings to news stories to frequent updates via video or email, our goal was to keep the entire Smeal community connected, engaged, and invested in our success, even from afar.

Smeal's e-Learning Design Innovation Group and Research Instruction & Information Technology Group were vital to our transition to remote learning. Together, we created the Smeal Academy to share best practices and strategies for teaching and learning during the pandemic, including practical tips and information; live sessions; and virtual consulting.

By utilizing innovative technology, many of our usual events — career fairs, case competitions, Impact Smeal Day, lectures, alumni events, and more — were held remotely with great success. In fact, alumni and friends joined us from more than 30 states and international locations.

There have been countless stories of faculty and staff across the University who stepped up to help solve emerging challenges throughout the pandemic. Smeal faculty members Steve Tracey and Sue Purdum were among our college's most visible figures, bringing their supply chain expertise to the University's efforts to help hospitals deal with a pervasive shortage of personal protective equipment.

The entire Smeal community developed innovative solutions to our remote work, and I am grateful for their tenacity and resilience in these extraordinary circumstances. We've learned many



Dean Charles Whiteman

Steve Tressler

lessons that will make Smeal a stronger, more nimble business college and a better employer as we look forward to the fall semester and beyond.

I have long been a proponent of a "flipped classroom," where recorded lectures are available to students at their convenience and classroom time is used to work through problems and business models in a more interactive environment. The pandemic accelerated a shift to this type of pedagogical model. By leveraging technology to create course materials and facilitate classroom interactions, I believe we are strengthening the education our students receive. I am excited to see how this style of teaching and learning can further amplify a Smeal education.

As we complete this edition of *Smeal Magazine*, the University is planning for a return to in-person instruction for the fall semester. While we are prepared to pivot in response to changing pandemic conditions, I am excited for a return to in-person classroom speakers, career fairs, alumni and club events, prospective student tours, and more.

I, for one, look forward to welcoming you home.

Charles H. Whiteman  
Dean

## How Lands' End survived (and thrived during) COVID-19: Six guiding principles of leadership

BY JEROME GRIFFITH

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many businesses and countless lives. While no one should wish to lead through a crisis, we should all be prepared when adversity presents itself.

My company, Lands' End, was impacted immediately in the first week of March 2020. Online demand was severely reduced, store traffic fell off as everyone stayed home, and we quickly began to worry about our cash on hand.

Having operated during the financial crisis of 2008-2009, our management team was ready. We immediately froze spending, reduced salaries, instituted furloughs, reduced product on order, and planned for how we would financially make it through the year. We "circled the wagons" quickly. The management team was incredibly nimble — not only with financial planning, but also with fully utilizing the digital tools which had been implemented in the past year.

Using Microsoft Teams as our resource, we all began working from our homes. We maximized

the use of 3D design software. We found a new online platform on which our designers could collaborate. We substituted avatars for models. We fully implemented in a month what would normally take a year or more.

It didn't stop there. We immediately instituted CDC protocol for working in our warehouses. And we never stopped shipping product.

As quickly as we tightened our belts in March, by mid-April our online demand surged. From mid-April through the rest of 2020, the team had to react to radically increased demand. We called manufacturers to not only reinstate product orders, but to raise quantities. We assessed the new normal. Customers wanted comfortable clothing they could wear while working from home. And they wanted to make their home more comfortable, as they were spending all day there. Plus, they needed active clothing for getting out of the house and exercising.

Ultimately, we pivoted twice; once to react to the realities of the pandemic and stay fiscally responsible, and again six weeks later to chase the business as customers' tastes changed and demand surged.

I'd like to think that principles I have learned over the years have helped us thrive in challenging times. First, surround yourself with a smart and diverse team. You do not need to be the smartest person in the room. I am quite happy to lead a team of people much smarter than myself.

Second, agree on strategy with the team. Then, let them do their jobs. Great people want to manage things themselves.

Hold them accountable, of course. But let them get on with it.

Third, communicate constantly. Let the whole organization understand what is happening and, most importantly, why. Get every individual contributor to be a part of what is happening and understand their part.

Fourth, never stop innovating. One of the things that put us on the right track to emerge from the financial crisis even stronger was innovative new product. The team was proud of the effort, and of the outcome.

Fifth, take risks, but fail fast. Never stay on a sinking ship just because the boat was your idea. In times of crisis, new ideas are very important. And taking risks with those ideas is inevitable. But it doesn't pay to hold on to a losing hand.

Finally, be curious. One quality that stands out among great leaders is that they all want to understand why. They never tire of asking questions for better understanding.

I believe many people in leadership positions gained valuable experience from the recent pandemic. The best ones acted quickly and decisively. And they reassessed those actions regularly. I couldn't be prouder of how the team at Lands' End has managed the company so far.

1. Surround yourself with a smart and diverse team.
2. Agree on strategy with the team. Then, let them do their jobs.
3. Communicate constantly.
4. Never stop innovating.
5. Take risks, but fail fast.
6. Be curious.

Jerome Griffith is the chief executive officer and a member of the board of directors of Lands' End Inc. He completed a bachelor's degree in marketing at Penn State in 1979 and resides in Wisconsin with his wife, Elke Foppe Grunsch.

## The disruption of America's supply chain: What happened and what have we learned?



Steve Tracey

Stephen Moyer

### Make the PPE supply chain more resilient

BY STEVE TRACEY,  
*Professor of Practice & Executive Director of the Center for Supply Chain Research®*

The COVID-19 pandemic isn't the only time in recent history that our healthcare industry's supply chain has been adversely impacted by an airborne disease. Whether it's the newest influenza strains that pop up every few years in record numbers, whooping cough or measles and the like, they all have had a similar supply chain impact. All of them trigger a rapid and immediate increase in demand for personal protective equipment (PPE) well in excess of what supply options can adequately service.

In most past cases, supply has caught up to demand reasonably quickly (but not without distress). As we've learned with the latest disruption, that may not be the future state. This should be a concern.

There are several reasons for the situation in which we find ourselves. A confluence of economic and strategic decisions has allowed most of our PPE to migrate to a just-in-time, single-use oligopoly concentrated in supply from a select few non-U.S. sources. All of these are potential single points of failure.

The important lesson here is in addressing these risks individually and collectively. A mixture

of reusable PPE, along with sterilization and reuse processes, in addition to the single-use items that predominate dramatically reduces what's needed when demand spikes. On the supply side, there needs to be attention paid to not only what kind of PPE we have but how and where we source it. In the future, there must be a higher percentage of domestic sources, and both the sourcing and distribution channels need to be more diverse and resilient.

Finally, there's a role for government to play both in creating proactive incentives to enable near-shoring and in regulation, requiring the healthcare industry to regularly stress-test the supply systems to make sure they are resilient to future disruptions of the kind we just experienced. This wasn't the first time our PPE supplies have been stressed. It's important, for the health of our country, that we try to make it the last.



Hui Zhao

Stephen Moyer

### Pharmaceutical supply chains and drug shortages: Threats and solutions

BY HUI ZHAO, *Associate Professor of Supply Chain Management, and Charles and Lilian Binder Faculty Fellow*

COVID-19 drew much attention to drug shortages and the unique complexity of the pharma supply chains. Drug shortages have posed a significant and persistent public health threat in the U.S. for more than a decade.

More than 200 drugs have been in short supply since 2018, affecting almost all hospitals with tremendous management costs and social welfare loss (e.g., delayed/cancelled treatments, and even patient deaths).

While this problem is very complex, involving many stakeholders/intermediaries along the supply chain, two main reasons

stand out: (1) most of these drugs are produced by few manufacturers (e.g., low-priced old generics are not attractive) and (2) complex production processes and long supply chains are prone to disruptions.

These challenges are aggravated when fail-to-supply leads to limited consequences and intermediaries along supply chains add complexity to streamline incentives.

COVID-19 has exacerbated drug shortages. In addition to sudden demand increases and production disruptions due to lockdowns, the impact of trade for drugs produced overseas

brought additional challenges (e.g., India halted the export of 26 drugs and 13 active pharmaceutical ingredients in early stages of COVID to conserve its drug supply).

Where do we go from here? In addition to increasing supply chain resilience, our research shows that mechanisms need to be carefully designed to incentivize more manufacturers to produce these drugs and reward supply chain reliability (Jia and Zhao 2017). Where market forces do not achieve these, government may play an important role in this direction.



Brent Moritz

Stephen Moyer

## Increase investments in supply chain resiliency

BY BRENT MORITZ, *Associate Professor of Supply Chain Management*

Effective supply chain management aligns supply with demand. Most often, we focus on supply disruptions, like a natural disaster destroying a manufacturing plant or delays like the container ship blocking the Suez Canal. However, the two big stories of COVID-19 are the demand impact and the global nature of the disruption.

For some items (like PPE and medical diagnostics), demand dramatically increased. For other items, demand shifted. For example, consider how much toilet paper was consumed in schools, workplaces, and hospitality, all settings closed by the pandemic.

Toilet paper is a functional product with modest margins,

and the products and distribution channels differ for institutional versus retail buyers. Although the underlying consumption was constant, demand quickly pivoted to retail. This caused a disruption, which was made worse by hoarding behavior.

For other items like airline trips, concert tickets, or restaurant meals, demand dramatically decreased. Some of these demand shifts are temporary, yet some (like online fulfillment) are permanent, which requires a re-think about effective supply.

The other headline is the global nature of COVID-19 and the limited opportunity to pool resources. Usually, when a disruption hits one location,

supply is available elsewhere: If a storm knocks out power, utility crews from surrounding regions are called in, or inventory is supplied from a different region. For COVID-19, essential goods were in demand at the same time worldwide.

COVID-19 has shown the importance of good supply chain management. Organizations that made investments in their supply chain infrastructure (both physical and information) and in their people were better positioned. Going forward, organizations will increase investments in supply chain resiliency to be better able to resist disruptions and recover when they occur again.



Kevin Linderman

Stephen Moyer

## Will firms learn from disruption and resist anti-learning behavior?

BY KEVIN LINDERMAN, *John J. Coyle Professor in Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Chair of the Supply Chain and Information Systems Department*

Although we would like to think that firms learn from supply chain disruptions, this may not always be the case. In fact, many firms engage in antilearning behavior.

We studied several decades of minor operational incidents on ocean liner ships. One ship sustained minor damage due to the improper loading of cargo. The crew failed to take corrective action, and, over time, the improper procedure became accepted as “normal” operations. The ship’s crew did not learn from the minor disruption.

Once these deviations became normalized, the ship experienced a higher risk of a catastrophic disruption. An improperly loaded ship, for example, resulted in fish cargo that fermented gases and caused the death of a crew member. Moreover, this antilearning behavior became socially contagious, as ships that shared the same route and operated in the same industry spread antilearning behavior to one another.

As firms attempt to learn from the disruptions of COVID, they should make sure that none of their suppliers engage in antilearning behavior, and that antilearning behavior doesn’t spread within their supply base.

Suppliers should learn from the disruption; otherwise they will not only increase their risk of a future disruption, but also the risk of other suppliers in the network. Those who fail to learn from disruption will likely repeat their mistakes in the future.

# Smeal

## BY THE NUMBERS

Smeal's holistic approach to doctoral education develops research scholars who will add meaningful contributions to the discourse in their respective disciplines.

Based on Carnegie Classifications of United States universities — RU/VH (research universities with very high research activity) and RU/H (research universities with high research activity) — Smeal has been highly successful

in helping its Ph.D. students achieve faculty positions at world-class institutions, including appointments at Top 20 and Top 50 universities. In addition, Smeal Ph.D. students place well among top international research universities and in research departments at federal agencies.

Here's a look back at the past five years of Smeal's Ph.D. placement success:



Mandy Hammell

## Hammell new head of Actuarial Science Program

Mandy Hammell, instructor in risk management, has succeeded Steve Putterman, professor of practice in risk management, as faculty-in-charge of the Actuarial Science Program.

Putterman, who joined Smeal in 2018, brought decades of actuarial executive experience leading life and annuity pricing and product development for both large and small insurance companies. He had also served as a consultant on actuarial projects.

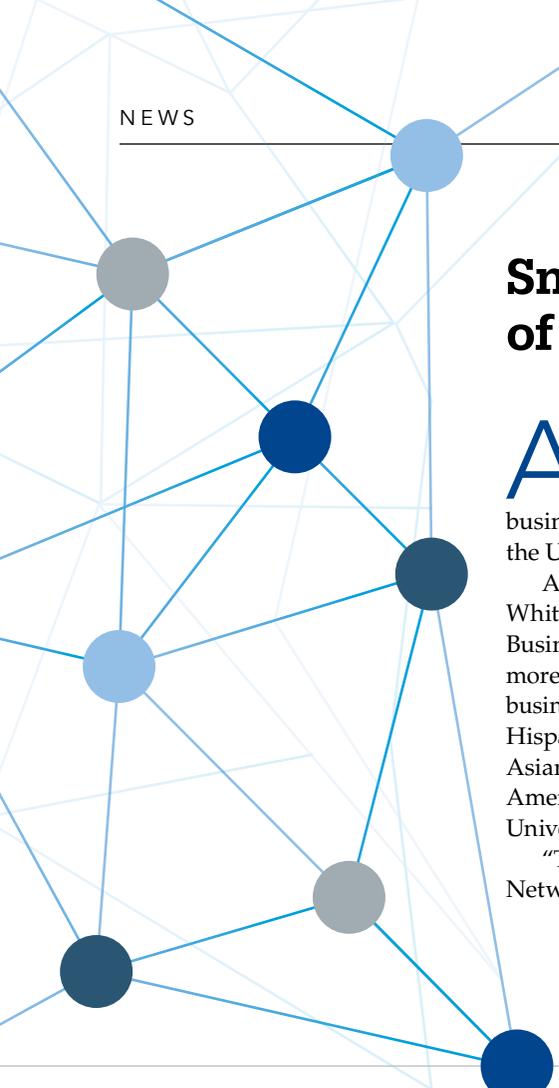
Hammell joined the Smeal faculty in 2020. Previously a vice president and actuary at Prudential Financial, she is a fellow of the Society of Actuaries and holds a bachelor's degree in applied mathematics from Penn State.

## Penn State chapter of American Marketing Association receives international acclaim

The Penn State Chapter of the American Marketing Association (AMA) was named International Chapter of the Year from a pool of more than 290 schools at the recent AMA International Collegiate Conference Awards Ceremony. PSAMA is led by President Jackie Tucker, a senior marketing major, and faculty adviser Franklin Carter, the William A. Donan Professor of Marketing. This marks the second time in PSAMA's history that it has received the honor.



From left, Sophia Dell, Romina Dichio, Samuel Smith, President Jackie Tucker, and Kathryn Parastino. Not pictured: Vice President Louann Zacarias and Vice President Kira Dizon



## Smeal promotes diversity with launch of Minority-Owned Business Network

A new initiative of the Penn State Smeal College of Business aims to help alumni of color who own businesses network and engage with the University.

According to Dean Charles H. Whiteman, the Smeal Minority-Owned Business Network is designed to afford more opportunities for alumni whose businesses are classified as Black American, Hispanic American, Native American, Asian-Pacific American and Asian-Indian American to become involved in the University's procurement program.

"The Smeal Minority-Owned Business Network is a wonderful resource for our

minority business owners, from access to the resources of the network to giving and receiving advice on how to navigate procurement processes — including but not limited to Penn State," Whiteman said.

Businesses can submit their information to a database on Smeal's website, where it will be viewable to the public upon approval.

Visit [magazine.smeal.psu.edu/smobn](https://magazine.smeal.psu.edu/smobn) to learn more and connect with the network.

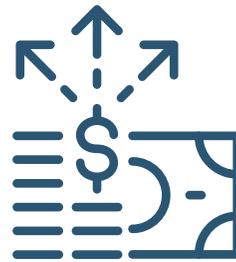
## Penn State Executive Programs adds course in analytics



Penn State Executive Programs has added a new short course to its Leadership and Strategy portfolio titled "Leading with Analytics."

Analytics is the combination of science and art that allows organizations to transform data into actionable insights to enable effective decision-making. With increasing amounts of data available to organizational leaders, it can be difficult to generate and apply the "right" information to business and organizational challenges. The course introduces tools and methods that leaders can apply to real-world problems.

## Smeal introduces new professional graduate program in taxation



The newest online program in Smeal's professional graduate portfolio can help tax professionals gain the expert knowledge they need to advise corporate and individual clients on their tax obligations.

Delivered online through Penn State World Campus, the

program offers two credentials: a 30-credit master's program with courses that explore the foundations of taxation and tax structures in public and private entities and a nine-credit graduate certificate that can serve as a springboard to the master's degree.

Visit [smeal.psu.edu/mtax](https://smeal.psu.edu/mtax) to learn more.



Gary Lilien



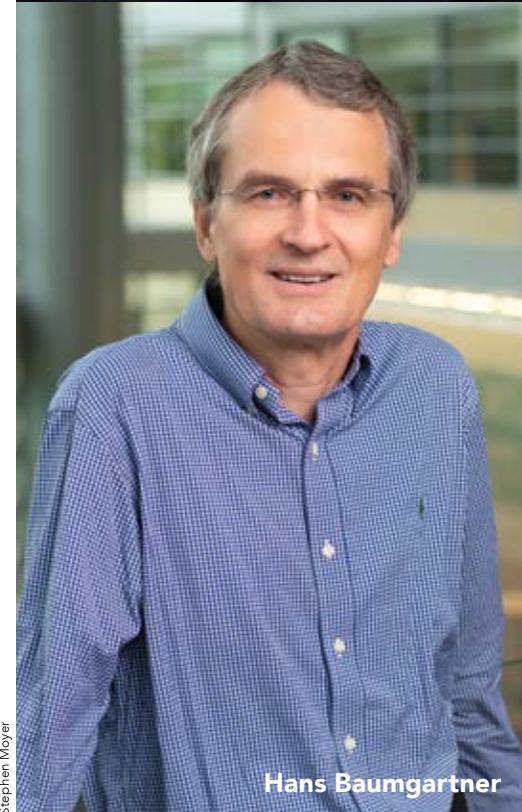
Karen Winterich

## Marketing Department, faculty recognized for research productivity

The Penn State Smeal College of Business Marketing Department and four of its faculty members were recognized for research productivity.

Gary Lilien, distinguished research professor of management science, and Karen Winterich, professor of marketing and Gerald I. Susman Professor in Sustainability, were included on a top 30 list compiled by the American Marketing Association (AMA) Doctoral Student Special Interest Group (DocSIG) that measured and ranked author productivity for publications in premier AMA marketing journals from 2011-2020. Lilien was tied for 14th with eight publications. Winterich was tied for 20th with seven publications.

Lilien; Hans Baumgartner, Smeal Chair in Marketing; and Wayne Desarbo, emeritus professor of marketing, were also included on a Stanford list of the top 2 percent of scientists in the world.



Hans Baumgartner



Wayne Desarbo

# THE STEWARDSHIP OF GENETIC DATA

**Penn State Smeal researchers probe the ethical challenges of balancing privacy and progress in the digital age.**

BY JEFF RICE

**F**or the consumer, it couldn't have been easier — send in a saliva sample and receive a treasure trove of information about family history, risk for certain diseases, and more. Over the last decade or so, the rise of companies like 23andMe and Ancestry.com, coupled with the rapidly expanding technology platforms that drove and supported them and housed and analyzed mounds of data, has put people around the world in touch with their past and their future.

"There were all these exciting breakthroughs happening constantly and revelations of what can be done with the

data," says Forrest Briscoe, professor of management and organization and Frank & Mary Jean Smeal Research Fellow in the Penn State Smeal College of Business.

And yet the ease with which those genetic data can be collected, and shared, also raises several compelling questions: Who owns the data? Who can share them? How should they be used? And, perhaps most importantly, who decides?

For the past few years, Briscoe and others at Penn State have explored these questions, talking to experts in bioscience and business leaders and gauging public opinions. They've discovered the answers are not easily found, though the rapid pace at which databases are expanding

and the numerous ways the data are being used suggest decisions will need to be made soon.

Briscoe, who came to Penn State in 2003, focuses much of his research on the ways businesses and other organizations adapt to societal issues, especially ethical concerns. In March 2017, he co-authored a white paper with professor emeritus of organizational behavior Barbara Gray and doctoral student Celeste Diaz Ferraro titled "Innovations in Medical Genomics: What are the Privacy and Security Risks?"

That paper was based on interviews with two dozen leaders in the genomic field and outlined the advances in genome sequence technology and the risks of

disclosing genetic data. It concluded with an urging of a public exploration of those issues so that stakeholders have options for guarding the safety and privacy of their DNA data.

"What we've seen since then is that the people in organizations who are invested in the growth of the field have looked at the ethics of the data a lot — but usually through the lens of people who are heavily invested and realize the potential," Briscoe says. "Everyday citizens are not as engaged in discussions about the governance of these data and how much control they should have over their own data."



**Forrest Briscoe**

Stephen Moyer

## The voice of the ethicist



Part of what has made collaborative and ethical weighing of these issues a challenge, the researchers found, is both the interdisciplinary nature of the field and the variety of organizations — hospitals, consumer genetics companies, biotech companies, and research institutions — that possess genomics databases. How the data are used and managed requires a deep knowledge of the data themselves, which involves biology, medicine, and statistics, but also a knowledge of data science, cloud computing and how to store data on a large scale. Where an ethicist or another who could pose ethical questions might fit in is tricky.

As part of a separate project, Briscoe and Jennifer McCormick, associate professor in the Department of Humanities in the Penn State Clinical and Translational Science Institute, studied hospital tumor boards, which are composed of various types of medical experts who come together to develop treatment plans for cancer patients.

“We have gathered data on these tumor boards to see how the ethicists assigned to them interact with the rest of the team, and it’s really challenging,” Briscoe said. “It’s super-technical. The ethicist needs to have a good enough understanding to dive in but not lose sight of overarching ethical frameworks that should influence decision-making independently of all the technical details.”

Briscoe and his colleagues found that the ethics training and cultures in the organizations that obtain genomic data vary widely. For positions in data science and computing, ethics training often mirrors that found in the corporate world. And it remains unclear how to integrate ethics into the structures and processes of how genetics organizations function and how people in those organizations work together.

“The more forward-thinking organizations are starting to figure out how to incorporate critical thinking into their job training and their academic training,” Diaz Ferraro says, “but that’s a huge hole right now for pretty much all of data science.”

## Gauging public opinion



Last spring, Briscoe; McCormick; Ifeoma Ajunwa, then a professor of labor relations, law, and history at Cornell University who is now at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and Allison Gaddis, a since-graduated Penn State Smeal student, reported the results of a national survey of public attitudes regarding genomic governance. In the survey, researchers asked participants if they would provide their DNA data and if they would do so altruistically (under 12 percent said they would) or only if they were compensated (roughly 51 percent said they would, with the remaining 38 percent unwilling to provide the data).

### “How can we make plans for our genomic data, while anticipating the future uses that are yet to be discovered?”

“One thing that we thought we were going to find but didn’t was more sensitivity to the type of organization asking for the data,” Briscoe says.

Public views of these issues were not largely influenced by political affiliation, their analysis showed, nor was the respondents’ willingness to provide their DNA data influenced by their views on privacy in other domains, such as finance. For future research, Briscoe said, he might include the question of what respondents would do with their genetic information.

“For most people, the relevance of your genomic data is going to be these probabilistic risk scores that tell you you’ve got, for

example, an 18 percent increased risk relative to baseline of some disease developing over the next 10 years,” Briscoe says. “Do you want to know that information?”

Regardless, those data are relevant to other parties because current technologies allow them to conceivably use genomic data to obtain the identities of those who provide them. If some characteristics are known about an individual, that individual — and his or her specific genetic markers — could be re-identified in a DNA database. Genetic information can even be ascertained if an individual’s data for a certain gene are not in that database, but the data of their relatives are.

“There’s a fundamental challenge here: as humans, our brains aren’t really wired for a data-centric world,” Briscoe said. “People invent new ways to reuse old data all the time. So how can we make plans for our genomic data, while anticipating the future uses that are yet to be discovered?”

“A decade ago, when 23andMe got going, few customers imagined the data being generated could lead to a new tool for DNA dragnets. But that’s what happened — and predictably, it caused some to become more enthusiastic and others to get more cautious. What use will be discovered next, and how will that change people’s preferences?”

## How much should employers know?



Genomic data have also entered the workplace, with some organizations offering employer-sponsored genetic wellness programs.

As part of a research initiative with the Rock Ethics Institute at Penn State, Briscoe worked with psychology student and Schreyer Honors Scholar Nick Banerjee to survey a group of students about their attitudes toward these types of programs, creating a mock brochure similar to what employers might use. They found that students held generally positive opinions about genetic wellness programs, though some were leery of employer intentions.

“Even though there are a lot of protections in place, there still seemed to be a sense of distrust in the employer providing that program,” says Banerjee, who presented the findings in a virtual poster at the Undergraduate Research Fair and Exhibition. “A lot of the students, even though they’d love to do something like this, prefer that it come from a healthcare provider over their employer.”

Briscoe and Banerjee would like to compare the students’ responses with similar surveys of the general public.

“These programs provide aggregated data back to the employer with the idea that as an employer, if you knew one condition or another was more prevalent in your workforce, you could take independent actions to keep your employees healthier,” Briscoe says. “But this is a new idea, and it remains

to be seen how they will go about it while protecting employees from discrimination and also protecting their personal health data.”

Once a company has possession of genomic data, whether it is a 23andMe or through an employer wellness program, those data are routinely shared via partnerships with other organizations. The terms of these arrangements are often unclear, and in some cases, data may leave the U.S. Some countries have laws that state you cannot take bio samples out of the country, but those laws do not apply to data. The lack of consistent regulation — or any regulation — poses potential risks, and that means the burden often falls on the organizations that collect or possess the data to be transparent about how they are using them.

“Some businesses are very aware of public sentiment, but it really is about leadership and what path they want to chart through a very competitive arena,” Diaz Ferraro says. “It can be very difficult in today’s modern economy to find a path that is both respectful of privacy and profitable, because many business models are based on using your data for someone else’s benefit. Not enough people are aware of how much data are being collected on them and how they are being used. I think if more were, there might be more public concern about oversight.”

## What are the rules and who should decide?



Genetics have been studied since the 19th century, and business models that have monetized the public’s curiosity about their own data have been around for over a decade. However, as technologies proliferate and the marketplace expands, the standards for how data are shared and used have not kept pace. The rapid rate at which society has embraced digital solutions to many aspects of daily living has highlighted concerns and created a sense of urgency regarding logistical and ethical issues.

Briscoe, Gray, and Diaz Ferraro are currently researching how the rules of exchange in the genomic data marketplace are evolving and how they might be applied to other developing marketplaces, exploring issues of privacy and ownership but also those of equity and inclusion.

Briscoe has put these and similar issues in front of students in his ethical leadership course, where he urges them to consider the various responsibilities of business leaders. He developed a framework known as PAUSE — which stands for privacy, accuracy, use, security, and equity — that helps students work through issues that might influence how an organization uses data.

“Initially I was thinking that would only apply to industries where the product is about data,” he says, “but in teaching the executive MBAs, almost everybody has data responsibilities, often to do with customers, always to do with employees.”

Understanding ethical influence in the decision-making process is important for Briscoe’s students, particularly when encountering issues with few clear solutions, and will be for the current and future leaders of genomic data organizations as well.

“Business leaders always have to think about the economics, too,” Briscoe said. “Somebody’s paying you for access to or use of the data, so you can’t just take an ethical position that you want to just protect it all forever. You want the use of it to align with the interests of the customers or stakeholders, which can be societally beneficial too. It’s a balancing act.”

# From Happy Valley



to  
**Nigeria**

On his career journey with GE, Mo Mijindadi took turns he never expected.

BY ANDY SMITH

**T**he interview with the GE recruiter was going “lukewarm” at best, recalls Mohammed “Mo” Mijindadi, a 2008 Penn State Smeal MBA graduate. The recruiter only needed two Penn State students for the company’s Experienced Commercial Leadership Program (ECLP) — a coveted post-MBA program that accelerates management and leadership development in select GE hires.

“Like most overzealous MBA students, I was going on and on about my work background and education,” he says. “At one point the recruiter asked me if there was anything I really enjoyed doing outside of work... what brought out the best in me? I shared that I ran nightclubs in my home country of Nigeria as an undergraduate and entrepreneur. My partner and I would rent out space in hotels and warehouses as venues to host our clubs. I took her through all the steps that entailed — from scoping out locations to running promotions and marketing.

“By the end of the interview she wanted to hire me,” he says with a laugh. “She said what I had just described was exactly the process involved in running a complex business. That was the beginning of my journey with GE.”

**A  
rapid  
rise  
through  
the  
ranks**



Mo Mijindadi meets with Professor Yemi Osibanjo, the vice president of Nigeria, at The State House, Abuja, in 2016.

**M**ijindadi’s self-described “love affair” with GE began well before his interview with the recruiter. “Many of the case studies in our MBA classes had something to do with GE,” he says. “That piqued my interest in the company because I wanted to work in an organization with a strong focus on leadership and at the forefront of infrastructure.”

Once he was accepted into GE’s ECLP, Mijindadi quickly rose through the ranks. He spent the summer of 2007 working as an intern for GE Transportation in Erie, Pa. After graduating from Smeal, he joined the program full time and relocated to Houston, where he worked for the Marketing and Product Development team within the Transportation division.

“On a visit to Erie, the GE Transportation headquarters, I was fortunate to have a one-on-one chat with the business CEO,”

Mijindadi recalls. “I talked about Nigeria, the infrastructural gaps, and how great of an opportunity it would be for GE to have a foothold there. Luckily for me, he remembered the conversation! About a month later, our sales leadership approached me with an opportunity to manage a significant project in Nigeria, and I said yes.”

His leadership career continued to advance, and in February of this year, Mijindadi was named president of GE Nigeria at the age of 42. It’s a position that has him leading GE’s efforts to strengthen the company’s impact across its Power, Healthcare, Aviation, and Renewable Energy sectors, and supporting the businesses to develop and execute market strategy.

“And all of this started with me talking about my passion for entertainment and interest in Nigeria during an interview at Penn State Smeal.”



Mijindadi at a family event at Oia, Santorini, Greece



Left to right: Tai Davis '09, Oscar Mejia '08, and Mijindadi at a rally held at University Park in 2008.



Mijindadi and his spouse, Dr. Halima Mijindadi, in Penn State gear after voting on Nigeria's election day in 2019.



Dr. Vernis Welmon and Mijindadi's sister, Maimuna Mijindadi Anyene, at Mijindadi's MBA graduation in 2008.

## The road to Penn State

Mijindadi's route to Penn State Smeal was circuitous. He was born in Ithaca, New York, where his father was an agricultural economics professor at Cornell University. The family moved back to Nigeria when Mijindadi was in elementary school, and there he remained until academic staff labor strikes during his early years at the Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria threatened to disrupt his education.

"I decided to finish college in the U.S.," he says. "I attended Temple University, where I was a double major in civil engineering and business administration. After graduation, I worked as an engineer for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority [SEPTA], but I wasn't passionate about what I was doing."

By that time, Mijindadi's sister Maimuna (Smeal MBA '06) had come to the U.S. to study at Penn State. She pitched Mo on the idea of joining her.

"This was a crossroads for me," he says. "It was my chance to build upon the engineering path my father wanted for me while expanding into business strategy and leadership, which I was passionate about."

To get into Smeal, Mijindadi interviewed with Carrie Marcinkevage, the MBA admissions director at the time and now Smeal's CRM strategy director. Maimuna was Marcinkevage's graduate assistant, and she thought her brother would make a great student.

"She was absolutely right," Marcinkevage says. "Mo had this easygoing intensity, which I know sounds like an oxymoron. You knew, even in a crisis, that you could turn something over to him and he'd get it done and everything would be just fine."

Others at Smeal also took note of the young Nigerian student who seemed to possess equal parts IQ and EQ.

"Mo had an ear-to-ear smile that can't be faked," says Andy Gustafson, associate professor and director of Smeal's MBA Communications Program. "I had him in my year-long leadership communication course. I also coached the MBA case-competition team he was a part of, which competed in several contests during his second year. They advanced to the finals at the National Black MBA conference competition. Mo was the type of student who could lift the spirit of an entire class."

## A silver lining in the dark cloud of tragedy

The Mijindadi siblings went their separate ways after graduating from Penn State.

As Mo rose through the ranks of GE in Nigeria, Maimuna joined United Technologies, working in Connecticut as an HR manager responsible for executive compensation.

In 2012, tragedy struck when Maimuna, her mother, husband, children, and other family members lost their lives in a plane crash while on their way to her younger brother's wedding in Nigeria. Suddenly, Mo's best friend and sister was gone.

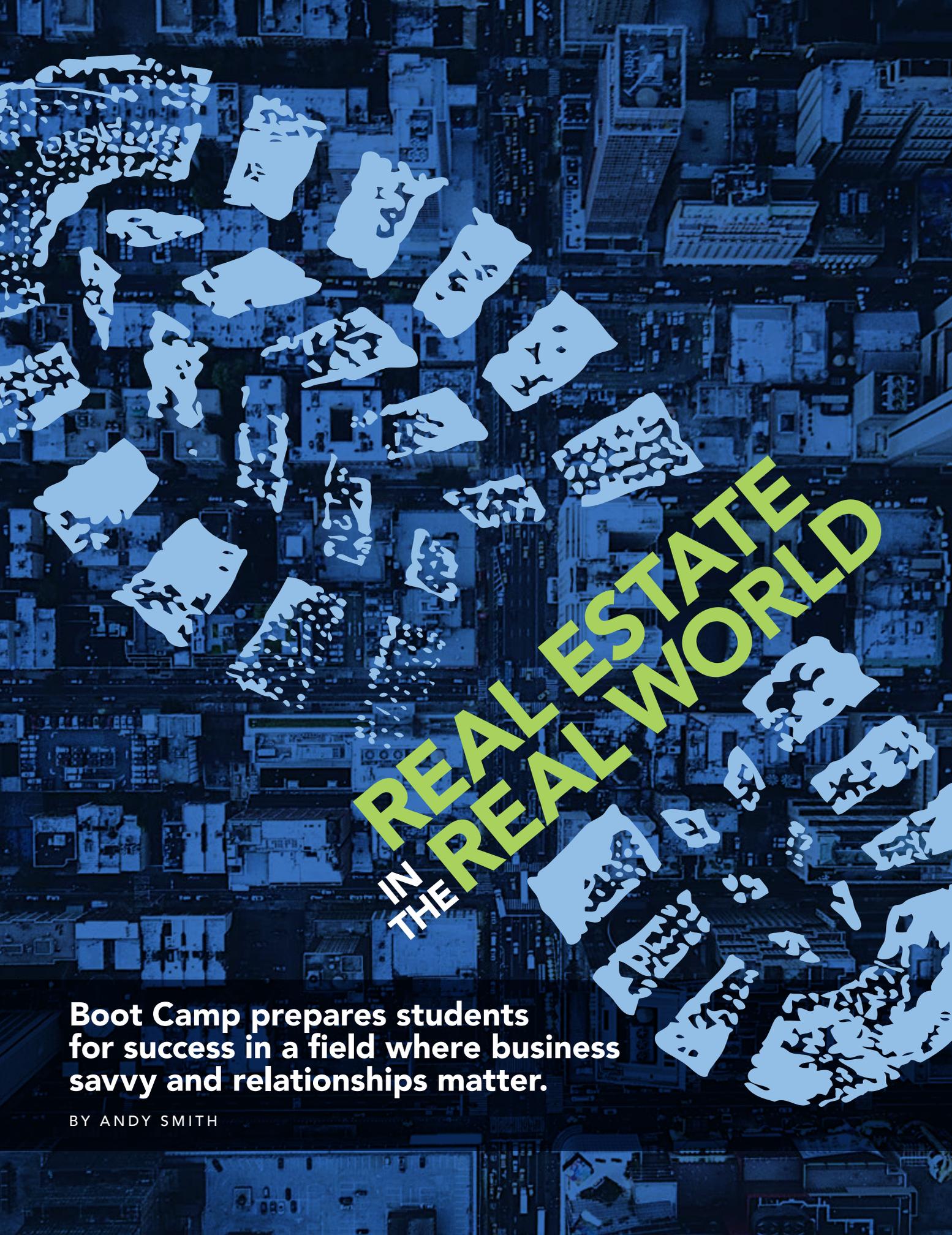
"We were two peas in a pod," he says. "We had a running joke among family that we could have been twins in another life. She was smart way beyond her years and always had a smile on her face."

Following Maimuna's death, her family, former Smeal classmates, and friends on two continents came together to start an endowed scholarship in her name. The Maimuna Mijindadi Anyene Memorial Fellowship is awarded each year to an outstanding candidate from Africa or of African descent who demonstrates a strong connection to their Smeal community and a desire to support and promote public and charitable work in the future.

"I never met Maimuna, but given the outpouring of donations after her death, it's clear she is a lasting part of the Smeal family," says Mike Waldhier, managing director of Smeal's resident professional graduate programs. "Mo has been integral to the scholarship from the beginning. He trusts us to choose the recipient, but he's part of the conversation and he always reaches out to the student afterward."

Mijindadi has stayed close to Smeal since his graduation, even attending a class reunion a few years ago. He describes his sister's fellowship as a "legacy that will live beyond her" and the recipients as an extension of his family.

"The love and support I received after Maimuna's death from everyone at Penn State was so appreciated," Mijindadi says. "My time at Smeal was a defining moment in my life. This was a community we both grew to love. We were from another country, and we had no family here. Penn State became our family." ♥



## Boot Camp prepares students for success in a field where business savvy and relationships matter.

BY ANDY SMITH

# IN THE REAL ESTATE WORLD

It's a good bet that few people have ever used the words "boot camp" and "soft skills" in the same sentence. But unlike a military version, the Real Estate Boot Camp at Penn State Smeal is designed to lift participants up rather than break them down.

"Preparing students to enter the real estate field involves much more than classroom and textbook learning," says Brent Ambrose, the Jason and Julie Borrelli Faculty Chair in Real Estate and director of Smeal's Institute for Real Estate Studies. "You also need to be up to date with what's happening in the field and you need to possess the confidence and personal skills to ensure your success."

Launched in 2015, the Real Estate Boot Camp was born out of a conversation Ambrose had with Peter Coccoziello, a 1973 Penn State Smeal graduate who is founder, president, and CEO of Advance Realty in New Jersey. Coccoziello is also co-founder of Smeal's Real Estate Advisory Board and a member of the Board of Visitors.

"Peter and I discussed the need for students to have exposure to different career paths in real estate as well as the skills necessary to be successful in the industry," Ambrose says. "We created the boot camp to provide those opportunities."

The Real Estate Boot Camp was designed as an extracurricular collection of experiences rather than an intensive "camp" with a set time period. Various activities are held throughout the fall and spring semesters, including on-campus lectures by visiting professionals, trips to visit job sites, and networking with developers and others in the field. Also included are activities meant to improve students' softer skills, such as mock interviews and resume development.

The program was originally open to all Smeal real estate majors but has since expanded to include non-majors and even non-Smeal students from other Penn State colleges and campuses. It had a modest beginning — only about 10 students applied. Today, the number of participants has swelled to nearly 250.

"Penn State has all the disciplines to succeed in real estate, from finance and marketing to planning and engineering," Coccoziello says. "But sometimes the students need help with the softer side of things — public speaking, interview skills, understanding body language, networking.

"You can be a brilliant student, but you're not going anywhere if you don't have self-confidence or you can't express yourself," he continues. "I've had Smeal interns who have gone through Boot Camp and I've seen the difference. They're much more confident, they know the questions to ask, and

they present well. I think the program has been a huge success."

One of the most popular and valuable Boot Camp offerings is a week-long ARGUS training course. ARGUS is the leading analytic tool in the real estate industry. Being ARGUS certified is a huge differentiator for students who are seeking internships and jobs.

"We pay for the ARGUS instructor, and at the end of the course, the students can take the certification exam," Ambrose says. "The students pay for the exam, but we refund the cost if they pass."

Another "carrot" to entice students to join the Boot Camp: all-expense-paid trips to cities like New York and Philadelphia to visit job sites and meet Penn State alumni who are working in the field. Boot Camp students are also included in the "resume book," a collection of prescreened students given to companies seeking interns or new employees.

The Boot Camp wouldn't be possible without the support of the Institute for Real Estate Studies' board members, particularly Carl Berquist, a 1974 Penn State Smeal graduate who made a sizable donation to launch the program six years ago.

"I'm a firm believer that part of a student's education should be what they experience, not just what they get in the classroom...that makes for a true well-rounded education," says Berquist, the retired executive vice president and chief financial officer for Marriott International.

**"I'm a firm believer that part of a student's education should be what they experience, not just what they get in the classroom."**

"The Real Estate Boot Camp provides students with the opportunity to get a taste for what the real estate industry is all about," he continues. "Students hear about this program and think to themselves, 'How can I not participate in this?' And they don't have to pay extra for it either. I graduated in 1974 and I would have loved to have had this experience back then."

Berquist likes to joke that he did the easy part: "I gave money." He and others credit Institute staff and faculty members like Lisa Ford, Brent Ambrose and Mallory Meehan for building the program into the powerhouse it is today.

"Boot Camp is about giving students opportunities," Berquist says simply. "Smeal has a team that goes above and beyond to help these students in ways they won't even realize until they look back years from now and say, 'Wow, what an opportunity that was.'"



Robert A. Ripps Photography

## Boot Camp Success **MATTHEW CARUSO**

**M**atthew Caruso got an early taste of real estate, starting from the ground floor up.

“My father has been in the construction industry for over 40 years with our own business, so I spent my summers working on construction sites, shovel in hand, no special treatment,” Caruso says with a laugh. “But I loved working on the job sites, which led to my interest in real estate development.”

A real estate major at Penn State Smeal, Caruso says it was a “no-brainer” to sign up for the Real Estate Boot Camp when it launched during his sophomore year.

“Ninety percent of life is about just showing up and participating, and that’s

what the Boot Camp was all about,” he says. “Getting insight from real estate professionals who came to campus, taking trips to New York to visit job sites and meet developers, getting ARGUS certified, being included in the resume portfolio... those were great things to talk about during interviews for internships and jobs.”

Caruso graduated in 2018 and today works as an analyst at Tishman Speyer in New York City. It’s a job that has him working in real estate investment, development, and asset management.

“I’m in the Big Apple — exactly where I wanted to be, doing exactly what I wanted to do,” he says.

## Boot Camp Success **KRISTEN CROSSMAN**

**K**risten Crossman loved to sell when she was a kid, whether it was magazine subscriptions in middle school or making a pitch to her parents for a camera phone. She was also fascinated by real estate and enjoyed math. All these interests aligned at Penn State Smeal, where she majored in risk management with a concentration in real estate and graduated in 2015.

“At Smeal, I got involved in anything extracurricular that involved real estate,” she says. “I was very goal oriented, and Boot Camp gave me opportunities to learn but also experiences that would help me get the best job after graduation.”

Today, Crossman works in New York City as a retail broker, representing landlords on leasing their retail assets and helping retailers facilitate their store expansion strategies. She says her experiences at Smeal set her up for success.

“The face-to-face connections I made, the alumni network, the events and seminars — all of it helped me home in on what I wanted to do,” she says. “I tell everyone that it’s hard to leave Penn State without a job.”

Grace Brown Photography





Paul Morris

Boot Camp Success  
**ALYCIA  
FOURNIER**

**A**lycia Fournier jokes that she was a junior Joanna Gaines as a kid, a reference to the co-host of HGTV's popular show *Fixer Upper*.

"My dad is a carpenter and we've been flipping houses together since I was young," Fournier says. "I was always interested in the numbers side of things, but I wasn't exposed to that growing up. Instead, I was grouting, painting and putting in cabinets."

A Risk Management major at Penn State Smeal, Fournier joined the Real Estate Boot Camp and discovered a whole new world.

"Boot Camp opened my eyes to the financial side of real estate," she says.

"I've had the chance to interact and network with professionals in the field. It's also gotten me involved in case competitions, which solidified that I'm in the right field."

This summer, Fournier will intern at Redstone Investments in Tampa. She says that her boot camp experiences made great talking points in the interview.

"When I told them all the things I've done, they were very impressed," she says. "The professors and Real Estate Institute board members have been so involved in helping Boot Camp students, referring them to companies for internships and jobs, giving us as many opportunities as possible. They do everything they can to help us succeed."

Boot Camp Success

**ADAM  
RAGGI**

**A**dam Raggi started as an accounting major at Penn State, but the pull of real estate was too strong.

"My dad owns a real estate investment firm, and I already owned a house and rented it out by the time I was 18," he says. "Today I own six properties containing 18 rental units."

Smeal's Real Estate Boot Camp was a natural fit for Raggi. Through the program, he got involved in case competitions, was trained in ARGUS, attended lectures, and took a trip to Philadelphia where he interacted with professionals in the field.

"I'm a social person, but having the confidence to talk to these high-level professionals was hard," he says. "Boot Camp events built up my confidence and made me feel like I could achieve what these professionals had."

Raggi graduated in May 2021 and now works for his father's company. Plans call for him to take it over when his father retires.

"I had no idea what I was getting into when I signed up for Boot Camp, but it ended up opening so many doors for me," he says. "It gave me the chance to take what I was learning in class and see it in real life." ♥



Elan Mizrahi Photography

# A Higher Standard

The Fred H. Schaefer Scholars Program in Accounting will cultivate future generations of ethical leadership

BY ANNE LOUISE CROPP AND STEVE NEUMANN



“Mr. Schaefer always spoke highly of his accounting degree and MBA from Penn State, and he was always quick to credit Smeal with giving him the right tools to have a prosperous career in accounting.”

## Bean counters. Number crunchers. Mathmagicians.

Penn State Smeal College of Business accounting instructor Ed Babcock, who also serves as the director of Smeal’s Master of Accounting (MAcc) program, is familiar with the stereotypes often associated with accountants. When people think about Smeal’s accounting graduates, he would rather they think of savvy problem solvers — individuals who are rooted in integrity, critical thinking skills, and the intellectual curiosity to be lifelong learners.

A generous \$4 million gift from the estate of late alumnus Fred Schaefer will move Smeal closer to that goal by creating the Fred H. Schaefer Scholars Program in Accounting.

Schaefer, who passed away in 2018, earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting in 1966 and an MBA in 1968, both from Penn State. He began his career at Arthur Andersen and was subsequently offered a job at Triarc Companies Inc., a conglomerate with interests in propane, fast food, and more. He was a former senior vice president and chief accounting officer at Triarc, which acquired Wendy’s International Inc. in 2008, and he retired as senior vice president of Wendy’s in 2010.

Friends and former colleagues describe him as “the quintessential CPA.” A good guy with a relentless work ethic. Completely dedicated to success in every way. “Mr. Schaefer always spoke highly of his accounting degree and MBA from Penn State, and he was always quick to credit Smeal with giving him the right tools to have a prosperous career in accounting,” says Michelle K. Houser, senior director of development and alumni relations, who worked closely with Schaefer to develop his vision for the Schaefer Scholars Program.

Courtesy of the Estate of Fred Schaefer

“When we first met, Mr. Schaefer shared his concern about the rising cost of a Penn State degree, particularly for out-of-state students. Over time, our discussions evolved from scholarship support for students to creating a prestigious and transformative program that would truly reflect his values.”

The program will provide scholarship support for participants while also encouraging leadership and ethical standards, a commitment to community service, and a study abroad or international internship experience.

“I am thankful to [Fred] for his decision to create the Schaefer Scholars Program,” says Henock Louis, KPMG Professor of Accounting and chair of the Department of Accounting. “I understand how important it was to him to help Smeal develop new generations of ethical leaders, and I look forward to the impact the Schaefer Scholars Program will have for our students.”

Babcock believes that beginning a career in accounting provides a great foundation to do just about anything students will ultimately want to do. Babcock’s own career is a living example of that.

“I was just like them 38 years ago,” says Babcock, “but my career wove through these different fascinating places and has landed, as a final resting spot, teaching at Penn State.”

“Students are intrigued by that,” he says, “and they can go down the hall and hear another story that is different but has that same theme.”

Accounting students were invited to participate in a competitive application process for the program in May and will be evaluated on qualifications such as academic merit, community engagement, and extracurricular and leadership experiences. Financial need will also play a role in determining eligibility for the program. Once accepted, students will remain in the program if they remain in good academic standing.

The program will enroll its first cohort of 10 to 20 students at the beginning of the fall semester of 2021.

Schaefer Scholars will be required to attend up to three ethics lectures per semester and will be expected to assume leadership roles in student clubs

and organizations across the University. They will also receive a one-time travel grant to support a required international internship or semester abroad, designed to broaden their worldview and prepare them for business in a global economy.

“Fred wanted a substantial portion of the financial support to enable students who perhaps could afford to come to Penn State but really couldn’t afford that incremental experience,” says Babcock.

“He recognized that experiencing something outside of the United States almost definitionally helps people have a broader perspective on life, on aspects of diversity, and the importance of high ethical standards,” he says.

Service to others will also be emphasized: Schaefer Scholars will be expected to complete a minimum of 10 hours of community service each year.

“The community service aspect is about helping students embrace the ‘pay it forward’ sentiment that’s innately in all of us, and which is already a tenet of the MAcc program’s culture,” says Babcock.

“Smeal is arguably among the most highly recognized colleges in the University,” said Babcock. “And just as the Paterno Fellows Program is a very unique opportunity within the College of the Liberal Arts, we think this program will become a prestigious recruitment tool for the accounting department within Smeal.”

Earlier this year, Schaefer was posthumously named the Department of Accounting’s Distinguished Alumnus of the year in recognition of his long and distinguished career and his commitment to the future success of Smeal’s accounting program.

“As someone who was considered a wonderful coach and mentor, who had a strong work ethic, and who was committed to the highest ethical standards himself, this program will be a terrific legacy for him,” says Houser. ♥

“He recognized that experiencing something outside of the United States almost definitionally helps people have a broader perspective on life, on aspects of diversity, and the importance of high ethical standards.”

A man in a blue suit and red tie stands outdoors in front of a city skyline and a bridge. The background features a large white arch bridge, several skyscrapers, and greenery. The man is smiling and has his hands in his pockets.

# Breaking Bread, Building Bridges

A Penn State Smeal MBA alumnus found his passion and life's work in the fight for human rights. He won an Emmy along the way.

BY KAREN GRESH

**T**wo weeks into his first year as an MBA student at the Penn State Smeal College of Business in 2008, Joshua V. Barr suddenly needed to leave — in a hurry.

Some 650 miles to the south, his brother was fighting for his life. A bank vice-president in the brothers' hometown, he had been critically wounded by a shotgun blast during a holdup.

Barr reached his brother's bedside, and his brother lived.

Although the incident would leave his brother with lifelong challenges, Barr was soon able to return to Penn State. There, he says, he was impressed anew with "a community that was very kind and understanding."

In general, to him, "Smeal just had the right people. They came from different parts of the country and from different countries." Living outside his home state for the first time in his 27 years, he loved that his roommates were from Cameroon and Nepal.

The Barr brothers and their siblings grew up in Sumter, South Carolina. Barr entered Smeal with a bachelor's degree from Francis Marion University in Florence, S.C. and a law degree from the University of South Carolina.

His experiences at Smeal, where his concentrations were general management and leadership, laid the groundwork, he believes, for the life that followed — a life that even includes an Emmy-winning documentary.

"The Smeal MBA program put you in a team throughout your first year," he says. "You worked closely with a small group and got to know people from around the country and around the world."

As vice-president of marketing for the student association, he created events that brought the community together. They included talent shows, potlucks, tailgates, and the Blue and White Ball.

"My goal was to liven it up and make the educational experience an enjoyable one," he says.



**This page:** Photos from Barr's time as a volunteer in Colombia, South America. There, his volunteer duties included teaching young people English through the organization GSC Inglés Para Todos (English for Everyone), participating in clothing drives, and putting down cement for roads.

## A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Barr had barely been out of the country before enrolling at Penn State. As part of his Smeal Global Immersion, which exposes professional graduate students to the risks and benefits of operating on a global scale, he traveled to Chile for a week.

The cultural experience prompted him to undertake, with his Cameroonian roommate, a volunteer immersion in Colombia, where they put together a presentation on institutional corruption.

When he was about to receive his MBA in 2010, Barr accepted a job offer from a Colombian university.

With a six-month contract and only a rudimentary knowledge of Spanish, he arrived in Colombia in July 2010. Over the next two years, his contract was renewed three more times. He taught international



Photos courtesy of Joshua Barr

law and business and served as international legal counsel for a corn products company.

He also helped start a foundation called English for Everyone (GSC Inglés Para Todos). Composed of national and international volunteers and using advanced methodologies, it taught children living in vulnerable communities in the city of Cali.

## A FIGHT FOR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Returning to South Carolina in 2012, Barr practiced in a family member's law firm. In 2013 he joined the South Carolina Human Rights Commission as staff counsel, later adding the title director of fair housing.

Barr eventually laid the foundation for the state civil rights department to be more aggressive in fighting rights violations. He filed multiple fair housing actions in state court and produced the highest number of probable-cause discrimination cases in the state at that time.

The commission's offices in Columbia looked out on the State House grounds, on which flew a Confederate flag. Although years of impassioned agitation had failed to accomplish its complete removal, the flag by the time of Barr's arrival had been moved from atop the building to a flagpole in front of the State House.

When nine worshippers were murdered at Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, calls to remove the flag erupted anew

in Columbia. Emotional demonstrations took place daily, and Barr waded into them repeatedly. He talked to those who wanted the flag to go, and he talked to those who wanted it to stay. "Listening to both sides," he said, "I found issues deeper than the flag."

Barr's job took him around the state, working with communities, especially rural ones. He wasn't finding signs of substantive change. "I didn't want to be a hamster on a wheel," he said.

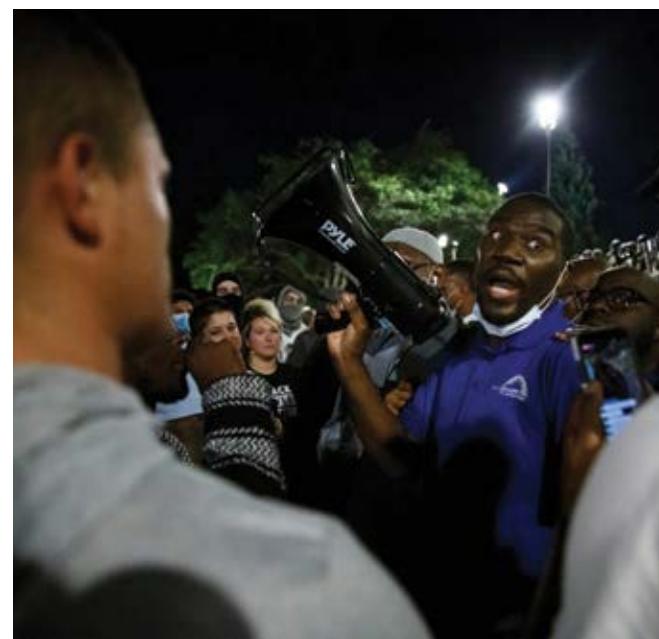
On behalf of the commission, Barr drafted a plan to address discrimination. But, he said, "once it was time to go, people backtracked."

Barr left South Carolina government in October 2015. Two months earlier, the Confederate flag had been driven away from the State House grounds in an armored van.

## FINDING COMMON GROUND

Barr became director of civil and human rights for the City of Des Moines, Iowa, where his office conducts civil rights investigations. "We work on policy change and people change," he said. Thus far in his tenure, he has increased the number of complaints filed in his office by 170 percent and the number of probable-cause discrimination cases by 500 percent.

"When I first went to Des Moines, I had lots of lunches with new people," he said, "but I found I wasn't really getting to know them that way. Finally, I said, 'Just come to my house for dinner.'"



Eventually Barr realized that dinners might help many other diners find common ground. Building on a successful program called Bridging the Gap, his office orchestrated imaginative pairings of diners who might hold very different views.

"We started actively recruiting to find volunteers," Barr said. "Two hundred people filled out a survey through a variety of organizations."

The groups ran the gamut of cultural and political viewpoints. Barr and his staff interviewed 70 people over two weekends, selecting 34 of them to form 17 dining couples. All told, the project took five months to complete.

Results were dramatic. "I thought there was no group I was prejudiced against," a participant said, "but I was wrong."

Barr served as executive director of a video production about the dinners. *Breaking Bread, Building Bridges* won a 2020 Governor's Emmy Award presented by the Upper Midwest Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, the most prestigious Emmy awarded by the chapter. Available on both YouTube and Facebook, the documentary reflects Barr's belief that "most people have evolutions, not epiphanies."

The Emmy is one of more than a dozen awards and recognitions Barr has garnered since his days at Penn State Smeal. Just turning 40, he believes the values and experiences he took with him from the college have influenced his life, career, and even, perhaps, his personality.

"That's where I found some of the most welcoming people," he said. ♥

**Above:** Barr with his Emmy for *Breaking Bread, Building Bridges*.

**Left:** Barr speaking with an emotional young crowd during a protest in Des Moines following the killing of George Floyd.



Keleigh Asbury



Rebecca Savikas

## Your career: The future of remote work in a post-pandemic world

**A**s infection rates associated with the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated in March 2020, companies and organizations around the world abruptly sent employees home to work. More than one year later, many of these same employers are confronted with workforces that have adapted to — and learned to love — the work-from-home arrangement.

Now what?

According to Keleigh Asbury '96 HHD, Penn State Smeal's director of alumni career services, there was already interest in job flexibility before the pandemic. Today, clients of Smeal's career coaches are actively looking for employers open to remote talent.

Smeal alumna Rebecca Savikas '99 Mktg, vice president for talent strategy and enterprise change, and HR business partner at Highmark Health, believes that remote work is here to stay.

"The pandemic has really shown what is possible and how people can work," Savikas says. "Working remotely can be done effectively if the right expectations are set. At Highmark, we are looking for outcomes, not activities. Open communications between employees and managers and flexible employment policies that support business objectives are essential to be successful."

The challenge, Savikas said, is for companies to determine exactly what remote work looks

like in a post-pandemic world: What will physical offices look like? Will employees be reimbursed for things such as internet access or office supplies that support their remote office? How do you onboard new employees or create impromptu "hallway moments" between colleagues?

"There are many important things to consider as companies are preparing to return to work, and it's important that they take their time to make decisions," she says.

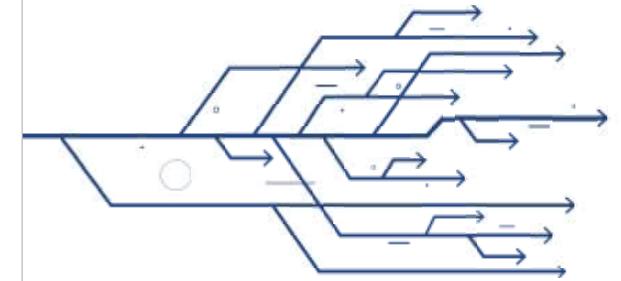
Asbury said that remote work options are just one change employees should expect in the year ahead.

"The pandemic accelerated opportunities in areas such as

e-commerce and automation," she says. "Smeal alumni can effectively pivot to a growing field or industry, create a new business venture through entrepreneurship, or support innovation in an existing organization with the help of a strategic career plan focused on the intentional combination of self-discovery and job market research."

For alumni interested in exploring remote work options in their current field or new opportunities outside of a traditional career structure, Smeal's experienced career coaches can offer an in-depth understanding of LinkedIn and other resources to support a pandemic-era job search strategy.

## Resources focused on your career success



### *Smeal Lifelong Learning Podcast: Navigating Your Career from a Multigenerational Standpoint*

**Makeda Brown '95 Mktg**

Intrapreneurship provides you with an opportunity to authentically leverage your gifts as you navigate your career within an organization. Intrapreneurs represent the innovators and implementers that enable organizations to be sustainable and profitable. As we begin to embrace the future of work, intrapreneurship will challenge us to think beyond traditional career paths and will offer a matrix of opportunities to drive impact throughout your tenure with an organization.



### **SMEAL'S LIFELONG LEARNING PODCASTS**

are 20- to 30-minute one-on-one interviews featuring Smeal faculty, alumni, and industry partners. Download past episodes at [magazine.smeal.psu.edu/podcast](https://magazine.smeal.psu.edu/podcast).

## Class Notes

**Nicole Serfass '16 Fin**, a financial consultant partner at Charles Schwab Co. Inc., is now a certified financial planner. She lives in Pittsburgh.

**Matti Perilstein '10 Fin**, founder of Eternally, was recently featured in the monthly web magazine *Keystone Edge*. She lives in Philadelphia.

**Andrew Moses '07 Acctg** launched the podcast *Everybody Pulls The Tarp*, which features one-on-one conversations with leaders in business, sports, and media. He lives in Oak Hill, Va.

**Brian Richardson '03 Acctg** was named to the *Philadelphia Business Journal's* Forty Under 40 for 2020. He is the executive vice president and chief financial officer of Univest Financial Corporation. He lives in Sellersville, Pa.

**David Maaskant '02 Mktg** was named a 40 Under Forty honoree by the National Association of Certified Valuators and Analysts (NACVA) for 2020. He lives in Boiling Springs, Pa.

**John Price '95 Acctg** was named chief financial officer at Assure Holdings. He lives in Centennial, Colo.

**Betsy (Dudinyak) Kiss '93 Fin** joined JBG SMITH as senior vice president for talent management. She lives in Rockville, Md.

**Damian Finio '91 Acctg** became the chief financial officer for Phibro Animal Health Corporation in October 2020. He lives in Westfield, N.J.

**Tom Perkowski '91 Mktg** sold the assets of his company, Eagle Cap Software, to eTT Aviation of Boise, Idaho, and currently serves as a special advisor to the CEO. He is also founder and principal of Apex View Management Consulting. He lives in San Diego.

**Michelle Harmon-Madsen '89 Mktg** was appointed chief marketing officer of AccuWeather in March 2020. She lives in New York.

**Gary Brandeis '88 Acctg** is president of the Scholars Hotel Group, which opened Scholars Hotel State College in the historic Glennland Building in January. He lives in Villanova, Pa.

**Julie McHugh '86 Fin** is the executive chair of the board of directors at Ironwood Pharmaceuticals. She lives in Lower Gwynedd, Pa.

**Lizabeth Zlatkus '81 Acctg** has been elected to the board of directors at Meta Financial Group. She lives in Glastonbury, Conn.

**Brian Lynch '81 Acctg** retired as head of global security at Vanguard. He recently formed the consulting firm BWL Associates LLC. He lives in Chester Springs, Pa.

**Stephen Kossayian '79 B Log** is the compliance and logistics manager with Traverro Logistics, LLC. He lives in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

**Linda Ianieri '78 Acctg** was appointed to the boards of Webster Financial Corporation and Webster Bank. She lives in New York.

**Paul Maier '69 B Log** was appointed non-executive director of the board at 4D Pharma and is also a member of the Audit and Risk Committee. He lives in Williamsburg, Va.

Pat Croce & Company's president, **Mike Croce '04 R Est**, and CEO, **Jeff Sorg '99 Mktg**, were featured in the March/April issue of *Penn Stater* magazine. The company purchased Hotel State College & Co. in December 2019.



### IN MEMORIAM

**Norman K. Whitehouse '56 Acctg** (Sigma Epsilon), Austin, Texas — December 19, 2020

### SEND US YOUR NEWS!

Promotions, awards, volunteer activities, advanced degrees, new ventures, publications, or family news? Visit [smeal.psu.edu/classnotes](https://smeal.psu.edu/classnotes).



**PennState**  
Smeal College of Business

## 2020 and 2021 Alumni Awards

### Congratulations to our Smeal Award Winners!

Smeal College of Business Alumni Award recipients are selected by the executive team of the Smeal Alumni Society Board in recognition of their exceptional career, leadership, and volunteer achievements, as well as the prestige their accomplishments bring to the college.

#### Diversity Leadership Award

Awarded to alumni who demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion through their professional and/or volunteer accomplishments in support of Smeal's goal to provide a climate of sensitivity, open-mindedness, and respect.

**Gregory A. Newman '09 Mktg**  
**Renée L. Baker, D.B.A. '12 EMBA**

#### Distinguished Achievement Award

Awarded to alumni who have made significant contributions and achievements in their chosen profession, their community, and to the Smeal College of Business.

**John Burke '82 Mktg**  
**Steven W. French '83 Mktg**  
**Rebecca J. Savikas '99 Mktg**  
**George E. Strickler '69 Acctg**  
**Karla Trotman '98 B Log**  
**Patrick G. Durbin '91 Acctg**

#### Outstanding Young Professional Award

In recognition of alumni age 35 years and younger who have demonstrated significant career achievements and/or community service.

**Laura Cushing '12 Fin**  
**Tony Thambinayagam '09 SC&IS**

#### Service to Smeal Award

Recognizes outstanding service to Smeal through volunteer activities and/or efforts that enrich the college community.

**Dr. Jeff Kaplan '07 MBA**  
**William C. Lane '75 Acctg**  
**Jonathan B. Taylor '90 Acctg**  
**Arthur Miltenberger '60 B A**

#### Gerald I. Susman Sustainability Leadership Award

Given to alumni and friends who support Smeal's work to accelerate the integration of sustainability in business by demonstrating exceptional leadership in the advancement of sustainable business strategy, management, and practice.

**Jean Oelwang '87 Mktg**

Nominations are welcome from alumni, friends, faculty, and staff of the college. To nominate someone for the 2022 Smeal College of Business Alumni Awards, visit [smeal.psu.edu/alumni/honoring-alumni](https://smeal.psu.edu/alumni/honoring-alumni) by Oct. 4, 2021.



## 2020 and 2021 University Awards

### Penn State Distinguished Alumni Award

Established by the Board of Trustees, this award — the highest honor bestowed by Penn State — recognizes alumni whose personal lives, professional achievements, and community service exemplify the objectives of the University.

#### Carl Berquist '74 Acctg

Retired executive vice president and CFO  
Marriott International Inc.

#### Charlotte McLaughlin '75 Acctg

President and CEO  
PNC Financial Services

#### Lisa Baird '84 MBA

Commissioner  
National Women's Soccer League

#### Jerome Griffith '79 Mktg

CEO  
Lands' End

### Penn State Alumni Achievement Award

Presented by the Penn State Alumni Association, this award recognizes alumni 35 years of age and younger for their extraordinary professional accomplishments.

#### Emily Zheng '14 Fin

Corporate Development  
BetterUp

#### Natasha Bansgopaul '10 MBA

Co-founder and COO  
DarcMatter, Konstellation, and VegaX Holdings



Courtesy of Lou and Kathy Gatto

## Lou and Kathy Gatto set sights on future with Global Social Impact Fund

When Penn State Smeal alumnus and avid outdoor enthusiast Lou Gatto was looking for a way to get more involved in the college, a conversation with Erik Foley helped solidify his plan.

Foley serves as the director of the Penn State Center for the Business of Sustainability and has supported Dean Charles H. Whiteman's commitment to become a leader in sustainability through teaching, research, and corporate outreach.

Gatto says that while he and his wife have always tried to do things that would leave a smaller carbon footprint, they've only recently learned just how important sustainability really is.

"As soon as I met with Erik and learned about his vision and his mission for the Center for the Business of Sustainability, I knew we needed to get involved," he says.

Gatto, who graduated from Penn State in 1968 and founded the CPA firm Gatto McFerson, has seen the business world change throughout his long and distinguished career.

"Business has shifted to a platform for social change," Foley says. "Today, many students come to Smeal because they believe businesses can provide an opportunity to make the world a better place." The key, according to Foley, is to focus not on how to sustain a business but to instead focus on how a business can sustain the world.

Gatto says that now is the time to start looking more closely at the planet and ways to sustain it for everyone. "It just has to be part of the formula," he says.

Reflecting their commitment to the environment, the Gattos recently made a \$1.1 million commitment

as part of their estate plan to create the Gatto Global Social Impact Fund.

According to Foley, the Gattos' gift will support programs to help students leverage the power of business to develop solutions to regional or thematic social challenges that may include hunger, homelessness, the energy transition from coal

"This gift demonstrates how deeply committed Lou and Kathy are to creating opportunities for our students to dive into the social challenges of tomorrow."

to renewable sources, or other salient issues as they arise. It will also provide funding for things like social entrepreneurship speakers or program support for student interest groups.

"Lou has this very entrepreneurial spirit," Foley said. "He understands how important 'out-of-the-box thinking' can be. This gift demonstrates how deeply committed he and Kathy are to creating opportunities for our students to dive into the social challenges of tomorrow, consider every angle, and to utilize the sort of grit and tenacity that's needed to develop amazing, winning ideas that can make a positive, sustainable impact that benefits people."

# A GREATER PENN STATE

We invite Smeal alumni and friends to partner with us to reach our ambitious \$88 million goal for the University's *A Greater Penn State for 21st Century Excellence* campaign, which will end on June 30, 2022. The campaign's core imperatives — keeping the doors to higher education open to hardworking students regardless of their financial well-being; creating transformative experiences that go beyond the classroom; and impacting the world by serving communities and fueling discovery, innovation, and entrepreneurship — are shaping the future of business education at Smeal.

## Campaign Progress

Through June 30, 2021

**GOAL:**  
**\$88,000,000**

**PROGRESS:**  
**\$82,375,364**

**“In my junior year, I had the opportunity to study abroad in Shanghai. The experience opened my eyes to a world of possibilities. Without that, I don't think I would have had the courage to move to London to pursue my career in finance.”**

**Kate Whalen '08 Fin**  
**Managing Director,**  
**Chief Administrative Officer,**  
**Private Alternatives**  
**AllianceBernstein**

**“Wall Street Boot Camp helped me secure an investment banking internship and has given me a tremendous foundation for networking and development that I can build on throughout the rest of my career.”**

**Brad Tripp '23 Fin**  
**Investment Banking Summer Analyst**  
**PHARUS Advisors**

**“As a participant in Smeal's Sapphire Program, I have the opportunity to define what kind of leader I really want to be. In-class learning is an important part of the program, but we also get to practice our leadership style in the real world.”**

**Emily Irvin '22 SC&IS**  
**Global Operations Supply Chain Intern**  
**Dell Technologies**

**“Smeal's highest strategic priority is to ensure our students receive the highest quality education, delivered at a reasonable cost, that is relevant and provides them with the skills and passion required to go out in the world and really make a difference.”**

**Lizabeth Zlatkus '81 Acctg**  
**Member, Smeal Board of Visitors**  
**Public Company Board Director**

**A GREATER  
PENN STATE  
FOR 21<sup>ST</sup>  
CENTURY  
EXCELLENCE**

**For more information or to make a gift, contact:**

**MICHELLE K. HOUSER, senior director of development and alumni relations**  
**(814) 865-7830 | mhouser@psu.edu**  
**smeal.psu.edu | greaterpennstate.psu.edu**



Penn State  
Executive Programs

# Virtual programs. Real results.

While the world has rapidly changed in the last year, our commitment to your professional development remains. Over the past 12 months, Penn State Executive Programs has hosted more leaders in our impact-driven short courses than ever before, and we are dedicated to supporting you in your professional development journey.

Whether you're seeking solutions for yourself, your team, or your organization, our experts are here to match you with right-fit custom programs and short courses that meet you where you are in business — *and take you where you need to go.*

## Upcoming Live Remote Programs

**Leading for Results: Strategic Financial Management**

Oct. 5-8, 2021

**Implementing Strategy for Success**

Oct. 18-21, 2021

**Achieving Supply Chain Transformation**

Oct. 25-28, 2021

**Leading with Analytics**

Nov. 2-4, 2021

**Strategic Procurement and Purchasing**

Nov. 2-4, 2021

**Inventory Management**

Nov. 8-10, 2021

**Forecasting and Essentials of Supply Chain Management**

Nov. 29-Dec 2, 2021

**Developing Strategic Supply Chain Leaders**

Dec. 6-9, 2021

**Communication Strategy for Leaders**

Dec. 15-17, 2021

Find your program and ask about our Penn State alumni discounts today:

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**The Pennsylvania State University**  
Smeal College of Business  
Office of Development and Alumni Relations  
209 Business Building  
University Park, PA 16802-3603

# Engage **WITH SMEAL**

There are many ways for you to stay connected with Penn State Smeal and each other. To learn more, contact Michelle K. Houser, senior director of development and alumni relations, at:

**(814) 865-7830** | [mhouser@psu.edu](mailto:mhouser@psu.edu) | [smeal.psu.edu/alumni](http://smeal.psu.edu/alumni)

## Get **INVOLVED**

Go to [smeal.psu.edu/alumni/ways-to-get-involved](http://smeal.psu.edu/alumni/ways-to-get-involved) to discover opportunities to stay connected to students, alumni, faculty and more.

## Give **BACK**

Visit [raise.psu.edu/SmealPriorities](http://raise.psu.edu/SmealPriorities) to support Smeal as part of the University's fundraising campaign: *A Greater Penn State for 21st Century Excellence.*

## Stay **INFORMED**

Find Smeal on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

## Alumni **CAREER SERVICES**

Find tools to advance your career, including career coaching, live webinars and podcast episodes, and more at [smeal.psu.edu/alumni/alumni-career-services](http://smeal.psu.edu/alumni/alumni-career-services).

# **TAILGATE WITH US AND CELEBRATE OUR RE-FRESHED BRAND!**

## **Penn State Smeal Alumni Homecoming Tailgate**

**Saturday, October 23 from 9 – 11 a.m.**

## **The Meadow, Business Building**

Kick off the Penn State vs. Illinois football game with Dean Whiteman and fellow Smeal alumni and friends

- Tailgate food and beverages
- Kids' activities and live entertainment
- Penn State Smeal branded giveaways