

The Bizbod

2025



TIM
HAMMES:

A MATCH-POINT
MINDSET FOR
SUCCESS

The Bizbod



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Our Mission

The Washburn University Gregory D. and Ronda K. Brenneman School of Business provides knowledge and personalized experiences to engage students who will enhance the economic vitality of businesses in the region and beyond.

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The Bizbod is published annually by the Washburn University Brenneman School of Business, 1700 SW College Avenue, Topeka, KS 66621. This publication is distributed to students, alumni and friends of the School.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Change is good — Really, it is!
That’s what I keep telling myself – and this year, it’s absolutely true! The School has seen some big, exciting changes lately, and even more are on the way.

First, a heartfelt thanks to Greg and Ronda Brenneman, whose generosity and vision are transforming Washburn. Because of their incredible support, we’re proud to have a new name and an enduring connection to the Brenneman family. It’s an honor that inspires us every day.

Second, after more than 50 years in the Henderson Learning Resources Center, we’re giving our home a full makeover! Renovations are underway to create the new Advisors Excel Hall, a modern, student-focused space that will take learning and collaboration to the next level. While construction continues, our offices have temporarily moved to the former Foundation building on MacVicar, and our classes are spread across campus. (So yes, we’re all getting our steps in!) We can’t wait to move back into our completely renovated home in January 2027.

Third, our amazing faculty continue to be the heart of everything we do. This year we celebrated several well-earned retirements and welcomed three new faculty members who bring fresh ideas, energy and expertise. We’ll keep building our team to ensure students have the best possible learning experience.

As you’ll see in the stories that follow, our students are shining in the classroom, in international competitions, on the athletic fields and in their careers. Enrollment is climbing, our programs are thriving and your generous support keeps it all moving forward.

On behalf of everyone in the School, thank you for believing in our mission and our students. The future is bright, and we’re so glad you’re part of this journey with us!

With gratitude
and excitement,

David L. Sollars
Dean and Professor



TIM HAMMES

A MATCH-POINT MINDSET FOR SUCCESS

two-time ITA Cup Doubles National Champion, first with Santiago Rendon in 2023 and then with Matthew Earle in 2024. In 2025 alone, he earned MIAA/GAC Player of the Year honors, captured the ITA Central Region Singles Championship and was named the ITA Central Region Senior Player of the Year – all while compiling an impressive 27-9 singles record and 24-10 doubles record.

Off the court, Hammes's game is equally strong. A consistent MIAA Scholar-Athlete and Academic Honor Roll member, he capped his undergraduate years by being named a CSC Academic All-American, an honor that recognizes the nation's most accomplished student-athletes.

Now in the MBA program, Hammes continues to push for excellence, citing the value of strategic thinking and

leadership skills that complement the mental toughness he's honed through sports. Competition, he noted, has always been a motivator. Whether facing nationally-ranked opponents or pushing through a challenging course load, he thrives on testing himself against high standards.

"The skills overlap more than you'd think," Hammes explained. "In both business and tennis, you have to make decisions quickly, think several steps ahead and adapt when things don't go as planned."

That drive to measure progress, reset goals and keep improving has carried over seamlessly into his graduate studies, fueling both his academic achievements and his ongoing training for professional tennis.

With his collegiate tennis career behind him, Hammes is channeling his trademark discipline into two new arenas:

completing his MBA and making it to the pros. He's traded in the Washburn team schedule for solo workouts, independent training sessions and coursework that challenges him to think beyond the baseline.

"Right now, my focus is twofold," Hammes said. "I'm working toward earning my MBA because I know those skills will be critical long-term, and at the same time I'm training and competing with the goal of playing professionally."

That same blend of preparation, strategy and resilience continues to guide him forward.

Whether studying for an exam or chasing down a cross-court forehand, Hammes applies the same mindset: success comes from thinking ahead, adapting under pressure and never backing away from a challenge. After all, Hammes knows success isn't about one big win – it's about raising his game, one point at a time.

When Tim Hammes steps onto the tennis court, there's no mistaking his focus. If you look a little closer, you'll see that same laser-like determination in the classroom as well. A standout graduate of the BBA program and now a current MBA student, Hammes has built a record of achievement that any competitor – athletic or academic – would envy.

Growing up in Germany, Hammes always had a racket in hand. Tennis became more than a hobby; it was a discipline that taught him focus, persistence and adaptability – skills that would serve him well far beyond the

baseline.

When the opportunity arose to play collegiate tennis in the United States, Washburn's mix of strong academics and competitive athletics proved to be a perfect match.

"I wanted a place where I could excel in both," Hammes said. "Washburn really gave me that balance – I've been able to compete at the highest level in tennis while also pushing myself academically."

That "highest level" is no exaggeration; his record reads like a highlight reel. Hammes is a three-time ITA All-American in singles, a two-time ITA All-American in doubles and a

"I wanted a place where I could excel in both. Washburn really gave me that balance – I've been able to compete at the highest level in tennis while also pushing myself academically."





Now Brenneman by Name, Same Excellence Remains

On Washburn University's 160th birthday in February, alumni Greg and Ronda Brenneman announced a historic \$50 million gift to the university. Their record-setting gift will provide base funding for a new healthcare education facility, and will, in time, transform the Business and Nursing schools. The School of Business is now the Gregory D. and Ronda K. Brenneman School of Business.

The Brennemans met while attending Washburn and married shortly after graduation. Ronda earned a Bachelor's in Education from Washburn in 1984 and went on to be a teacher. Greg holds a BBA in Accounting and Finance from Washburn, an MBA with distinction from Harvard Business School and he was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Commerce from Washburn in 1999. He currently serves as Executive Chairman of CCMP Capital and is the Lead Director for Home Depot's Board of Directors. He is also the founder of Turnworks, Inc., his personal investment firm focused on corporate turnarounds.



5 THINGS I've Learned

Ashley Dreher is a junior from Topeka, Kansas, triple-majoring in Finance, Management and Marketing. She was awarded the 2025 James D. Pollak Memorial Scholarship, the only "full ride" Brenneman Business scholarship.

1. The Brenneman School of Business inspires students to lead with purpose.

In high school, I balanced multiple jobs, active involvement in several clubs, volunteer commitments and a full academic load. I carried that same drive into college, but Washburn encouraged me to reflect on why I was pushing myself so hard. Through engaging coursework and supportive mentorship, I discovered how my skills and passions could shape a meaningful and rewarding career. My mentors didn't just guide me academically; they challenged me to think more broadly and expand my knowledge base, which inspired me to take on triple-majors and graduate early.

2. Time is an invaluable resource that you must learn to manage.

At Washburn, I learned the importance of embracing the present moment. Managing multiple commitments at once made it clear to me that time is one of the most valuable and limited resources we have. Brenneman Business showed me how to dedicate my energy towards what truly matters by aligning my efforts with my values

and goals for my professional future. I learned not just to manage my time, but to take control of it by organizing my daily schedule with intention, minimizing procrastination and dedicating time to both my personal and academic success.

3. Washburn provides a supportive culture, which encourages students to seek help.

Raised within an independent mindset, I always saw asking for help as a last resort. My mentality shifted after meeting the Brenneman Business faculty. I realized that the professors at Washburn aren't just instructors; they're mentors who genuinely care and are deeply invested in student success. They create an environment where it is safe to ask questions, make mistakes and grow. That level of support helped me realize that real growth is often rooted in the willingness to lean on others who are invested in your success.

4. The true measure of character is how you show up when no one is watching.

Although it's easy to show up when there is recognition involved, my true growth as a person came from

the quiet, unseen moments. All of the late nights studying, extra work shifts and small daily choices I made developed the habits and mindset that prepared me for success beyond the classroom. Ultimately, no one is entitled to success – true progress only comes to those who are willing to put in the work every day.

5. Washburn invests in student success by opening doors beyond the classroom.

Thanks to the generous scholarship support from donors, I've been able to take advantage of valuable opportunities that have enriched my college experience. These scholarships relieved the financial burden, giving me the incredible opportunity to complete my degree and take the next step toward my career. Furthermore, Washburn has played a vital role in my college career by providing access to guest speakers, workshops and networking events that have helped me form new professional connections and develop real-world skills. I'm incredibly grateful for the support of the Brenneman School of Business and the significant impact it has had on my college journey.

BRENNEMAN BUSINESS Excellent 2025

The Brenneman School of Business Excellent Eight Awards were created to reward and honor some of our most hard-working students in each Business major – Accounting, Business Data Analytics, Economics, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Finance, International Business, Management and Marketing. The awards acknowledge students who best represent the School's core values – honesty, trust, fairness, respect, integrity and responsibility.

These awards are determined by the Brenneman School of Business Student Affairs Committee, consisting of: Amber Ybarra, Rick LeJuerne, Dr. David Price, Dr. Rosemary Walker, Dr. Barbara Scofield and Dr. Liviu Florea.

Mohammed Asfaque

Rautahat, Nepal

What has been your favorite Business class so far?

My favorite class is any class taught by Dr. Nizovtsev. His teaching style makes everything fun, easy and interactive – it's what really drew me in.

What is your dream job?

My dream job would be to get paid just for thinking. Imagine sitting on a couch, reflecting on an open problem in math or economics, and suddenly a groundbreaking idea strikes. I jot it down, the world goes wild and I get paid millions for it!



ECONOMICS

Alexa Kaufman

Sabetha, Kansas

What has been your favorite Business class so far?

My favorite class so far was Foundations of Data Analysis with Dr. Hoover King. The skills I gained were incredibly useful in my summer internship and helped me become more of an asset.

What is your dream job?

My dream job would allow me to build strong global partnerships and travel regularly. Whether that's in international business development, partnership coordination or a support role that helps sales teams succeed behind the scenes. I love connecting with people from different cultures and contributing to global growth through collaboration.



INTERNATIONAL BIZ.

Braden Colley

Topeka, Kansas

What has been your favorite Business class so far?

My favorite class has been Strategic Management with Dr. Juma. I really enjoyed the course simulation; it felt like we put all of our underlying knowledge from previous courses together to see the full flow of business and business decisions.

What is your dream job?

My dream job is to eventually open my own firm with accounting and financial advisory services. I feel like there is a lot of potential earnings and savings that are left in the table by the average person, and I would like to help people make the most of their money.



ACCOUNTING

Devin Frittsch

Omaha, Nebraska

What has been your favorite Business class so far?

My favorite class so far has been Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation with Dr. Price. This class was interactive, challenged me creatively and gave me insight and experience in real-world scenarios.

What is your dream job?

My dream job is to be a serial entrepreneur. I enjoy the process of building something new and turning ideas into businesses. I want to be able to focus on opportunities that excite me and create businesses I truly believe in.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Kyler Gronewaller

Greeley, Kansas

What has been your favorite Business class so far?

My favorite Business class so far has been Legal Environment of Business with Professor LeJuerne. He made the class exciting with little skits about real world cases and I found learning about the history of landmark cases extremely interesting.

What is your dream job?

My dream job would be a job that I can not only enjoy myself but also to enjoy the company of my coworkers. I would like to build camaraderie with them and still be able to do my job to my highest ability.



MANAGEMENT

Kristin Ng

Topeka, Kansas

What has been your favorite Business class so far?

My favorite Business class has been Data Discovery and Management with Dr. Harnowo. The hands-on exercises during lectures and final project encouraged independent learning and helped me gain a deeper understanding of the material in ways that are applicable to my future career.

What is your dream job?

My dream job is to work as a financial analyst and eventually advance into a leadership role, such as a vice president or director, within a company.



DATA ANALYTICS

Jessica Filkin

Council Grove, Kansas

What has been your favorite Business class so far?

My favorite so far was Production and Operations Management with Dr. Harnowo. His classes are highly interactive and he is hands-down the best professor I've ever had.

What is your dream job?

My dream role would include a combination of numerical analysis and data compilation, active engagement, client/customer interaction, and opportunities for creativity – whether through hands-on work or planning and scheduling. I have always been most interested in residential construction, food and beverage, travel and sports industries.



FINANCE

Dacey Vanderbilt

Wamego, Kansas

What has been your favorite Business class so far?

My favorite Business class so far was Consumer Behavior with Dr. Price. I liked that I got the chance to examine a real business's clientele and use psychological and sociological theories to understand why people buy certain products.

What is your dream job?

My dream job is to manage a curated vintage clothing/coffee shop, but more specifically be the creative director of all the marketing, design, and social media aspects. I've worked in coffee for almost three years and really enjoy the artistry of it and how it brings a community together.



MARKETING

2024 PITCH COMPETITION LET YOUR BIG IDEA SHINE BRIGHT



1ST PLACE
PEYTON PRICE

Peyton Price won first prize and \$8,000 for her presentation of HydraKick, a new alcoholic beverage infused with electrolytes.

The annual Entrepreneurship Pitch Competition gives students the opportunity to present their new business idea to a judging panel in three minutes or less. In 2024, 105 students from Washburn University and Washburn Institute of Technology competed in the knockout round for 12 semi-finalist slots. The second round further narrowed down the competition to five finalists who competed for cash prizes provided by Go Topeka.



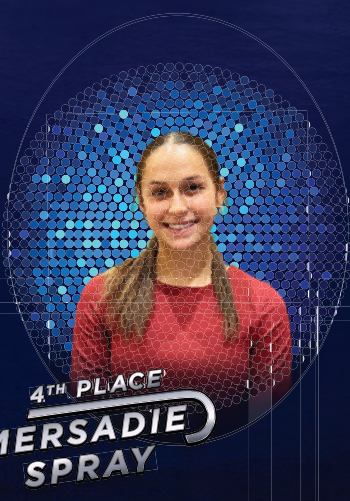
2ND PLACE
CHASE RYCKMAN

Chase Ryckman earned second place and \$6,000 for his pitch for Sky Safe Signal, a mini drone distress signal.



3RD PLACE
EMILY HARMON

Emily Harmon took third prize with \$4,000 for Pocket Keys, a trumpet-inspired fidget toy.



4TH PLACE
MERSADIE SPRAY

Mersadie Spray came in fourth place with her Athlete4Christ Bible study app. and received \$2,000 in prize money.



5TH PLACE
KODY NICKLIN

Kody Nicklin took fifth place and a \$1,000 prize for tiny homes disaster relief.

Reimagine your Community



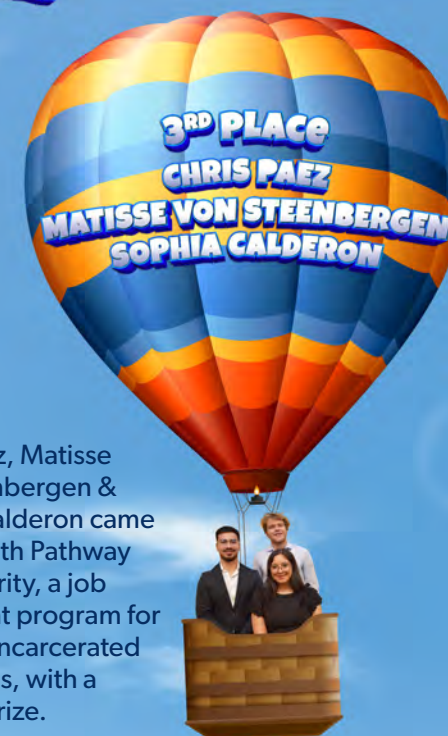
1ST PLACE
EMILY HARMON

Emily Harmon won first prize and \$7,000 for her presentation of Pocket Keys, her trumpet-inspired fidget toy.



2ND PLACE
REBEKAH MCINTOSH
NICK PETRELLA

Rebekah McIntosh & Nick Petrella took second prize and \$5,000 for their idea of EmpowerEd, an organization to provide job training and placement for individuals with disabilities.



3RD PLACE
CHRIS PAEZ
MATISSE VON STEENBERGEN
SOPHIA CALDERON

Chris Paez, Matisse Von Steenberg & Sophia Calderon came in third with Pathway to Prosperity, a job placement program for formerly incarcerated individuals, with a \$4,000 prize.



4TH PLACE
KODY NICKLIN

Kody Nicklin won fourth place and a \$3,000 prize for Mobile Hope, his idea to build tiny homes for people recovering from natural disasters.

The Community Innovation Challenge encourages students to develop business ideas focused on helping solve social issues in our community. In 2025, more than 50 student teams submitted proposals, which were scored by a panel of judges and narrowed down to 12 semi-finalists. The top four semi-finalists moved on to compete in the finals for cash prizes generously provided by the Topeka Community Foundation.



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RICHARD G. VOGEL

Gavan Bergman

VIRGINIA H. WILBERT

Alison Hill

W. GLEN WINCHELL

Abbie Flentie

DONALD C. WRIGHT

Kathleen Dolan

MARK & SHEREE YARDLEY

Zachary Vandervoort



Thanks to the generosity of many alumni, community leaders and organizations, the Brenneman School of Business awarded more than \$522,606 in scholarships to more than 250 incoming and current business students.

STUDENT BUSINESS ACCELERATOR FUND

The Student Business Accelerator Fund (SBAF) provides funding to assist with development and startup costs for student entrepreneurial ventures. The fund, which is supported by generous alumni, awarded \$38,900 to student entrepreneurs in 2025.



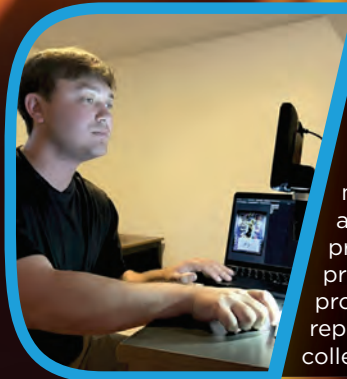
Jordan and Jordy De La Torre received \$11,000 for their street corn stand Los GemElotes. They purchased a fully-branded tent from Strike Visuals which greatly improved their visibility at events. "It's made a big difference for us – customers notice more and we've received a lot of positive feedback about it," Jordy said.



Sam Wragge (on left) received \$12,700 in funding for PlyoPro Sports, which sells portable plyo baseball training equipment. Wragge and his business partners, Carson Kasl and Jackson Sarver, built their production line and launched their website over the summer. They intend to sell in-person at baseball tournaments this fall.



Shanise Brooks received \$2,500 for her startup, Clean Kicks shoe cleaning and restoration. She has set up her LLC and trademarked tagline. Brooks has launched her social media presence and website, as well as a collab. with a local artist Jason Wright. She's attending a workshop in Chicago to learn new techniques in October.



Dawson Durkes received \$2,000 in funding for TopGrade, an AI-powered trading card grading system that incorporates a digital microscope for quality analysis. The project has progressed into a working prototype that generates professional-style grading reports for trading card collectors in real time.



Devin Fritsch received \$2,500 in funding for Beyond This Stone, a anodized aluminum square engraved with a QR code that links to an online memorial. The codes are meant to be placed on urns or gravestones so families can share stories and photos. So far, Fritsch been able to create, sell and ship his first orders.

In addition to those highlighted above, the 2025 SBAF committee also made the following awards:

- Mattisse Van Steenberg received \$2,500 for S.P.A.R.K., a lead-generating service.
- Chris Paez received \$1,200 for his fragrance company Atlantis.
- Kody Nicklin received \$4,500 for Mobile Hope tiny homes.

NATALIE THIBAUT TALKS TALENT & LEADERSHIP



Last fall, Bizbods got an insider's look at life as an Amazon executive when Natalie Thibault (BBA '08) visited campus as part of the Ichabods of Industry lecture series. Thibault, now a senior talent development business partner, led a lively classroom discussion full of stories, lessons and life advice for aspiring leaders.

Thibault shared her Amazon journey from operations and distribution roles to mentoring leaders across the globe, including leading teams internationally. She emphasized that adaptability is key in any career – learning to pivot when things change and seeing challenges as opportunities grow. "Talent is like a supply chain," she told students, explaining how she helps employees develop the skills and experiences they need to succeed in new roles.

"You have to be comfortable with mistakes – both yours and the people you lead – because that's where real learning happens," she added.

Students got a peek behind the

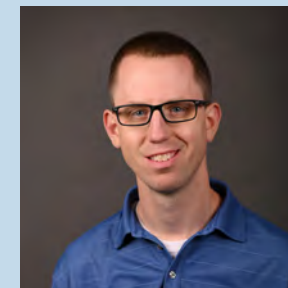
curtain at Amazon's culture of innovation, leadership principles and strategic thinking. Thibault highlighted practical ways to scale oneself: building strong teams, creating processes and mentoring others to maximize team performance. She also shared insights on balancing work and life while staying driven in fast-paced environments, including routines she developed abroad that helped her maintain focus and energy.

Thibault's visit was much more than just a lecture; it was an interactive conversation where students could ask questions and hear firsthand how a global company develops talent and tackles challenges. Students left with concrete strategies for navigating their own careers, from developing new skills and mentoring peers, to staying flexible when priorities shift. It was a session grounded in real-world experience, giving students a clearer sense of what it takes to succeed in dynamic, complex workplaces.

New faces @ Brenneman Business

Josh Wisenbaker

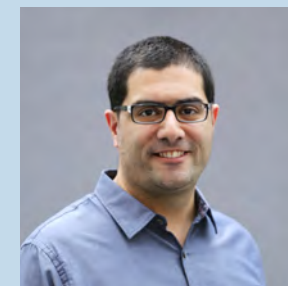
Lecturer of Accounting



Before coming to Washburn, Wisenbaker worked as a financial accountant for the City of Lawrence. Prior to that, he worked for Wendling, Noe, Nelson & Johnson LLC, a Topeka CPA firm.

Dr. Ilyas Ustun

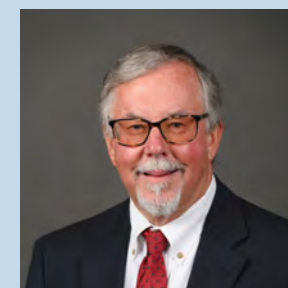
Assistant Professor of Data Analytics



Previously, Ustun served as Depaul University's Director of Data Science. He earned his Ph.D. in modeling, simulation and visualization engineering from Old Dominion University.

Dr. Al Frost

Lecturer of Management



Over his 30-year career, Frost has worked with companies like Anheuser-Busch, Delta Airlines, Home Depot and Motorola, in mainly human resources and organizational development roles.

2024-2025

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The Brenneman School of Business and the Washburn University Alumni Association and Foundation extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our donors – every gift makes a difference for our students.

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Cody ('99) & Jennifer ('98) Foster
Steve (H'05, '70) & Brenda ('95) Kitchen
Bill (H'19, '74) & Malinda Malloy
Security Benefit
Gerd Smith ('56)
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Marlou Wegener

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* DECEASED
H = HONORARY

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DENNIS RODENBAUGH 2024 ALUMNI FELLOW

that would carry him through decades of unexpected changes. His career has been anything but a straight line. After working in investment banking, he moved to western Kansas to help with his father-in-law's farm and began managing dairies. There, he faced crises that would test any leader's resolve. At one point, he discovered millions of dollars had been embezzled from a family-run dairy and the bank was ready to pull the plug on the whole thing. Rather than walk away, Rodenbaugh convinced a room full of skeptical bankers to double the size of the operation, betting everything he owned on its survival.

Later, a catastrophic blizzard killed more than a thousand cows under his care, forcing him to reevaluate his priorities and resilience. These experiences shaped both his character and his leadership philosophy.

"I have a really high need as an individual for serving people around me," Rodenbaugh explained, noting that service to others – not titles or financial outcomes – has been his deepest motivator.

That motivation drives his work at DFA, a cooperative owned by 10,000 farmer-members and supplying nearly one-third of the nation's milk. Since stepping into the CEO role in 2022, he has led efforts to modernize operations, expand global reach and innovate with new products.

Just as important, he has transformed the organizations culture from

what he described as a fear-driven environment to one where collaboration and empowerment guide decision-making.

Central to his approach is what he calls "intuitive management." Rather than relying solely on data or rigid processes, Rodenbaugh seeks to understand people and business dynamics on a deeper level. "I want to understand it emotionally, not just intellectually," he said. That perspective has been the key to navigating both crises and opportunities.

For Washburn students preparing their own careers, Rodenbaugh emphasized that success rarely follows a carefully planned path.

"I didn't plan this out when I was sitting in your chair," he told them. "It was a winding, curvy, odd way of getting where I am." What matters, he stressed, is persistence, curiosity and adaptability.

Looking back, Rodenbaugh credits Washburn not only with providing his academic path, but also for instilling the confidence and critical thinking skills that carried him forward. "It was here that I learned how to learn," he reflected.

Rodenbaugh's journey underscores a central truth: leadership is less about climbing a career ladder and more about navigating challenges with resilience and vision. From blizzards and boardrooms to global strategy and innovation, he has carried forward lessons first formed in his Washburn classrooms. For today's students, his example shows that with persistence and service to others, even the most unlikely path can lead to extraordinary impact.

TARA DIMICK SPEAKS AT SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON



Tara Dimick (BBA '02, MBA '15) returned to campus in May to speak at our annual Scholarship Awards Luncheon for awardees and donors.

Dimick is the owner of Compass Marketing and Advertising Partners and the owner and publisher of TK Magazine. She is also very committed to bettering her community, serving on the multiple advisory boards and as the chair of Momentum 2027 and the Women's Fund of Topeka.

She spoke to students about her experiences as a student and how much the faculty, staff and generous donors of the School of Business helped her get to where she is today.

BIZBODS EARN 4TH PLACE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SIMULATION

This past spring, a five-person team of Brenneman Business students qualified for and competed in the Capsim's Capstone Spring Challenge and earned fourth place against hundreds of students from around the world. The team consisted of Jake Markert (St. Peters, Mo.) Zaid Dajani (Lenexa, Kan.), Alonso Barraza (Topeka, Kan.), Dominic Lopez (Parker, Colo.) and Timothy Powel (Topeka, Kan.) strategically ran a multi-million-dollar company, making a decision every hour, for eight hours straight.

Every year, students who take Dr. Norma Juma's Strategic Management course experience the business simulation. It's an online learning tool that helps them relate to what happens in the real world as they make strategic decisions across the core functions of a business.



Each semester, we administer the Educational Testing Services (ETS) Major Field Test in Business to our BBA and MBA capstone courses. The test measures business knowledge gained by students during their studies and allows us to benchmark performance against hundreds of Business programs across the U.S.

Every year, consistently, for the last several years, Washburn students have scored in at least the 75th percentile or higher.

This year, for the first time in Washburn's history, one of our students achieved a perfect score on the exam – Emeka Ogbonna earned a score of 200.

The Washburn University students listed here placed in the top 25 percent, Fall 2024 through Summer 2025.

Hannah Abel*	Jackson Kavanagh
Chase Arnold	Michael Keegan*
Caleb Baer	Casey Matthews*
Alonzo Barraza	Samuel McCoy*
Jack Benedict*	Logan Michael
Cole Benzmilller	Shane Mullen
Gavan Bergman	Ali Naveed*
My'Shay'Da Blue	Drew Nelson
Dylan Brady	Kristin Ng
Rhett Brown	Emeka Ogbonna
Wyatt Carlson	Timothy Powell
John Collar	Peyton Price
Braden Colley	Adam Rundel
Savanna Dey	Madden Rutherford
Luke Dickey*	Andrew Schmidtlein*
Mya Droge*	Vaclav Schneider
Wesley Ekstrand	Sarah Seley
Breahnna Enloe	Logan Shull*
Mason Fair	Kayla Simons
Jessica Filkin	Ciaralyn Sunday
Carter Gooden	Ryan Swafford
Deedric Hagans	Jaren Thompson*
Conner Haire	Drake Vanderbilt
Carson Haire	Jennifer Voegeli
Zoey Haugsness	Banks Whitney
Wyatt Heiman*	Gillian Witzke
Andrew Horvath*	Hunter Woodyard

*MBA student

ADVISORS EXCEL MAKES TRANSFORMATIVE INVESTMENT IN WASHBURN UNIVERSITY

Washburn University has entered a new era of academic innovation thanks to a major investment from Advisors Excel, a Topeka-based financial firm founded by Washburn alumni Cody Foster and David Callanan. Their lead gift to renovate the university’s Henderson Learning Resources Center – soon to be Advisors Excel Hall – marks the largest single-building renovation project in Washburn’s history and a milestone in the partnership between the university and the local business community.

The transformation officially kicked off in June 2025 with a glass-breaking ceremony, signaling the start of construction on what will become a state-of-the-art academic hub. For more than 50 years, Henderson Hall had been a cornerstone of Washburn’s campus, housing countless classes and serving as home to the Gregory D. and Ronda K. Brennenman School of Business, as well as departments from the College of Arts & Sciences and the Mass Media Department. Once complete, Advisors Excel Hall will continue that legacy, updated for a new generation of students.

Washburn President JuliAnn Mazachek praised the project’s significance, saying “We honor the legacy of President Henderson while looking forward to the future and our ability to provide an outstanding learning experience in our fully-renovated modern space at Advisors Excel Hall.”

The renovation will completely re-imagine the building, adding flexible classrooms that adapt to modern teaching styles, new study and collaboration areas and cutting-edge technology.

For Advisors Excel’s founders, this investment is deeply personal. Foster and Callanan met as Washburn students in the 1990s. They founded Advisors Excel in 2005 and grew it into a national leader, now employing nearly 900 people and managing more than \$19 billion in client assets – all while remaining committed to Topeka.

“An investment like this was important to us because we know it will help develop career-ready graduates and attract

the best and brightest students to Washburn,” Foster said. “It’s an opportunity to support Washburn and its students, and to strengthen the Topeka community and beyond.” With Advisors Excel’s gift, Washburn was able to move the long-envisioned renovation from dream to reality.



Washburn Alumni Association and Foundation President Marshall Meek noted that once Foster and Callanan stepped forward, others in the Washburn community quickly followed, inspired to help bring the project to life.

The collaboration between Washburn and Advisors Excel also reflects shared leadership and vision. Foster, who served on the university’s presidential search committee, credits President Mazachek’s clear direction and focus on community engagement as a major factor in their decision to invest. Both Foster and Callanan see the project as a “bet on the future” of Topeka – one that will pay dividends through education, innovation and workforce development.

When it opens in early 2027, Advisors Excel Hall will stand as a symbol of progress, collaboration and community pride. As students, faculty and alumni return to the revitalized space, they’ll find a building designed not only for learning, but for connecting – between disciplines, people and Washburn and Topeka’s growing business community.

“We’re making a bet on Washburn’s growth,” Callanan said. “And with the people and leadership they have, it’s a good bet.”

ICHABODS IMPRESS ON GLOBAL STAGE IN FINLAND



Four Ichabods represented Washburn at the X-Culture Global Symposium in Vaasa, Finland, in August. Students Tommy Roehl, Jenni Armstrong and Olivia Frederick, along with alumna Blythe Landon (BBA ’22), joined 150 students from more than 30 countries. Washburn’s participants were top performers in the BU355 International Business course.

At the start of summer, each was assigned to an international team working with a Finnish company. Roehl and Armstrong worked with Crimppi, a manufacturing firm, though on different teams. Landon was assigned to Finvacon, specializing in electrical components, while Frederick’s group was set to work with Zip Adventure Park.

Teams collaborated virtually for weeks, then refined and presented their strategies in Finland directly to company executives. Washburn made its mark: Armstrong and Landon’s teams both won awards, with Armstrong becoming the first Bizbod ever to receive symposium honors.

Beyond competition, students immersed themselves in Finnish culture – touring businesses, enjoying local food and visiting landmarks, including a sauna and Zip Adventure Park.

For the Ichabods, the week was about more than winning – it was about collaboration, cultural exchange and applying classroom skills to real-world challenges.

“I’m grateful that I was given the opportunity to participate in the symposium and further develop the skills I learned in class, while visiting a beautiful country, learning about its culture and meeting new people from around the world,” Roehl said.



In May, we held our annual Beta Gamma Sigma and Beta Alpha Psi new member initiation dinner. Beta Alpha Psi added 14 initiates, while Beta Gamma Sigma inducted 44 new members. Bruce Akin (BBA ’87, MBA ’98) was inducted to Beta Gamma Sigma as an honorary member and spoke at the event. Akin was the Vice President of Transmission and Distribution at Evergy, Inc., until he retired in 2022.



Beta Gamma Sigma is the international honor society serving AACSB-accredited business programs. Only those who earn the distinction of “the best in business” during their academic careers can claim membership.

Beta Alpha Psi is an international honors organization aiming to promote the study and practice of accounting, finance and information systems and to recognize scholastic excellence in the business information field.

2025 Beta Gamma Sigma Inductees:

Sydney Achilles	Tim Hammes	Brandon Rectenwald
Jenni Armstrong	Rachel Hansen	Lakyn Schieferecke
Gloria Ball	Chaz Havens	Smera Shrestha
Minakshi Bansal	Isaac Hickman	Luke Shull
Jayne Burdick	Lauren Hulshof	Logan Shull
Sophia Cavanaugh	Ryan Kramer	Shaye Taylor
Gwendolyn Clark	Marinne Lilly	Jaren Thompson
Gracy Dorzweiler	Casey Matthews	Meg Tibbits
Michele Drees	Samuel McCoy	Matisse Van Steenberg
Mya Droge	Karly Neufeld	Jennifer Voegeli
Shelby Elskamp	Coen Osborn	Kaylee Wagner
Mason Fair	Josh Osborn	Kade Walker
Carson Faurot	Christian Paez	Claire Waner
Jessica Filkin	Trey Pivarnik	Taylor Wessel
Talia Gay	Peyton Price	

2025 Beta Alpha Psi Inductees:

Anson Applehanz	Jessica Filkin	Andre Pourmirza
Costanza Armadans	Stuti Ghimire	Timothy Powell
Robert Darling	Stephanie Granada	Ivlea Tien
Mason Fair	Cheyenne Hittle	Renata Viveros
Graham Faris	Ryan Kramer	

FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

GAIL HOOVER KING

Visiting Professor of Accounting and Data Analytics, Retired

Dr. Gail Hoover King was awarded the 2025 Outstanding Accounting Educator Award by the American Accounting Association, which recognizes educators who have significantly impacted or innovated accounting education. She also celebrated her retirement at the conclusion of the spring semester.



BARBARA SCOFIELD

Professor of Accounting and Director of the MAcc Program, Retired

After 12 years of service at Washburn and thousands of students educated, Dr. Barbara Scofield retired at the conclusion of the summer semester. "I feel privileged to have been part of Washburn's work of providing students with the knowledge and skills to build meaningful careers. Go Bods!" she reflected.



MANAF SELLAK

Associate Professor of Economics

Dr. Manaf Sellak was promoted to associate professor of economics. He has taught at Washburn for six years. "My favorite part of teaching is watching students grow in confidence as they connect economics concepts and tools to real-world issues, ask critical questions and develop analytical skills they can carry into their careers and lives," he said.



AKHADIAN HARNOWO

Associate Professor of Production and Operations Management

Dr. Akhadian Harnowo was awarded the 2025 Dicus Excellence in Teaching Award. One student shared, "I have never learned more in a professor's class than I did in his class. His command of the subject, energy in the classroom and willingness to meet with students really helped me thrive in his class."



MICHAEL STOICA

Distinguished Professor of Marketing

Dr. Michael Stoica was awarded the 2025 Kaw Valley Bank Award for Research Excellence. In the last five years, he has co-authored 13 conference presentations and 16 peer-reviewed journal articles. He has produced research in the areas of marketing, business administration and educational technologies.



NORMA JUMA

Brenneman Professor of Business Strategy

Dr. Norma Juma was awarded the 2025 Outstanding Achievement Award by the Topeka Chapter of The Links. The Links is a volunteer service organization for women committed to enriching, sustaining and ensuring the cultural and economic survival of African Americans.





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