Welcoming the World
The $1.5 million Seeley G. Mudd Building, home of Willamette University’s newly-established Atkinson Graduate School of Management, opened its doors to students in 1975. After 40 years, and a few major remodels and repairs, the building is still the hub of Willamette’s MBA programs.
I Love Math
Think Statistics has to be scary? Think again.

Russell J. Yost
MBA’05, Directions
Editor and Director of Marketing at the Atkinson School: “Our school’s rich traditions and tri-sector commitment have shaped our direction from the beginning. Though our community may be separated by time and distance, I’m amazed how faculty, staff and alumni have remained in contact and have supported each other over time.”

Mike Russell, Content Marketer at Pivotal Writing: “The joy in writing each of these pieces is approaching the subject with an open mind and a healthy curiosity. The story’s already there. It just needs some help to take shape.”

Colleen Smith
MBA’14, Research Analyst at Cascade Insights and recent Atkinson graduate: “Writing about the Atkinson experience allows me to reflect on my own time spent there, and to remind myself of what an amazing program I have been lucky to be a part of.”

QUESTIONS OR FEEDBACK?
Please contact mba-media@willamette.edu or 503-808-9901. Willamette University MBA (Salem Campus) 900 State St., Salem, OR 97301, 503-370-6167; Willamette University MBA (Portland Campus) 905 NW 12th Ave., Suite 110, Portland, OR 97209, 503-808-9901
Debra J. Ringold, Dean and JELD-WEN Professor of Free Enterprise
EDITOR: Russell J. Yost
WRITING: Russell J. Yost, Mike Russell, Colleen Smith
PHOTOGRAPHY: Frank Miller, Woody Blettel, Ed Keene, Jr. DESIGN: Mike Wright, Susan Blettel CREDITS: Mike Russell, Pivotal Writing, pivotalwriting.com; Keene Studio, keenestudio.com

willamette.edu/mba

Departments

4 Dean’s Note
6 Seen and Heard
8 Career Directions
16 Professional Directions
20 Global Directions
21 Faculty Directions
24 Executive Directions
26 New Directions
27 Ticker Tape
28 Faculty’s Recommended Reading
THE BUILDING SITE was chosen, building plans were made and funds were acquired from the Seeley G. Mudd Foundation. Two members of the Willamette University Board of Trustees endowed professorships. They established a budget — but they needed a Dean.

In 1974, Willamette University was well known as a private, reputable liberal arts college boasting a thriving law school. Though Salem was the seat of Oregon’s government, Portland was considered the “business center” of the state. However, business education enrollment would be critical to the success of a new management school — and the expectation was set that the new program would prepare students for careers in all three sectors: business, public administration and not-for-profit management.

Achieving this vision was no small task, as other universities who had attempted so-called generic management schools (combining sectors) were finding it very difficult. Faculty trained in business disciplines did not see public administration faculty as their peers — and public administration education was largely built on passing along government administrative experience.

At this critical time, Willamette did not have a permanent president, yet the Board of Trustees wished to maintain their momentum to establish this new school. I was hired as Dean to take on the challenge and put life into the project.

Where was a model similar to what we hoped to create at Willamette? Dartmouth College was located outside a large business center, was also a private institution and maintained an enviable reputation for the quality of its MBA graduates. Stanford University was closer to home but at the center of business giants. My vision became: Willamette should try to become “Dartmouth of the West.”

The immediate tasks at hand were to find students and faculty, both of high quality because we knew that you don’t build a great product with cheap inputs.

We lacked scholarship support, had not achieved accreditation, our new computer (singular) and library were across campus and our program was marketed as “generic.”

But we began — and over time (perhaps longer than anticipated), we would achieve our vision.

— Stephen H. Archer, Founding Dean

The expectation was set that the new program would prepare students for careers in all three sectors: business, public administration and not-for-profit management.
...Into A Tradition

A RECENT BOOK from the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), *Disrupt or Be Disrupted*, chronicles the changing nature of the management education marketplace. It makes a compelling argument that only distinctive programs fully engaged with stakeholders will be successful in the coming decade.

For 40 years, the Atkinson School’s raison d’être has been, and continues to be, to prepare persons for leadership and management roles in the business, government and not-for-profit sectors. Our view is that all organizations exist to serve and to satisfy — customers, citizens or clients. We believe there are essential, generic management principles that transcend sector. These generic management principles, and the practices they imply, are the means by which value is created.

Our task is to identify and convey these generic management principles, examine them and demonstrate their robustness across sectors. In so doing, we prepare students for successful careers in business, government and not-for-profit organizations. This commitment is prominently featured in our mission statement and differentiates Willamette University’s MBA programs. As one of only two MBA programs in the world to achieve dual accreditation in both business and public administration, the Atkinson School provides the rare benefit of professional accreditation relevant to all sectors.

During the past 40 years, the Atkinson School has established strong alliances with regional businesses, not-for-profit organizations, civic leaders and government agencies. An engaged Atkinson Committee of the Board of Trustees, experiential core courses and electives, service learning projects, co-curricular professional organizations, internships, fellowships and employed graduates add substance to these enduring alliances.

We have grown steadily throughout these 40 years. With locations in Salem and Portland, we are now the largest MBA program in Oregon. The full-time program enrolls between 90 and 100 students each fall, the MBA for Professionals cares for about 100 students annually and within the next two years our tenured/tenure track faculty will reach 20.

Two key things have not changed since our founding: the commitment of our faculty to the personal, professional and intellectual development of our students and the commitment of our alumni to the “next generation” of graduates. For your dedication, I thank you and say, “Here’s to the next 40 years!”

— Debra J. Ringold, Dean and JELD-WEN Professor of Free Enterprise

Our task is to identify and convey these generic management principles, examine them and demonstrate their robustness across sectors.
THE WILLAMETTE MBA program brings together students who represent a large spectrum of interests, backgrounds and experiences. No matter what direction a student is headed — finance or human resources, government or for-profit — everyone must go through the rite of passage known as Practical Applications for Careers and Enterprises, or PACE.

The goal of PACE, as described by the course instructor professor Larry Ettner, is “to give the MBA candidate real experience in tackling a project, having time frames and expectations from a third party and having to manage these tasks in a newly-formed, diversified team — as well as beginning to hold people accountable for their oral and written work in a professional setting.”

While the client-based projects in PACE often prove to be the most trying part of the experience, both the clients and MBA students see great rewards from the collaboration.

First-year student Carina Comer MBA’15, who worked with the not-for-profit Salem Harvest, reported, “I am beginning to find a way to balance the different perspectives of my team, along with the ability to speak up and put down rules and deadlines so that more things get done. I have never needed to manage this diverse or large a group before, and have seen growth in myself because of it.”

One client, Salem’s Abiqua School, asked their MBA consultants to examine different revenue models to make a decision on future expansion — either adding different classes or a complete high school program. Administrators at Abiqua happily reported that their team of MBA consultants delivered a high-quality oral presentation and a comprehensive written report that met all of the goals established at the beginning of the project.

This positive reception is the most rewarding part of the process for students, especially when the impact they have on their clients is apparent. “Our client has already begun to institute several of our recommendations, such as hiring several new interns to keep up with record-keeping,” says first-year MBA Tim Ikehara-Martin MBA’15 after working with Willamette’s Zena Forest and Farm.

The benefits of PACE go beyond client satisfaction. Una Japundza MBA’15, who worked with Emerald People’s Utility District of Eugene, Oregon, found that “PACE has taught me the importance of knowing how to work with people. It isn’t easy, but the long-lasting friendships I created were worth every second of it. It made me stretch outside of my comfort zone, and become a better friend, leader and communicator.”

This personal growth is what makes PACE so distinct and worthwhile, helping Willamette MBA students earn real-world experience, sharpen their professional skills and cultivate relationships.

— Colleen Smith
2013-14 Academic Year PACE Projects

The Lord and Schryver Conservancy
Location: Salem, Oregon
Project: Prepare for a capital campaign by implementing a new member and volunteer recruitment program, designing structure and roles for organizational members, and defining clear goals and objectives for the future.

Zena Forest and Farm
Location: Salem, Oregon
Project: Perform a financial analysis to establish an accurate depiction of Zena’s financial standing; develop a five-year strategic plan to increase Zena’s impact on Willamette University’s campus.

Marion County Fair
Location: Salem, Oregon
Project: Develop a plan to increase annual fair attendance; provide an optimized fair layout for a future permanent fairground.

Emerald People’s Utility District (EPUD)
Location: Eugene, Oregon
Project: Find an environmentally responsible and economically feasible way to manage destructive vegetation along utility lines and develop a tool to test effectiveness.

4Him2Day Children’s Cancer Resource Foundation
Location: Salem, Oregon
Project: Assist in building the foundation’s infrastructure to expand beyond their current service area in Marion/Polk counties and to grow the volunteer base.

The Imani Project
Location: Portland, Oregon / Kenya
Project: Develop fundraising presentation materials and plan events; improve database organization and create a succession plan.

Kale Uganda
Location: Uganda
Project: Develop a new financial documentation structure that is low-budget and easily accessible to the organization’s members; develop a new strategy for fundraising to ensure a sustainable revenue stream.

Abiqua School
Location: Salem, Oregon
Project: Analyze market size and check financial viability to accommodate more students in order to assess expansion options, with the possibility of increasing class sizes or adding pre-k or high school classes.

Oregon Symphony Association in Salem (OSAS)
Location: Salem, Oregon
Project: Analyze the current marketing approach and create an integrated marketing communications plan to increase awareness of OSAS’ brand in the Mid-Willamette Valley.

4Him2Day Children’s Cancer Resource Foundation
Location: Salem, Oregon
Project: Assist in building the foundation’s infrastructure to expand beyond their current service area in Marion/Polk counties and to grow the volunteer base.

Pringle Creek Community
Location: Salem, Oregon
Project: Increase the Pringle Creek Sustainable Learning Center’s presence among the Oregon environmental community and identify financial resources and partnerships to promote financial independence of the organization.

Salem Harvest
Location: Salem, Oregon
Project: Create a five-year business plan to provide board members of the volunteer-run organization with an expansion strategy and plans for efficient operations to use in the future.

Mercy Corps Northwest
Location: Portland, Oregon
Project: Analyze program needs in order to provide program expansion location recommendations, focusing on the micro loan, individual grant and entrepreneurial education programs.
EARNING AN MBA gives students a competitive edge in today’s job market and Willamette offers a number of ways to add leadership experience while building knowledge. From accounting to consulting, golf to hiking, Willamette boasts a wide range of student associations for professional and personal interests. They aim to enrich the MBA and are open to students in each of Willamette’s MBA programs. The most difficult part: deciding which one to join.

Two organizations were especially active during the 2013–14 academic year — MBA Women International (formerly National Association of Women MBAs, or NAWMBA), and the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM). Both groups set the bar high by offering networking and business opportunities, hosting speakers and coordinating an array of related events.

MBA Women International (formerly NAWMBA)
Established in 2009, MBA Women International (MBAWI) is dedicated to propelling female MBA students and professionals into leadership positions in business.

“I’ve always been passionate about gender differences and the distinct challenges female professionals face,” says chapter president Sabrina Sourjah MBA’14. “I didn’t think twice when I was appointed chapter president. I knew I’d be busy, and I wanted to give it my full focus.”

This year, MBAWI has brought a variety of events to Willamette: “We hosted two panels — one at each campus [Salem and Portland] — of professional women from different industries to discuss work-life balance for women, and how to succeed with different management styles. We sent seven delegates to the national conference in Boston. We circulated an e-newsletter and partnered with other student associations to host social events. We even held a professional dress workshop.”

Sourjah’s efforts have not gone unnoticed; the chapter was recognized as Willamette’s most outstanding student association of the year for 2013–14.

“We’ve built up momentum for enhanced visibility within Atkinson,” says Sourjah. “Next year, I would love for the chapter to build on that by partnering more with the national association.”

Society of Human Resource Managers — Willamette MBA
Yvonne Drabin, president of Willamette’s chapter of SHRM, holds similar hopes; “For several years, our chapter has been recognized with the outstanding chapter award from the national SHRM foundation. We’ve earned a reputation for consistently putting on quality events. This year, we will do the same.”

Read more about each organization online: willamette.edu/mba/for_students

Leadership Opportunities for Every Career Interest

Willamette MBA Student Organizations

Atkinson Student Association
Atkinson Accounting Association
Atkinson Consulting Association
Atkinson Finance Association
Atkinson Golf Association
Atkinson Marketing Association
Atkinson Outdoor Club
Atkinson Project Management Institute
Atkinson Public Administration Association
International Graduate Students Association
Joint Degree Association
MBA Women International (formerly NAWMBA)
Net Impact
Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

Sabrina Sourjah MBA’14
events, and I think that next year’s board will continue where we left off.”

In the past academic year, Willamette’s SHRM chapter has hosted HR professionals from the State of Oregon, the online retailer Amazon and several local companies. SHRM has also coordinated several service-oriented events. First- and second-year members competed to raise funds for the Willamette Humane Society. A group of members volunteered with the Portland chapter of SHRM to review resumes and practice interview skills with Portland-area English-as-a-Second-Language students. In Salem, members gave mock interviews for local high school students. Finally, student board members networked and spoke at Salem’s SHRM professional chapter. Each February, two students research and present a topic to the chapter body; “This year, students presented on HR analytics. Last year, I partnered to present on social media in the workplace. The professional members’ experience, mixed with the students’ research, makes for enthusiastic conversation,” says Drabin.

Since she has such a full plate with her MBA courses, why does Drabin take on the responsibility of chapter president?

“I’m a very young MBA, so I wanted to gain experience quickly. I’m treating this role as a job. I’m glad I did. I’ve gained the experience I wanted, and more.”

— Mike Russell

From accounting to consulting, golf to hiking Willamette boasts a wide range of student associations for professional and personal interests.
The Atkinson story actually begins 50 years ago — in 1964 — when Willamette University President George Herbert Smith kicked off the planning phase for a new school of management. Other interests took precedent and Smith’s agenda for the new school was passed along to the next administration upon his retirement in 1969. Though it took another five years for Atkinson to welcome its first students, the seed was firmly planted for a “one of a kind” school to launch at Willamette.
It wasn’t all about bell-bottoms and Disco Fever — the 1970s put Americans in a state of uncertainty after the Vietnam War. Unemployment was high, inflation was on the rise and the country faced an energy shortage the likes of which it had never seen.

Amidst this time of chaos and change, entrepreneurial thinkers at Willamette took President Smith’s bold vision and turned it into a viable proposal, winning acceptance from the Board of Trustees in 1971. The Seeley G. Mudd Foundation, with over $40 million in grants to be distributed to leading private universities, awarded Willamette $1 million (approximately $5 million in 2014 dollars) to support the cost of a new building and furnishings.

A team of faculty members from the College of Liberal Arts located a founding dean at the University of Washington — Professor Stephen H. Archer. His charge: to establish a school “to prepare persons to assume progressively more responsible roles in managing the activities of business, government and not-for-profit organizations, so that such organizations more effectively and efficiently achieve their respective goals.” The Atkinson Graduate School of Administration welcomed its first class in fall 1974.
Americans wanted their MTV and expressed themselves through bold clothing and neon colors. Though the “mall mentality” and 1980s pop culture references abounded, the country faced an uncertain outlook with a period of high unemployment. America showed strong growth in its GNP, but deficit spending and stock market downturns signaled weaknesses in the economy.

This was a period of growth for the Atkinson School — which was renamed from a school of “Administration” to a school of “Management” to better reflect the philosophy of the program. In 1984, personal computers were introduced and slowly began replacing typewriters on most desks around campus. New faculty members were added, including a newly formed chair in international management. By 1987, the school was recognized by U.S. News and World Report as one of the best regional management schools in the western United States.
Globalization and growth marked the booming 1990s as the U.S. entered an electronic age and could communicate with the world better, faster and cheaper than ever before. Grunge music shocked the airwaves while the Internet emerged as the dominant way to share information.

An increasingly diverse — and international — student population became the new normal at Atkinson. The “Compass Week” orientation concept came online. New computer terminals, including a designated computer lab, were added during a building remodel thanks in part to a generous gift from the William Kilkenny family. In 1995, after a lengthy self-study process, both the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA — now the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration) granted the Atkinson School accreditation. It was the first program in the world to earn this “dual accreditation.”

In the fall of 1995 the Atkinson School became the only program in the world to hold dual accreditation for business and public administration from AACSB International and NASPAA.

In 1994, Debra Ringold joined the Atkinson faculty and became Professor of Marketing. She later served as Associate Dean and became Dean and JELD-WEN Professor of Free Enterprise in 2007.

Emeritus Professor Fred Truitt, who served as a visiting faculty member in 1989, joined the Atkinson faculty permanently in 1991 to hold the Helen Simpson Jackson Chair in International Management.

Michael Dothan joined the Atkinson faculty in 1997 to replace retiring faculty member Stephen Archer as the Guy F. Atkinson Professor of Economics and Finance.

In 1990s Dale Weight served as Dean of the Atkinson School from 1990 to 1997. He participated in the Brownwater Regatta wearing his signature “tuxedo shirt.”

International students have always been an important part of the Atkinson community and the number of students from outside the U.S. increased throughout the 1990s.
The Information Age introduced a dramatic shift in the way technology was utilized in and out of the classroom. Social media, reality television and a 24-hour news cycle informed conversations. Events like the September 11, 2001 attacks and the “Great Recession” drastically changed the way Americans saw the world and their vision of success.

Atkinson responded by preparing for the future while embracing the past. The program’s tri-sector commitment is as strong today as it was in 1974. Though all students have laptop computers, and most classes use online technology to supplement traditional materials, quality teaching remains paramount. The school expanded to Portland in 2005 to serve the needs of working professionals while maintaining its core mission.

With all of this taking place over the past four decades, it’s a wonder to think what will shape the next 40 years.
The First Hug:
Leaving a Legacy of Service and Caring

If you’ve applied to one of Willamette’s MBA programs in the past 25 years, you’ve probably spoken with her. She’s often one of the first people to make contact with new students. Her caring nature is cited as a driving force behind students’ decisions to attend Atkinson.

In January 2016, just after the school’s 40th anniversary, Judy O’Neill will retire. To honor Atkinson’s Associate Dean and Director of Admission’s years of service and warm smiles, we wanted to share a bit of her story.

An educator from the beginning
“From the time I was about five years old, I wanted to be in education. My career has taken me from teaching high school, to teaching and advising at the college level, to the admission and enrollment management aspects of higher education. It’s been great.”

O’Neill’s path also included a graduate degree in education at Oregon State University and an MBA at University of Portland where she worked for nine years before joining the Atkinson School as the Director of Admission in 1990.

How times change
“When I joined Willamette, the position of Director of Admission involved everything I loved: admissions, student advising, student services and marketing. In the early days, I was also the person who wrote the course catalogues, viewbooks and, sometimes, the alumni magazine.”

“The biggest changes that have influenced our ability to communicate and serve students was the development of the web, email and social media. I remember my first exposure to the web. It was 1993 and [Director of Information Services] Jim Kephart came into my office and said ‘There’s something called the World Wide Web. It might help to get our message out.’ So, we posted a digital photo of the school, our phone number, and an invitation to call us. And people did!”

Service to others: A constant
“We’ve always retained a personal, high-touch feel in the admissions process. It is important to us to get to know each applicant. We want to be sure we have a good match between our students and the learning environment of the school. We want our students to succeed here and in their lives. We want happy alumni!”

After retiring, O’Neill plans to play more tennis and golf, and volunteer for the Humane Society and Willamette Valley Hospice. She also hopes to continue her connection with the Atkinson School.

— Mike Russell

“We want our students to succeed here and in their lives. We want happy alumni!”
Reconnecting with Members of the Inaugural MBA for Professionals Cohort

IN 2006, WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY opened the Portland campus for its evening MBA for Professionals program. Courses were designed and scheduled to give working professionals a relevant, comprehensive education.

Two nights per week, three semesters per year, for two years, Atkinson’s full-time and contributing faculty imparted the knowledge, real-world tools, leadership and networking ability that students sought to support their individual career goals. Over those two years, strangers became teammates and friends. Trials and triumphs marked time.

But life doesn’t stop. What happens to that tightly knit community after graduation? To find out, several members of Willamette’s inaugural MBA for Professionals cohort shared their stories.

How has your career evolved since earning your MBA?

JUDY HUTCHISON (JH) After spending a few more years in banking, I was ready for a change. I wanted to work with people, not just people’s money. The recruitment position at Willamette was staring me in the face. It’s right-brain stuff. It felt good to go in this direction. I believe in it.

CHRIS LITTRELL (CL) My career has remained focused on commercial real estate. I worked at The Standard during and after the program, which gave me an amazing foundation in real estate. Ultimately an opportunity at Nike surfaced and I’m convinced having an MBA made the difference in getting the position.

MINDA (HEDGES) SEIBERT (MS) I expected to go back overseas and focus on economic development. Instead, a short-term job in community relations and fundraising for Mercy Corps turned into a new career path. I am now building relationships with donors at Girl Scouts of Oregon and SW Washington to give girls more opportunities to be leaders.

ANDREW FRAZIER (AF) I’ve been managing Frazier Hunnicutt Financial since the second year of the MBA program. I had the good fortune to start it with Mat Hunnicutt MBA’02, and we’ve been building it ever since.

How have you kept in touch with your cohort?

JH I took the MBA to invest in the relationships. I can name everyone in my cohort, and know what most of them are doing. These are friends for life. You meet them all at orientation — mostly strangers — and two years later you’re going to their weddings and holding their babies.

CL It is amazing to see the accomplishments and catch up with friends and colleagues from the cohort as our careers and families grow. Andy Frazier and I were undergrads together at Willamette and happened to join the inaugural MBA cohort. We both flourished during the program. It’s always great to catch up to reminisce about how far we have both come since those early undergraduate years.

MS Yes! In addition to the off-and-on connection, I have gotten together at least once a month for dinner with three other women who were my studymates most weekends. Also, my husband-to-be was in the following cohort. We had overlapping course schedules and married while we were still in the program.
**AF** Willamette alumni are everywhere. I played in a golf tournament the other day; one of the players in my group was a Willamette grad. I still see a lot of the first crop of folks that I went through the cohort with. It’s a pretty cool experience to keep in touch and watch their lives change and grow.

**How have you used what you learned at Willamette?**

**CL** Nike is a company of innovation, whether that’s in our products or the real estate we select. The MBA more fully developed my critical thinking and ability to anticipate deeper questions to arrive at better solutions so we can remain ahead of the curve.

**MS** The MBA still supports my career path, no matter how it changes. You’re always interacting with people, trying to quantify what you’re doing, deciding how to position your offering. It’s very applicable.

**AF** If I hadn’t gone through the program I would’ve had to guess at so much while building the business. It helped us draft a better strategy and place our resources in more valuable positions. In a small business, you wear so many hats. Having at least a functional understanding of how to run multiple departments is essential to our growth.

— Mike Russell

---

**What course would you most like to retake through the MBA for Life Program?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Andrew Frazier</th>
<th>Minda (Hedges) Seibert</th>
<th>Chris Littrell</th>
<th>Judy Hutchison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing Partner</td>
<td>Director of Individual Giving</td>
<td>Director of Real Estate</td>
<td>MBA Recruiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frazier Hunnicutt Financial</td>
<td>Girl Scouts of Oregon and Southwest Washington</td>
<td>Nike — North America Direct to Consumer</td>
<td>Willamette University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Marketing. And HR.** We can always add clarity to our policies. | **I could use a refresher in finance. I’m also interested in technology and societal change, so I’d like to redo marketing.** | **I would take statistics for the chance to learn from Mike Hand again.** | **I always enjoyed HR and organization behavior/dynamics. Maybe marketing, too.** |

---

*Left to right: Andrew Frazier, Minda Seibert, Chris Littrell, Judy Hutchison*
CALL IT A LAME MATH JOKE. Call it an illustrative example. Call it what you will. It’s worth considering: “The average age of a person who wears diapers is 24.” “What?! That doesn’t make any sense,” your mind shrieks. Correctly. Averaging may be mathematical, but with a drop of critical thinking we know that very few 24-year-olds wear diapers. Between newborns and adults, a simple average distorts the way the world really works.

”Part of what I enjoy about statistics is trying to tease out the truth,” says James Furlo MBA’07, a market analyst at Hewlett-Packard Company. “When you encounter a statistic that doesn’t make sense, you have to be ready to challenge it.”

It’s Not as Scary as You Think
“Students expect statistics classes to be like Algebra 2, involving lots of abstract problems,” says Kawika Pierson, CMA and assistant professor of accounting and quantitative methods. Pierson joined the Willamette MBA faculty in 2011 and has taught core and elective classes in the Early Career and Career Change MBA, as well as the statistics course in the MBA for Professionals.

“At Willamette, we emphasize the enterprise understanding over the mechanics of the math. Understanding how the world behaves is more important than understanding why the math works,” Pierson adds.

“We’re always challenged to extract a story from the data,” says Mike Hand, professor of applied statistics and information systems. Hand has given more than 35 years of service to
Atkinson and is a legend among Willamette MBA faculty members. “Even when a trained eye interprets the numbers, it can be difficult to communicate the insight to general and managerial audiences,” Hand adds. “Seeing the pattern is the first step. You have to close the loop, and move what you know into the organization and how it behaves. While relatively few students aspire to become data analysts, the discipline of data analysis adds value to any other pursuit.”

“That’s why statistics is required for every student,” Pierson continues. “Only some of our MBAs will generate statistical analyses in their jobs. But they will all see reports with stats. And they’ll all need to be able to verify that they were calculated the right way. You can’t get away from it.”

“While statistics is not, in itself, a management discipline, every aspect of a business uses statistics extensively, from operations, marketing and human resources to accounting and finance,” adds Robert Walker, associate professor of quantitative methods. Walker joined the Willamette faculty in 2012 and teaches statistics courses in both MBA programs as well as courses in the analysis of longitudinal data at the Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis in the United Kingdom.

“The ability to apply accumulated knowledge in those management disciplines is much easier with a command of statistics and statistical reasoning,” Walker adds.

Statistics Adds Value to Any Discipline

“As a manager, you need to be comfortable with statistics and what others might present to you,” says Terri Savage MBA’06, finance specialist at Intel. “For example, if the data are different from what you were expecting, you may be more likely to doubt it. However, if the data turns out as you expected, you might be less likely to question the process. It can be a self-fulfilling prophecy if you don’t have the experience to know what could go wrong.”

“Data analysis is a process. The choices during that process matter,” explains Walker. “Applying statistics to management is about questioning gut feelings, suspicions and myths that occasionally drive decision-making. Understanding how and why we change our approach is a story; the raw numbers are just steps.”

“We have a mantra at the office: ‘What’s the story behind the numbers?’” remarks Furlo. “It’s so common, it has become an acronym (WTSBTN). The numbers do tell you one thing, but we have to interpret how the stats represent behavior.”

“Statistics helps us understand all forms of behavior,” continues Walker. “Some of the most interesting research relates what people say they do to what they actually do. We have surveys, and we have behavior in the real world. They don’t always match. The ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of that are fascinating.”

Trepidation Becomes Appreciation

“The capstone project at the end of the MBA program is really rewarding to see,” Pierson shares. “Most students choose much broader, harder problems than I expect. At that point, it’s my role to pare the question down to something manageable. Instead of approaching statistics with trepidation, virtually everyone tries to apply the tools in ways that show that they’re really interested.”

“Some students will tell you when they understand that it’s fun,” adds Hand. “In others, you’ll see it in their performance in class. Several times, I’ve been surprised to see certain students in a second-year statistics class. I didn’t think that they were interested. Sometimes, you don’t know until much later. I’ve heard from graduates five years out of the program who tell me: ‘I used to hate this stuff; now I use it every day.’”

— Professor Mike Hand
"EVERY YEAR, I WORK WITH A TEAM of consultants to put on a training for about 200 Panasonic employees. They each create a 15-minute presentation on anything from sales strategy to expanding a department, from solar power systems to after-market devices for cars. It’s quite exciting to give guidance and feedback on such a wide variety of topics. Without my MBA from Willamette, I couldn’t do this work.”

Meet Hideaki Azuma, a business consultant for Human Resource Institute (HRI) in Tokyo, Japan. A teacher at heart, Azuma focuses on HR development and business strategy. He’s also an adjunct professor of marketing, critical thinking and communication at Chukyo University.

Translating Teaching Techniques

Why does he enjoy teaching? “When I was an undergrad in Japan, I didn’t enjoy learning. The traditional Japanese teaching style is very much one-way; students listen to the professor’s lecture, and then they read from books. That’s it. I was very impressed by Atkinson’s approach. It’s very interactive. Students never slept in class. I wanted to share that experience with the students at Chukyo and to show that learning can be interesting.”

That attitude flavors Azuma’s approach to his work at HRI. He’s actively involved in in-house training for marketing, corporate strategy, business communication and logical thinking. In these two-day trainings, he challenges participants to refine their strategies and expand their worldviews.

“It’s never just about the topic at hand. I also try to convey a mindset about global communication and business. Japanese companies want to expand globally, so they need to understand how to communicate across cultures. Even domestically, companies have foreign workers and foreign clients. Because of my experiences working with a wide variety of international students at Atkinson, I can imagine how to adapt to different business cultures. That global mindset is really effective for me right now.”

Different Benefits For Different Times

Though Willamette’s emphasis on a global perspective benefits Azuma now, he originally chose the school for three different reasons: “I expected the language and culture barriers would be a big challenge; I knew that Willamette would take care of me. Second, I liked seeing that Willamette’s program already had a large number of international students. Finally, I love nature, and Oregon looked like a beautiful place to spend my free time.”

Azuma’s eco-humanist interests stay with him today. He volunteers as an official facilitator for Awakening the Dreamer symposia and as a certified Organization and Relationship Systems Coach. The former explores three complementary concepts — environmental sustainability, spiritually fulfilling work and social justice — in the pursuit of cultivating future game changers. The latter is an approach to conflict resolution rooted in coaching and dialogue.

Living Willamette’s Motto

“Someday, I would like to combine these approaches — not only for business but also for social change towards a sustainable future.”

Azuma is making progress. For the last four years, he’s been volunteered for Social Venture Partners, a global nonprofit based in Seattle, Wash. “Partners like me support local nonprofits with their professional skills, rather than just making monetary donations. I get to use my education from Atkinson to support nonprofits. This started for me in the PACE program. That experience was really interesting to me, and I wanted to do that work in Japan.”

—Mike Russell
New Faculty Members Join Atkinson

STUART READ will join the Willamette MBA faculty as Professor of Strategic Management. Read’s research is focused on effectuation, a set of heuristics derived from expert entrepreneurs that describes how people make decisions and take action in situations of true uncertainty. As uncertainty is pervasive across all aspects of firms, markets and organizations, his work on effectuation applies to, and has been published in, a variety of disciplinary areas.

Read has nearly 20 years of industry experience, including participation in the creation of six high technology start-up firms. Four of those firms were acquired by industry leaders such as Sun Microsystems and Lotus Development Corporation. Two are publicly traded. He also spent six years with enterprise database software provider, Oracle Corporation. He holds a doctorate from the University of Washington.

Faculty page: willamette.edu/mba/faculty/read

RYAN LANGAN will join the Willamette MBA faculty as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Marketing. Langan recently completed his doctorate at the University of South Florida and holds a bachelor’s degree in science from University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse and an MBA from the University of Portland. Prior to his academic appointments, Langan worked in sports marketing for the LaCrosse Bobcats and the Portland Trailblazers.

Langan’s research interests include corporate social responsibility, consumer gratitude and corporate philanthropy. He has taught courses in sports marketing, international marketing, market research and promotion management. He is a member of the American Marketing Association and Academy of Marketing Science.

Faculty page: willamette.edu/mba/faculty/langan

As a Willamette MBA alum, you are part of a global network of people and organizations.

By investing in the Atkinson Annual Fund, you are supporting programs that impact current students as well as alumni like you.

The Annual Fund supports programs like:
• Events and activities to connect with fellow alumni, faculty and staff
• Career development and management services
• The opportunity to continue your learning through virtual sessions and the MBA for Life program

Give today and sustain the power of this incredible network: willamette.edu/support
FOR YEARS, students from around the world have made the move to Oregon to attend the Willamette MBA program. Current full-time MBA students also have the opportunity to participate in semester-long exchange programs with schools in Europe. Now, teams of students in all MBA programs, as well as Willamette MBA alumni, can spend their winter or spring breaks on special study trips as an optional supplement to their MBA experiences. Inspired by the increasingly global nature of business, the program has taken members of the Atkinson community to Brazil, Chile and China so far.

Setting the Course

“I was seeing alumni get jobs who had never been out of the country before, and suddenly their employers were saying, ‘Go to China and check out our suppliers or our manufacturing facility,’” said Beth Ursin, director of career management. “I realized that this is what they’re going to be doing on the job, and so these experiences should be part of our training.”

Aimee Akimoff, director of recruitment and avid world traveler, also recognized that international experiences would be an effective way to stay competitive with other MBA programs.

When approached by Akimoff and Ursin, Willamette MBA Dean Debra Ringold was more than receptive about the idea of an international program. In fact, her decision to hire current professor and Jackson Chair in International Management, Gary Knight, was based on the idea of leveraging his expertise to kick-start a global trip program.

Having run a similar program at Florida State University, Knight was well aware of the benefits of sending students to visit companies in other countries.

“For the several decades after WWII,” Knight explains, “the United States was the dominant economy in the world, and it was pretty straightforward for U.S. companies to do business internationally. Within the last ten years, countries like China and Brazil have become very big competitors in the global marketplace. In that context, it’s really important for U.S. companies to function effectively in world markets, so we’re giving students the tools they need to be players in these companies and to provide a higher level of expertise.”

The Nexus of Practical Application and Adventure

Full-time MBA student Monica Truax MBA’15, who traveled on both the Chile and China trips, also recognized the need to understand business in other countries.

“The international opportunities played a major role in my decision to come to Willamette,” Truax said. “Prior to pursuing my MBA, I worked for a Fortune 500 company with an established national supply chain and plans to expand into Canada and Mexico. My involvement with the Canada expansion inspired me to pursue a higher
education in global operations.”

These trips are also great opportunities for students and alumni who haven’t traveled widely. Tyler Stoltz MBA’14, a Brazil and China participant, said, “I had never left the country before, so it was an opportunity for me to get some international experience and have some fun. Getting into business, everything is going to be global. I want to know as much as I can so I can do the best job as possible here, and be familiar with other countries.”

The trips last a little longer than a week and include a one-credit course for participants to prepare themselves for the nuances of each country and explore background on the organizations they’ll visit during their time abroad. Each trip includes two to three company visits per day along with opportunities to visit tourist attractions.

During the company visits, students are exposed to local business practices and concepts that validate the necessity of first-hand experience. For example, Stoltz recalled the confusing subtleties of Guanxi, a commonly referenced style of business in China.

“Guanxi has a very unclear definition — sometimes it seems good, and sometimes it’s bad. It’s all about relationships, which take a long time to build — you can’t just go in there and expect a business deal to be done in two days.”

Making Connections Locally and Globally

Upon returning, growth is immediately apparent. “By the end of the trip, the students have gained the confidence to travel out on their own. They get an idea of how business is done over there and see what life is like and see how they could become international managers,” Knight explained. “These students develop self-confidence and a stronger ability to function effectively in foreign countries.”

Truax has since seen the career benefits of the program. “My experiences in Chile and China helped me land an internship with the Global Logistics Infrastructure team at Nike, where I’m collaborating with partners across all six geographic markets to improve global supply chain relationship management in the No. 12 Top Supply Chain in the world.”

For anyone considering one of the trips, Truax advises, “Do it. The opportunity to visit foreign companies across the public, private and nonprofit sectors is priceless. The trips also allowed me to connect with [students in the] MBA for Professionals program and expand my professional network locally.”

During the 2014-15 academic year, students and alumni have the opportunity to travel to Japan and India.

Anyone interested in participating is encouraged to email mbaglobaltrip@willamette.edu for more information.
Willamette Partners with State of Oregon on Pioneering New Program

Oregon is the first to standardize public project management.

IT’S THE STUFF OF OFFICE LEGEND.

In 1993, the Driver and Motor Vehicle Services’ 1960s-era computer system was supposed to get a major upgrade. Instead, after three years and $56 million of public funds, the overhaul was scrapped. To this day, DMV field offices can’t accept credit or debit card payments.¹

To prevent another DMV failure, Oregon became the first state in the nation to mandate and fund a training program to teach project management. The goal: cultivate a pool of project managers who use consistent standards, methods and terminology to manage state projects. The result: the Oregon Project Manager Certification Program (OPMCP).

They’re Called ‘Best Practices’ for a Reason

In 2013, Willamette University’s Executive Development Center (EDC) won a multi-year contract to deliver the OPMCP. The instructors — Jon Lazarus, MBA’98 PMP;² Jeff Oltmann PMP and Kimberly Cude PMP — designed the curriculum in accordance with the Project Management Institute’s (PMI) Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge.

The DMV failure “happened, in part, because they didn’t have a solid project management process in place,” says Lazarus, who took the OPMCP in 2005. “Unfortunately, the reality is that most new technology development projects have suffered similar problems with scope creep, blown schedules and cost over-runs. From day one in the OPMCP, we teach how to define scope and establish a process for change management.”

“The best a project manager can do,” Lazarus continues, “is communicate the right problems and issues ahead of time, and set limits on acceptable costs, required functionality, etc. — always asking ‘Are we on time?’ ‘Are we on budget?’ and ‘Are we delivering as promised?’ If those questions were at the forefront [of the DMV effort], I believe the sponsors of the DMV project would have been able to make better decisions earlier, which might have meant reducing the project’s scope or even cancelling it.”

Our partnership with the State of Oregon is long enough so that we can evolve this program to meet its needs as they change.

— Kimberly Cude, PMP

². PMP stands for Project Management Professional certification
The Governor Signs Each Certificate

The 14-day OPMCP takes place over several months and covers the spectrum of project management: starting a project on a firm foundation; getting alignment among stakeholders; visual tools for building a good plan; monitoring progress, steering, and making changes; and properly closing a project.

Students complete each module — including pre-reading and post-module quizzes — before sitting for a final exam designed by the global headquarters of PMI.

“The OPMCP is a considerable investment of time and energy,” says Oltmann. “We’ve designed it for people running significant projects, or a lot of projects, so it’s worth that investment for them.”

For the Uninitiated, an Introduction

For those who supervise or work with project managers, the EDC offers an abbreviated four-day program, Introduction to Managing Projects. This promotes better communication and outcomes with an overall understanding of a project manager’s work.

“The four-day class gets into what project management is, why you need to know about it, and how you can apply it. It’s a lot of hands-on simulations and workshops based on adult learning theory,” says Cude. “In the two current OPMCP cohorts, there are several students who took the four-day class first. They’re all thankful they did.”

Continuously Adapting to Changing Needs

A one-day seminar is under development. “Executive Briefing on Managing Projects focuses on how senior managers can work with their project managers, rather than defining project management,” says Oltmann.

“It’s exciting to be a part of something that’s gaining so much traction,” says Cude. “Our partnership with the State of Oregon is long enough so that we can evolve this program to meet its needs as they change.”

As tomorrow’s office legends coalesce around today’s headlines, the need for standardized project management skills remains critical to successful state projects.

— Mike Russell
The Celebration That’s 40 Years in the Making

THE ATKINSON GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT commemorates its 40th anniversary during the 2014-15 academic year, and exciting events and activities are planned for current students, alumni, faculty, staff and friends.

LEARN MORE willamette.edu/go/agsm40

Willamette University Alumni Weekend
Sept. 12–14, 2014
Alumni from all schools and programs are invited back to campus for a weekend to celebrate all things Willamette. The weekend includes special reunion events, in-class programs and opportunities to reconnect with Willamette faculty, staff and fellow graduates.

Willamette University’s Atkinson Lecture Series
Featuring Speaker Jerry Greenfield, co-founder of Ben & Jerry’s Homemade, Inc.
March 18, 2015

JERRY GREENFIELD and his long-time friend and business partner, Ben Cohen, are the men behind one of the most talked about, and least conventional, success stories in American business. Co-founder of Ben & Jerry’s Homemade, Inc., Greenfield has helped to build a storefront venture into an ice cream and business marvel by making social responsibility and creative management strengths rather than weaknesses.

Atkinson School 40th Anniversary Celebration and Annual Brownwater Regatta
May 1–2, 2015

ALUMNI AND FRIENDS are invited to a special reunion at the Atkinson School in Salem, held during the annual Brownwater weekend. The event will kick off with the annual Brownwater Golf Tournament followed by a reception on May 1. All alumni and friends are invited to join in Atkinson’s time-honored tradition of floating the Mill Stream – which might include a special appearance by Dean Debra Ringold.

Friday, May 1, 2015
Annual Brownwater Golf Tournament, 10 a.m.
40th Anniversary Reception and Brownwater Casino Night, Willamette Valley Vineyards, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 2, 2015
Annual Brownwater Mill Stream Float and Community BBQ, 11 a.m.

Share your memories and follow the fun on Twitter at #agsm40 or on Facebook at facebook.com/WillametteMBA.
In the spirit of celebration, it’s time to play a little game of “Caption This!”

Visit the Willamette MBA page on Facebook (facebook.com/WillametteMBA) to click through the gallery of 40th anniversary photos and share your best captions. The captions with the most “likes” will receive a special Willamette MBA prize.
FACULTY’S RECOMMENDED READING

POLLY RIZOVA
Associate Professor of Management
“The Secret of Success: The Double Helix of Formal and Informal Structures in an R&D Laboratory” by Polly Rizova

GARY KNIGHT
Helen Simpson Jackson Chair in International Management
“China Goes Global: The Partial Power” by David Shambaugh

NICOLE THIBODEAU
Contributing Assistant Professor of Accounting
“Thinking, Fast and Slow” by Daniel Kahneman

FRED THOMPSON
Grace and Elmer Goudy Professor of Public Management and Policy Analysis
“Capital in the Twenty-First Century” by Thomas Piketty