

2023

JEPSON CENTER

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

# ANNUAL DIGEST

GONZAGA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION



**GONZAGA**  
UNIVERSITY

School of Business  
Administration



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Dean..... 2

### Academic Excellence

SBA Transitions ..... 3

Rankings ..... 5

New Graduate Programs..... 7

Avista Entrepreneur Competition ..... 9

Student Chapter Receives Merit Award ..... 13

### Active Engagement

JP Morgan CEO Engages with Students ..... 15

Andrew Brajcich Elected Chair..... 17

Keep Connected..... 19

### Inspiration

Finding Inspiration with John O'Leary..... 21

Nike N7 Fireside Chat..... 23

Time Person of the Year Visits Campus..... 25



## LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Hello from the School of Business Administration at Gonzaga University! We are halfway through the 2023-2024 academic year and things are going well! There are many things to tell you about and we are pleased to present to you this issue of the Gonzaga University School of Business Administration Digest.

There are challenges everywhere we look, in practically every environment we interact with. Questions about the value of a college degree (socio-cultural), the shortage of college-aged individuals (demographic), increased rivalry in the higher education market (competition), and things like artificial intelligence (technology) are just some of the external factors that impact what we do. We are not just adapting to these challenges; in many ways we are thriving. In this digest, you will read about our two new graduate programs, how our Zags continue to do very well in competitions, how our students, staff, and faculty are engaging with the world outside the Jepson Center, and how we seek to inspire all by living out our Jesuit mission.

All we do, including what's highlighted in the following pages, is a tribute to everyone who is part of our business school community. Our students, staff, and faculty to be sure but also our friends, supporters, and the University as a whole. We are an exemplar of Jesuit business education because of the efforts of so many. We will always be grateful for the opportunities that are presented to us.

Please enjoy the latest issue of our digest! Thank you for helping to make us the business school that we are.

Best wishes and Go Zags!

Kenneth S. Anderson, Ph.D.  
Dean, School of Business Administration

## SBA TRANSITIONS:

### NEW HIRES

**Rich  
Tradition.  
Bold  
Future.**



### Maimuna Akter Assistant Professor Finance

#### ABOUT

Professor Akter comes to Gonzaga after completing her Ph.D. at Florida Atlantic University. Prior to Gonzaga, she worked as an assistant professor of Banking and Insurance at the University of Dhaka for nine years.

Maimuna grew up in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and found her fascination for teaching during her undergraduate studies. She started her career in academia at the University of Dhaka. Her passion for learning Finance in a broader arena encouraged her to move to the USA for higher studies. Her current research is on how common ownership influences corporate policies. Her research interests include climate finance, market manipulation, and corporate culture. At Gonzaga, professor Akter will teach Principles of Financial Management and Intermediate Finance courses.

#### EDUCATION

Ph.D., Finance, Florida Atlantic University  
MBA, Illinois State University  
MBA, University of Dhaka  
BBA, University of Dhaka



### Shriya Shekhar Assistant Professor Finance

#### ABOUT

Professor Shekhar joins Gonzaga after completing her Ph.D. in Finance from Wayne State University. She enjoys teaching. Her research interests include IPO underpricing, bank monitoring, capital structure, M&A and executive decision making. Acquiring her bachelor's degree in economics from Miranda House, Delhi University, she went on to pursue an MBA in Finance from Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, and completed a term at Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth, USA.

Having worked at firms such as Deloitte and CRISIL, a Standard & Poor's company, she has an extensive industry experience of about eight years in financial services and analytics. Her experience includes working on fintech, credit, and regulatory risk projects such as development of a post trade portfolio compliance management application, credit risk assessment framework, risk benchmarking, structured finance ratings, shortfall estimation, credit enhancement sizing, and surveillance of rated instruments. She has worked with banks, NBFCs, microfinance institutions and investment management firms both in India and US.

#### EDUCATION

Ph.D., Finance, Mike Ilitch School of Business, Wayne State University, USA  
MBA, Finance, Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, India  
MBA, Spring exchange, Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth, USA  
B.A. Honors Economics, Miranda House, Delhi University, India



## EXCEL

U.S. NEWS & WORLD  
REPORT RANKINGS

# RANKED

## UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

U.S. News & World Report, 2023

Top 20% - Undergraduate Business

#17 Undergraduate Entrepreneurship

#30 Undergraduate Management

#31 Undergraduate Finance

#39 Undergraduate Accounting

## GRADUATE PROGRAMS

U.S. News & World Report, 2024

#23 MBA in AIE

#29 Graduate Accounting M.Acc & Tax

#63 Part-Time MBA

*(Ranked in the top 100 in the country since 2010)*







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## EXCEL

### SBA INTRODUCES NEW GRADUATE PROGRAMS

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With many professions becoming increasingly data-driven, and the challenges of finding strong, service-oriented leaders common across industries, Gonzaga University is stepping up its efforts to offer new opportunities for students in the Inland Northwest and those studying online.

This fall, the School of Business Administration started offering two new master's programs that will give students new tools to succeed in the future while remaining rooted in the Jesuit values shared across all programs at GU. The new programs include the Master of Science in Business Analytics (MSBA) and the Online Master of Business Administration—and are housed in the School of Business Administration.

The business school's new offerings are a recognition, Dean Ken Anderson says, "that the world outside our business school continues to change, and we have an obligation to change with it." Whether that means making the school's well-established and nationally ranked MBA program available online or adding new in-person programs like the MSBA to provide students with future-looking tools in data systems and management, Gonzaga must keep evolving while delivering great value for students.

"These new additions complement what we are already doing in our business school," Anderson says. "The Master of Science in Business Analytics builds on our recent efforts in analytics at the undergraduate level. It will have two tracks—business administration and accounting—to allow students to choose their focus. The Online MBA takes the essence of our very successful traditional MBA program and makes it available to students anywhere in a convenient, asynchronous format.

"We were beyond excited for these programs to launch in the fall."

**For more information on the Master of Science in Business Analytics, visit [gonzaga.edu/school-of-business-administration/graduate/msba](https://gonzaga.edu/school-of-business-administration/graduate/msba).**

**For more information on the Online Master of Business Administration, visit [gonzaga.edu/mba](https://gonzaga.edu/mba).**



# EXCEL

## ZAG PLACES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETITION



Mateo Valdez ('24) exemplifies opportunity. Whether it's starting his own sports consulting group or interning with some of the largest tech giants, he pushes the boundaries of what is possible as a college student. His latest endeavor: A third-place finish in the Avista Entrepreneur Competition and almost \$8,000 in prize money.

Mateo's winning formula arose from his work developing InternFleet, a newsletter that builds and compiles attainable internships for undergraduate students across the United States.

"I see a lot of hardships in the context of finding your career that just should not exist," said Mateo. "In an increasingly competitive corporate world, having a good academic resume isn't sufficient enough anymore, so you need stuff outside of the classroom to complement it, whether that is extra-curriculars, personal projects or internships."

The idea originated from Mateo's evaluation of the internship market. He found the search process to be full of holes. It starts from the largest aggregators of internship openings who often push the most notable companies, therefore, the most competitive internships. It sets a false perception that landing an internship is much more difficult. Mateo is then able to utilize his experience and findings to help craft unique collections of business internships for his subscribers.

Mateo has a knack for not just finding opportunities but constantly building upon them. He's building a name for himself and is working in and around the Gonzaga network to find success. He joined the New Venture Lab early in his Gonzaga career, helping craft and develop ideas and business ventures for local entrepreneurs. Of course, Mateo has landed multiple internships for himself, most recently with HP, PwC and Microsoft. But he hasn't done it alone. He has developed connections within the Gonzaga community to further grow as a learner and an innovator.

One of Mateo's most impressive feats is becoming the founder and president of the Gonzaga Sports Consulting Group, a business organization on campus that has already worked with teams in the NBA, NHL and MLS. In addition to business, several members of the GSCG are majoring in sport management through Gonzaga's School of Education, making the GSCG a truly interdisciplinary organization. It's through GSCG that he met Professor John Correia, Ph.D.

In the early days of GSCG, Correia initially watched from afar intrigued by the rapid progress Mateo was making. Correia couldn't stay back for long, and soon he was helping Mateo and recruited the help of Weber as well.

"Mateo has a unique skillset to not only want to do great things, but also persist and solve problems along the way," said Correia. "He has a great mix of dreaming big while also having a strong work ethic that has given him a diverse set of experiences to draw upon as he continues on his personal and professional journey."

Earlier in the school year, Mateo used Gonzaga as a testbed for InternFleet. The only materials he had to advertise were an Expo marker and the whiteboards of the Jepson Center. He got nearly 100 subscribers on the first day. Soon, it wasn't only students who saw success in Mateo's newsletter. So did the Avista Entrepreneur Competition.

With the help of the Gonzaga School of Business Administration and being a part of the Hogan Entrepreneurial Leadership Program, Mateo became connected to the Event.



Gonzaga students have shined at this competition in the past, previously known as the Northwest Entrepreneur Competition, including last year, where Gonzaga students collectively won over \$14,000. However, this year, Mateo was the sole Zag to make the final round.

The contest is separated into three phases held across multiple months hosted by Eastern Washington University in Spokane. The first round is an elevator pitch where each contestant or team gets two minutes to share their idea. The second round is a trade show-esque event with tri-fold boards and longer pitches. The final stage is a Shark Tank-style presentation with an over \$55,000 prize pool.

Mateo cruised through the first phase, and when he got to the second round, things were a bit different. The stakes were clearly higher. He recalls tri-fold boards that would win a regional science fair, homemade cupcakes with company logos on them and all Mateo had was a self-described “ugly board” that was basic and straight to the point. All Mateo had to do was stick to the basics. His presentation was clear, concise, impactful and more than enough to see him advance to the final phase.

The final phase was in May and after Gonzaga’s semester had ended. Mateo, originally thinking he would never make it to the final stage, had to drive back to Spokane from Seattle to compete. From there, he had the small task of presenting for seven minutes, and then facing five minutes of questions from CEOs, professors

and notable figures in the Spokane community. Yet again, Mateo passed that test. His third-place finish puts him in a select group of Zags to place in the competition. In total, he took home \$7,750 that will be put into an account to help grow InternFleet.

“What really sets him apart is that most of his ideas, like the one he developed for this competition, are directed at providing new opportunities for other students to grow and thrive through increased access to real-world experiences,” said Weber. “In true Zag form, Mateo is using his talent and creativity to benefit others.”

Mateo now faces a unique challenge heading into his final year: how to grow InternFleet while managing countless projects, his senior year of college and coming up with even more new ideas.

Of course, Mateo has a plan. He’s assigned three goals for this upcoming year. First, to watch his sports consulting group flourish with him taking more of a managing role. He has laid the groundwork and Mateo hopes the club will continue for years to come. Second, he wants to see where InternFleet can go. It is still a work in progress but has so much energy and interest behind it, it’s an exciting unknown. His final goal is to enjoy his last year at GU.

“It’s very cool to look forward to things, but at the same time, you can’t get caught up in that,” said Mateo. “Sometimes it’s most important to take a deep breath and just enjoy the moment.”

-Jack Talbott ('24), University Advancement







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## EXCEL

### STUDENT CHAPTER RECEIVES MERIT AWARD FROM SHRM

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SHRM (the Society for Human Resource Management) awarded a 2022-2023 Superior Merit Award designation to the Gonzaga University SHRM student chapter for providing superior growth and development opportunities to its student members.

The SHRM Student Chapter Merit Award program encourages the development of more effective student chapters and distinguishes outstanding activities and projects. Chapters are recognized based on operations, chapter programming and professional development of members, support of the human resource profession, and SHRM engagement.

"SHRM student chapter members embody the upcoming cohort of HR trailblazers, and it's vital to highlight their achievements." Said Michael P. Aitken, SHRM Chief Membership Officer. "The dedication displayed by Gonzaga's student chapter underscores that the future of the profession is in good hands. I commend their achievements and their adeptness in cultivating inventive initiatives, growth, and enthusiasm for HR, especially as we steer through evolving work landscapes."

SHRM student chapters have the opportunity to earn an award based on the number of activities they complete during the merit award cycle, the most recent one of which lasted from May 1, 2022, to April 30, 2023.





# ENGAGE

## JP MORGAN CHASE CEO MAKES IMPRESSION ON BUSINESS STUDENTS



If you bumped into JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon on the street when he visited Spokane, you might never know the man in the golf shirt and jeans was one of the foremost minds in global finance, someone looked to by industry leaders and media outlets for his thoughts on inflation, interest rates and the state of the world's economy.

Four Gonzaga students in the School of Business Administration knew exactly who Dimon was when they were invited along with Dean Ken Anderson to attend a lunch discussion with him at Barrister Winery. He stopped in the Inland Northwest as part of his annual bus tour to Chase Bank branches across the United States.

"Shaking the hand of one of the most influential people of our time was most definitely the highlight of the entire event," says sophomore Ken Josue Velasquez, a 19-year-old Spokane native and business administration major with

a concentration in finance. He was particularly struck by Dimon's "dedication to innovation, global impact and empowerment of his clients."

Jessica Agustin, a 22-year-old second-year MBA student from Indonesia, found that Dimon's talk helped her understand the "multifaceted role of banking in our society," and particularly how banking affects non-financial sectors of society. She was struck by his advice to remain calm in the face of seeming crises.

"The main idea was clear, that regardless of the circumstances, the show must go on," Agustin says. "In the financial industry, with phenomena like fluctuations of global currencies, the strength of U.S. currency is not just about the economy. It's also linked with the culture of the nation. Through resilience and determination, we can maintain stability in the face of adversity."

Robert Blomgren ('07, business administration) is a 40-year-old Spokane native finishing his MBA at GU this fall. He found Dimon's stage presence impressive, as well as his breakdown of "where the true power of the U.S. dollar comes from." He left the luncheon inspired to keep on his current journey as "I have a similar leadership role in my current company" as the role Dimon serves at JPMorgan Chase.

Dimon's presence while speaking also impressed Kaden McCullough, a 20-year-old from Colbert who compared the CEO's ability to weave a lunchtime talk into a public-speaking "ballet."

"He was able to get his points across while simultaneously expressing understanding for alternate viewpoints, and while meticulously articulating the reasons that had formed his opinions into what they were," McCullough says.

As excited as McCullough was to hear from Dimon, the student walked away from the event truly valuing the experience of mixing with business leaders from throughout the Spokane community who were also on hand.

"People were incredibly friendly and supportive," McCullough says, "looking to share their perspectives and give good advice on how I, as a 20-year-old college student, can start making my way in the world."

School of Business Administration Dean Ken Anderson says making those kinds of connections and engaging with the world off campus is part of the Gonzaga way of education.

"Our students got to meet Mr. Dimon and other members of the JPMorgan Chase leadership team, enjoy a talk by Mr. Dimon and network with dozens of members of the Spokane business community," Anderson says. "One of our business school's key values is engagement. We want Gonzaga business students to be engaged in activities outside of their classes, and this was a fantastic example of that."

It certainly is something that Jessica Agustin won't forget as she pushes on in her education and career.

"I feel even more driven in my studies and Gonzaga and my future plans," she says. "Jamie's advice to fearlessly embrace the unknown, to be unafraid of asking questions and to treat mistakes and steppingstones was truly inspiring."

"The insights and principles I learned sparked a greater desire to contribute positively to society with the knowledge I gained. The event also encouraged me to always remain curious and to have a constant thirst for learning."



# ENGAGE

ANDREW BRAJCICH  
ELECTED CHAIR  
OF WASHINGTON  
SOCIETY OF  
CPAS BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS



The Washington Society of Certified Public Accountants elected Gonzaga professor Andrew Brajcich as chair of its board of directors for 2023-24.

Brajcich, who is GU's Jud Regis Endowed Chair of Accounting and director of the school's graduate accounting programs, previously served as vice chair and secretary for the WSCPA. The group is a professional community of more than 6,500 CPAs and financial professionals working in business and industry, education, government, non-profit organizations and public accounting.

The WSPCA is the only organization in Washington state dedicated to serving the professional needs of CPAs, educating consumers about CPA services, and encouraging students to enter the profession. Brajcich's combination of professional experience and hands-on work with students make him a natural fit for this new role. He's served on the organization's board of directors since 2019.

"My time on the board has taught me more about the profession than I knew existed," Brajcich says.

"Interacting with various professionals helps me be a better mentor to students as they embark on a wondrous career. I've also been exposed to the governance of the profession at the state and national levels. This insight informs my understanding of what we do in class and in the field."

As chair, Brajcich will spend time advocating for the profession and guiding the organization that includes students he works with every day in addition to professionals and retirees. Among recent efforts he and the WSCPA have worked on are a scholarship program for aspiring accountants that awarded more than \$500,000 to accounting students in the state for the 2022-23 school year, as well as working on CPA exam changes to eliminate onerous rules that disproportionately affected women, parents, working professionals and underrepresented groups trying to enter the profession.

At Gonzaga, Brajcich is part of a team that's continually made accounting a strength of the School of Business Administration. The program's 82.4% CPA pass rate is 10th in the nation and first on the West Coast among large programs. GU's master's of tax program has a 100% placement rate within three months of graduation, while the master's in accounting program has a 95% placement rate within the same time frame. Both the undergraduate and graduate accounting programs are consistently ranked among the nation's best by U.S. News & World Report.



# ENGAGE

STAY CONNECTED



**G-Suite**  
ZAG BUSINESS



Check out the new School of Business Administration podcast on G-Suite to listen to in-depth conversations with Gonzaga School of Business Administration graduates, faculty members, and friends.



Stay connected with the vibrant Zag Business community across all our social media platforms! Follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube for the latest updates, exclusive content, and engaging discussions. Join the conversation, share your insights, and be part of the thriving School of Business community. Connect with us today and let's build a stronger network together! #ZagBusiness

Keep up to date on all School of Business New and Events at  
[www.gonzaga.edu/SBANewandEvents](http://www.gonzaga.edu/SBANewandEvents)



# INSPIRE

## FINDING INSPIRATION WITH JOHN O'LEARY



As part of the Canfield Family Lifelong Learning Series, the School of Business hosted an evening of inspiration at the St. Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco. John O'Leary, a two-time No. 1 national bestselling author and speaker, inspired attendees with his remarkable story of survival and profound wisdom.

John's journey is nothing short of extraordinary. In 1987, at the age of nine, his life took a drastic turn. While playing with fire and gasoline, John accidentally created a massive explosion in his home, resulting in burns on 100 percent of his body. He was given less than a 1 percent chance to live.

His story reminded attendees of the immense power of resilience and determination. Coupled with the breathtaking view of the San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge, the evening transformed from an ordinary gathering into a moment of shared inspiration and camaraderie, uniting Zag Business leaders, alumni, and friends in a unique and meaningful way.

The School of Business extends special thanks to the Canfield Family for their invaluable contribution in making this event a reality. Their support has allowed the SBA to create an environment where wisdom, inspiration, and learning thrive. The SBA is deeply appreciative of their generosity and dedication to lifelong learning.





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## INSPIRE

### THE POWER OF SPORT AND COMMUNITY, FOR THE NEXT SEVEN GENERATIONS

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What began with the rhythmic hum of a forklift turned into a story of passion and purpose.

In 1997, Sam McCracken, proud citizen of the Sioux and Assiniboine Tribes, began working for Nike within the bustling confines of an Oregon distribution warehouse center. Fueled by both his love for sport and for his vibrant community, Sam weaved a narrative to his supervisors that transcended mere business strategies. With confidence and a knack for storytelling, he proposed a sports-based business plan to address health disparities in tribal communities. Years later, this initiative would be called N7.

During Native American Heritage Month this year, McCracken accompanied Gonzaga alumna Izzy Yasana Hawley ('22) in a fireside chat with School of Business Administration students to talk about the origin of N7 and the initiative's internship opportunities. Hawley received her M.B.A. in American Indian Entrepreneurship (MBA-AIE), which prepares leaders to support and manage sustainable business in Native communities. More than 50 grads of the Gonzaga AIE program have gained the skills to make a positive impact on their reservations and tribes. Hawley is the Unite/Value Brand Manager Nike and Young Athlete Brand Specialist for N7 and assisted in connecting N7 with Gonzaga.

In the fireside chat, McCracken told the story of N7. Although the "N" technically stands for "Nike," he prefers to interpret it as "Native." The "7" represents the Native American principle of considering the impact of our generation on the next seven generations. McCracken urged students to learn from their ancestors and the people who came before us.

His vision and calling to work on behalf of his community led to the Air Native shoe, designed around the specific morphology of the Native American foot. The shoe features a roomier toe box, fewer seams, and a thicker sock liner for added comfort. He also developed a fund to "inspire and enable participation in sport for indigenous youth." The N7 Fund, a proponent for athletes and sports, has invested upwards of \$10.8 million in nearly 300 organizations since 2009, with a focus on supporting youth access to sports and uplifting Indigenous communities.

N7 graciously sponsored Gonzaga's men's and women's basketball teams in celebration of Native American Heritage Month. The teams wore turquoise jerseys, a unifying color for the Native American community that represents friendship and fellowship to N7.



# INSPIRE

## TIME PERSON OF THE YEAR SPENDS A DAY ON CAMPUS



Cynthia Cooper, the WorldCom whistleblower and Time magazine's Person of the Year, spent the day on campus. Cynthia visited accounting ethics classes, met with the accounting advisory board, and held dedicated sessions with student leaders and faculty. She did an incredible job engaging everyone. Her keynote in the evening was attended by nearly 500 students, most of them business and accounting majors, where she shared her harrowing story.

As the Vice President of Internal Audit, Cooper and her team worked in secret and often at night. They ultimately uncovered \$3.8 billion in fraud, which at that time was the largest in U.S. history. With no advance notice or reason given, Cooper was once called to a secret meeting with the external audit partner and audit chair at a hotel across the street from WorldCom headquarters. There, it was promised to her that any issues would be resolved, and no further action was needed.

She explained how no one at WorldCom started out planning to commit fraud, but slowly over time, things escalated to a point where those involved felt there was no going back. She knew many of the people and their families. In fact, Cooper's daughter was in the church choir with the daughter of the CFO, who was eventually sentenced to five years in prison. Cooper also carried the burden of knowing her actions would lead to thousands in her community and beyond losing their livelihood.

Cynthia also spoke to the strength of her faith and family throughout the two-year process culminating with multiple convictions. Andrew Brajcich, Jud Regis Chair of Accounting, asked Cynthia how she did it, and she simply responded that her mother had always told her, "Never let anyone intimidate you." As

whistleblowers often experience, Cynthia felt alone on an island that few could understand. During those dark moments, she undertook reading the entire New Testament. After meeting the FBI and Enron whistleblowers at the Time cover photo shoot, her husband told her she came back a different person. Her message was one that many of our students were hungry to hear.

Bringing Cynthia to campus was made possible by the Jud Regis Chair of Accounting, Andrew Brajcich and the generous support of Jud Regis' son and daughter-in-law, Dan and Cecilia Regis, who wanted to honor Jud with a gift that would support three of the biggest values that Jud modeled in his life: family, faith, and freedom.







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