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La Crosse Mayor Tim Kabat, '88, left, and Onalaska Mayor Joe Chilsen, '86, led the collaborative, county-wide push that created the La Crosse County Convention and Visitors Bureau.



# Building Bridges

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

## TWO MAYORS TAKE THE WHEEL

*CBA alums, mayors collaborate to drive county-wide progress*

Mayors Tim Kabat and Joe Chilsen, both College of Business Administration alums and instructors, are bringing growth and development to their city's skylines and waterfronts — thanks in large part to their ability to collaborate.

They've worked not only with each other, but also alongside other city governments, businesses and non-profits to build consensus on tough issues and make better use of city resources.

Kabat, La Crosse mayor, says he first realized the importance of collaboration in UWL classes. There the business major refined his process for asking questions, actively listening and trying to see both sides of issues.

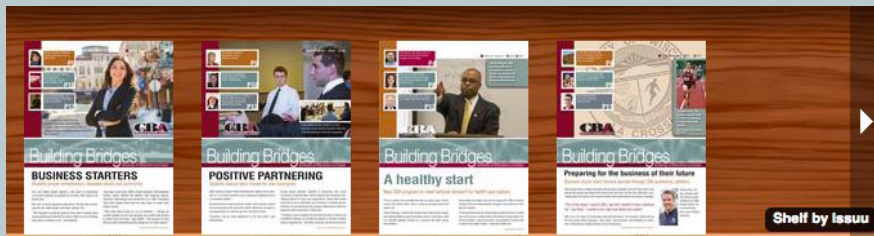
Similarly, in the MBA program, Onalaska Mayor Chilsen learned how collaboration was an important means to pursue big-picture ideas.



CLICK IMAGE TO WATCH

## Message from the Dean

College of Business Administration Dean Laura Milner gives an overview of the stories from business alumni, faculty and students you'll find in this issue.



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# Building Bridges

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

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# STUDENT-CENTERED LEADER

New associate dean brings experience growing student leaders, fostering business outreach



Prior to coming to UWL, Kenneth Rhee, the CBA's new associate dean, was an associate professor of management and director of the Executive Leadership and Organizational Change Program at Northern Kentucky University.

When Kenneth Rhee moved into his new office at UWL this summer, the first thing to go up on his walls were autographed, group photos of former students. Notes along the photo frame thank him for “a challenging and equally rewarding two years,” and for “one of the best experiences of my life.”

Rhee was previously director and founder of the Executive Leadership and Organizational Change Program at Northern Kentucky University, a program that aimed to transform students into outstanding leaders.

Rhee plans to bring that same student focus to UWL as the college's new associate dean.

“I'll do whatever I need to do to make sure our students have the maximum opportunity to learn and grow from the program and achieve their true potential,” he explains. “Our job as a college is to provide the resources and the environment for them to have that type of experience.”

Rhee, who started July 1, will work closely with Dean Laura Milner to ensure that the college is not only meeting student needs, but also meeting business community needs. Being director of the program at Northern

Kentucky, Rhee also gained experience making business connections.

“We need that connection to make sure we continue to update the knowledge and skills we teach, and bring people from the business community in to connect with our students,” he says.

Rhee also looks forward to serving the needs of UWL's MBA students. He brings about 30 years of career experience working in graduate education, including chair of the MBA Assessment and Development Program at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio.

Rhee was attracted to UWL for its strong sense of community. “Everyone seems to be collegial and also has a strong affinity toward the university,” he says.

He sees faculty who, like him, want students to learn and grow.

“I'm very excited to be here and be part of the great tradition of UWL and the CBA,” he says. “I hope we, as a collective unit, can engage in activities that will help the entire organization change and grow. In the long run, it will ultimately benefit our students.”

## *PREPARING FOR ACCREDITATION VISIT IN 2018*

UWL's College of Business Administration has been accredited by AACSB International (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) since 1982. Its next re-accreditation visit will be in 2018. Only five percent of business programs worldwide meet these rigorous standards of accreditation. Part of Kenneth Rhee's role as associate dean is managing the college's reaccreditation efforts.

# HIGH MARKS

## Students rank among top performers nationally on CPA exam

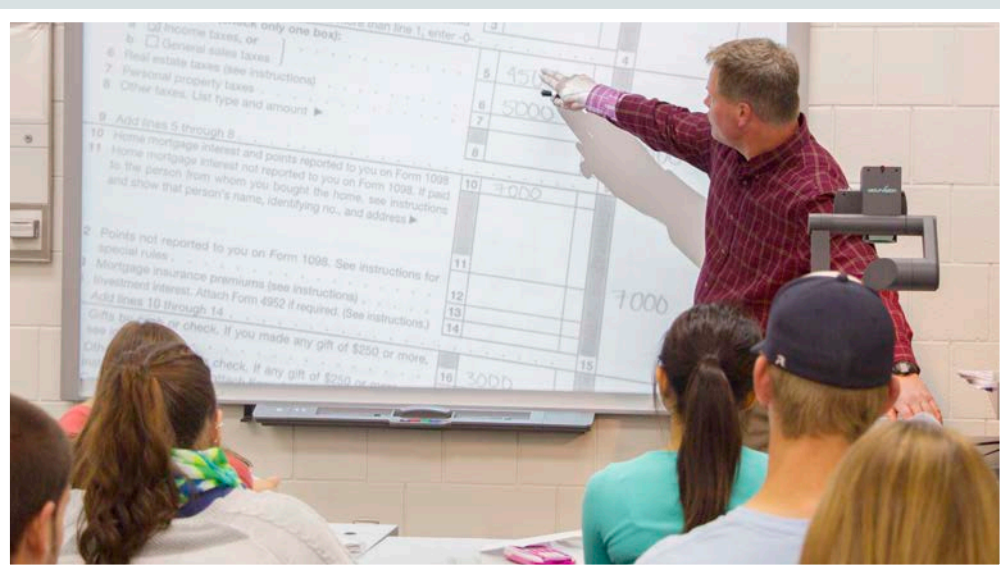
UWL Alumnus Matthew Stephani says the College of Business Administration prepared him well for the certified public accountant exam. But you don't need to take his word. Before graduating in 2015, the accountancy major passed all four parts of the CPA exam on his first try.

Stephani isn't alone in his high marks on the exam. Students in UWL's Accountancy program have the highest first-time pass rate in the nation on the Certified Public Accountant exam among undergraduate-only programs in the large program category. This category is schools with more than 60 exam candidates.

"What really impressed me now looking back is how many of my non-accounting business classes were relevant in preparing for and completing the exam," says Stephani, who works at Baker Tilly, an accounting and advisory firm in Madison. "The CPA exam has evolved into an exam that is much more than just a test of accounting knowledge, but rather a comprehensive test of many aspects of business. I think that speaks volumes then for the overall quality of the business college."

### CPA EXAM RESULTS

It's gratifying for the CBA to be recognized not only as the best comprehensive in the state, but also as the finest undergraduate-only program in the nation for its pass rate, says CBA Dean Laura Milner.



Will Maas, UWL Accountancy Department chair, teaching a class. Accountancy students have consistently had one of the highest pass rates in the nation on the Certified Public Accountant exam.

Every program that did better than UWL had at least a master's in accountancy program, if not a doctoral program in accounting, she adds.

When comparing all undergraduate and graduate programs in the large program category — 270 schools — UWL's accountancy program was in the top 10 percent at No. 22 overall.

About 75 percent of UWL students passed the exam the first time. The only other Wisconsin

school with such a high first-time pass rate was UW-Madison, which ranked No. 5 with an 85 percent pass rate.

UWL has consistently had one of the highest CPA exam pass rates in the country, says Will Maas, UWL Accountancy Department chair.

"We have strong students, and the faculty in the Accountancy Department, CBA and UWL as a whole focus on student learning, so our students graduate with a solid foundation for passing the CPA exam," he says.

### ABOUT THE CPA EXAM

The certified public accountant exam is a rigorous, 14-hour exam that measures average knowledge in a broad range of accounting and business concepts. Passing the CPA exam is among the requirements for licensure.



JEFF BLOXDORF

A photo of the group of alumni friends in 1980.



# REMEMBERING “BLOX”

Group of alumni create scholarship to honor friend



Jeff Bloxdorf, pictured in the top row, third from the left, organized an annual weekend get together for his college friends that included a golf tournament.

The love of La Crosse ran deep in Jeff Bloxdorf. He and his wife, Lisa, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary here. Jeff, affectionately known as “Blox,” also organized an annual weekend get-together for his college friends in La Crosse for about 35 years. It included a golf tournament and traditional stops around town.

Jeff unexpectedly died at the age of 57, but the tradition he worked so hard to maintain continues, because of the friendships he built.

At the 2015 event, the group raised more than \$25,000 to endow a scholarship in his name — the Jeff Bloxdorf Memorial Scholarship for future UWL finance students.



CLICK IMAGE TO WATCH “FRIENDS REMEMBER BLOX”

## HONORING A FRIEND

The Jeff Bloxdorf Memorial Scholarship honors Bloxdorf who earned degrees in finance and accountancy from UWL and was president of UWL’s finance club while in college. The contribution will also put Bloxdorf’s name on one of the rooms in the new student center to open early spring semester 2017.

For Jeff, it was all about getting as many friends from UWL back together in the city that originally brought them together.

“You make some of your best friends in college, even if you don’t realize it at the time,” says Steve Schwager, ’80. “Thanks to Blox organizing this, we were able to pick up every year like we never left.”

Kathy O’Connor, ’80, a longtime friend, says they’ve kept the tradition alive because they love being with each other. “We always played at the same club, had the same tee time and met at the same place Friday night.”

Had the tragedy happened to anyone in the group, they would have rallied in the same way, says Lisa Bloxdorf, Jeff’s wife.

“When you lose someone, you feel like you are going down this path by yourself. Only me and my kids can go through it,” she says. “But I feel like they’ve been right here next to me holding my hand. I’m so grateful. So many people don’t have that, and I don’t know how they get through something like this.”



Onalaska Mayor Joe Chilsen, '86, earned an MBA at UWL. He has taught many classes in UWL's Marketing Department.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

## Two Mayors

"Before I came to UWL, I was always good at making money, but what the MBA program showed me was how to look at issues with a more strategic view — at the 32,000-foot level," explains Chilsen. "That's where all this collaboration comes in."

### CREATING A COUNTY-WIDE TOURISM HUB

Tourism has become an increasingly important source of income and employment for both cities. La Crosse County recently was listed among the top 10 Wisconsin counties

in the state for its total tourism impact, moving from No. 12 in 2014 to No. 9 in 2015.

Chilsen and Kabat have taken a collaborative and strategic look at their city's tourism efforts and realized they could do it better together.

They got the wheels rolling on the collaborative, county-wide work that led to the creation of the La Crosse County Convention and Visitors Bureau in early 2016. The entity merges all of the tourism agencies in the county into one regional tourism hub, ultimately saving taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars and more effectively promoting tourism of the region.

"We rely on tourism and recreation for a significant part of our economy, so having a regional group that can pool resources and effectively promote the La Crosse area will be very important," says Kabat.

Each municipality has its own strength and weaknesses, explains Chilsen, so they can accomplish more by leaning on one another. In Onalaska, the county-wide bureau has saved the city at least a quarter million dollars a year while giving it better marketing, says Chilsen. That's allowed the city to spend more money on other projects, such as the development of its waterfront property.

Likewise, Kabat attributes many of La Crosse's significant accomplishments in recent years to collaboration. One of the most notable signs of progress is economic development in downtown and commercial areas. In the last couple of years, La Crosse has had more than \$1 billion in new investment in construction via building permits, notes Kabat.

"The mayor is one voice and seldom do things get done by one person," says Kabat. "Reaching out and working with citizens, business people and other key stakeholders is the most effective way to produce results that have a positive impact on our community."

### TEACHING IS IMPORTANT TOO

In addition to running cities, Kabat and Chilsen also teach in the CBA, where they often share experiences from the job and life lessons.

"People are drawn to stories and how the concepts and ideas relate to the world outside of the classroom," says Kabat. "I believe these experiences — both good and bad — help us to grow as people."

“I recall a number of classes at UWL that required group projects and working with peers. These projects taught me the importance of clear and effective communication, collaborating with others to complete complicated tasks and projects, and getting to know the people you work with so that you can be an effective team.”

— La Crosse Mayor Tim Kabat, '88



La Crosse Mayor Tim Kabat, '88, earned an undergraduate degree in business administration. He teaches business research and communication at UWL. He has also taught microeconomics and public policy.

Chilsen, who has taught nearly every course in the marketing curriculum over 22 years, teaches students about not only the business bottom line, but also the importance of service. “I want students to see service to others as an integral part of their lives,” he says.

Chilsen loves teaching the introductory course, Principles of Marketing. These students are taking their first business classes, so he gets to see the most change in them, he says.

“I see changes in the way they think about business — beginning to understand how decisions they make impact the overall business,” he says.

They begin to see the business picture from the 32,000-foot view, like he did as an MBA student, as well as the collaboration it takes to get there.

## WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE?

Mayor Kabat and Mayor Chilsen offer advice for CBA students and recent graduates looking to make a difference in their communities.

“*Get as many varied experiences in business* as you can because those experiences are what you'll retain and use later. Some of the best experiences I draw from are from the worst company I worked for. I learned what not to do. And ask alums and teachers as many things about their experiences as you can. We've already made the mistakes.”

— Onalaska Mayor Joe Chilsen, '86

“*Get involved in your community* — whether that's volunteering, serving on a committee, helping a non-profit or charity — basically, try to make life a little better for someone every day. It is so easy to criticize what's going on and to give in to the naysayers. It is much more challenging and ultimately more rewarding to roll up your sleeves and be a part of the solution.”

— La Crosse Mayor Tim Kabat, '88



# STUDENTS IN

## STUDENTS ATTEND AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

UWL's American Marketing Association chapter earned an honorable mention in the Collegiate Case Competition during the AMA International Collegiate Conference March 17-19 in New Orleans. The case competition required each participating AMA chapter team to create a comprehensive marketing plan for Hershey's ICE BREAKERS COOL BLASTS chews.

UWL's Marketing Department and the CBA Dean's Office funded UWL students' attendance at the conference, which provides aspiring marketers professional development opportunities, career advice, competitions, networking and more.

UWL senior Emily Sherwin says she also learned about personal development, with topics such as personal branding. Sherwin and other attendees plan to share what they learned with AMA members to make their experience in AMA more valuable.

"I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to attend," says Sherwin. "I will unquestionably apply what I learned throughout my AMA, educational and career futures."



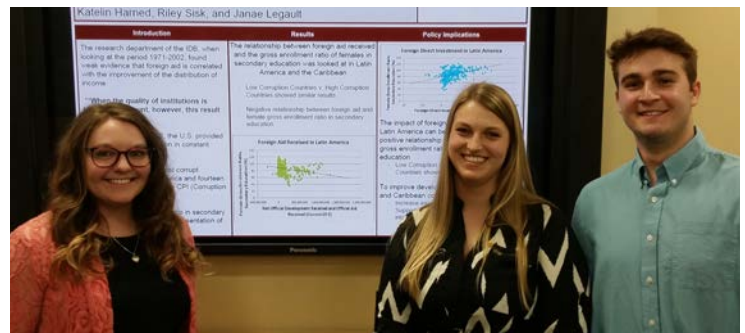
UWL students pictured during the American Marketing Association conference banquet are, from left; Adam Letto, Kayla Peterson, Emily Sherwin, Anna Ostrowski, Morgan Jacobs and Jordan Kvasnicka.

## INQUIRIES IN ECONOMICS

The Economics Department concludes every semester with the Celebration of Student Inquiry in Economics. Students present their honors theses and coursework in several 300+ level courses.

The celebration begins with a keynote presentation delivered by a graduating economics honors student. Then students from multiple classes present their final class projects in a joint public forum poster session.

Among the presentations, this year's managerial economics students applied what they learned in class to research projects for local business clients. Attendees from this semester's event included students' clients from Chaseburg Manufacturing, Clearwater Farm and the Holmen Area Community Center.



Student presenters from left are Katelin Harnes, Janae Legault and Riley Sisk.



Students presenting at the Celebration of Student Inquiry in Economics are from left, Luke Schmit, Zach Cowell and Matt Vesco.





# THEIR ELEMENT



UWL student Ben Kivi, right, delivers a sales pitch to mock buyer Don Crain, Inland Printing, during the UWL Sales Competition March 4, in Wimberly Hall.

## STUDENTS LEARN TACTICS IN SALES

UWL students received marketing advice from 12 area business professionals during the 3rd annual UWL Sales Competition in March. Students had 20 minutes to sell a product to a buyer, played by one of the business professionals. Other business professionals acted as judges. The top four students won cash — and an opportunity to move on to the national competition, the Great Northwoods Sales Warm-up, in fall. Associate Lecturer Stacy Trisler, who advises the students, says UWL has a successful track record at the national competition. Two UWL students obtained full-time jobs from the 2015 event.



The winners of the UWL Sales Competition were, from left; Elliot Statz, fourth; Mikayla Williams, third; Adam Letto, second; and Ben Stauss, first.



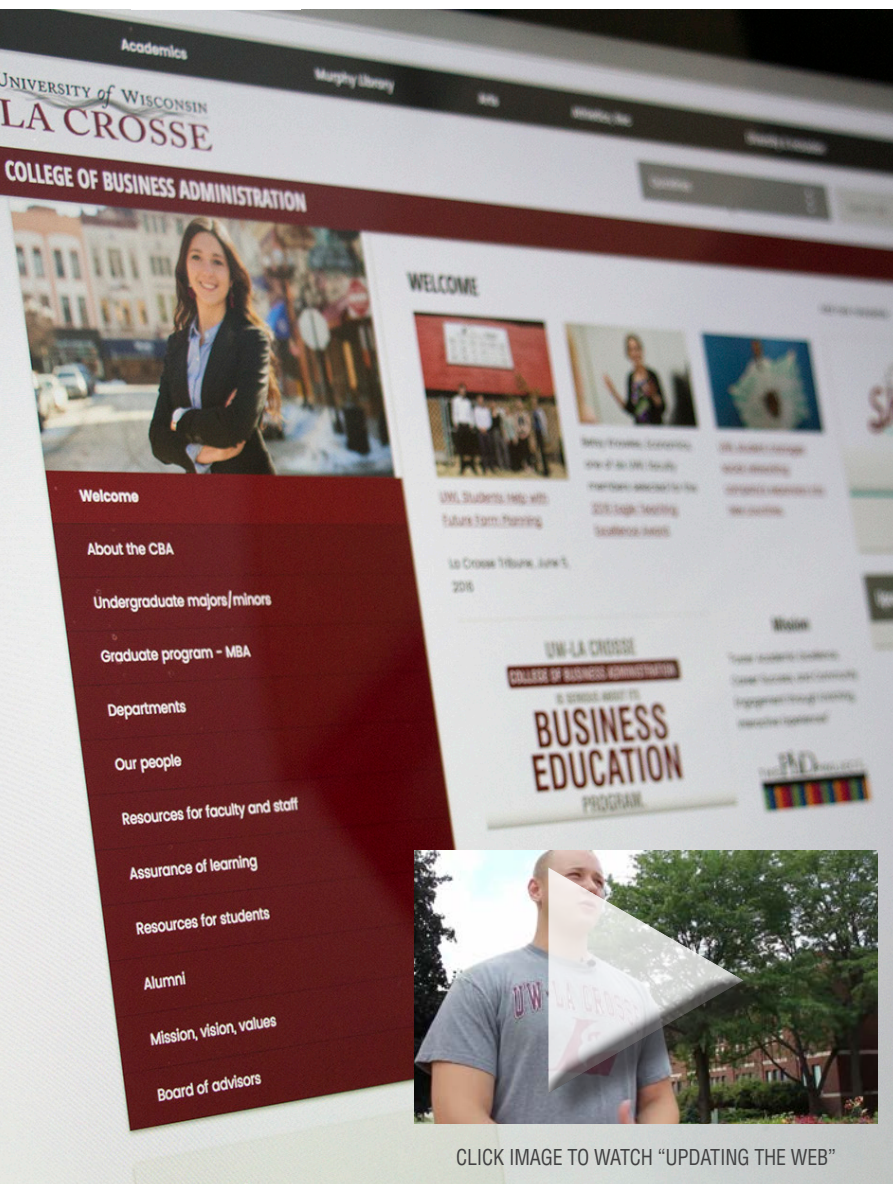
Associate Lecturer Stacy Trisler, who advises the students, congratulates UWL student Ben Stauss, who earned first place in the sales competition.

## ECONOMICS GOES OUTDOORS



It was the perfect day to get outside and solve micro-founded dynamic general equilibrium models. That's what James Murray, associate professor of Economics, was thinking at the end of spring semester. In preparation for final exams, Murray took his Economics 305 class outside to solve some of the most challenging problems he could come up with — using sidewalk chalk. Students each solved several problems and then presented the solutions to the class.

"The students managed to enjoy a nice day and have a very productive class," he says



CLICK IMAGE TO WATCH "UPDATING THE WEB"

# UPDATE!

## Students lead research efforts to revamp CBA website

When the College of Business Administration dean asks you to do something, you say “yes,” according to student Isaac Mansur. The soon-to-be graduate was eager to help when he and two other classmates in a management class were asked to research changes to bring more students to the CBA website and make it more useful.

“It was great to actually work with the the dean of the college of business,” says the management major. “She very much embraced the fact that the students were the ones to idea generate for it.”

### MANSUR EXPLAINS WEBSITE PROJECT

To find ideas for the changes, the students researched other business school pages and interviewed their peers.

The proposed change favored most by the students added an events calendar on the page. The students also liked the idea of adding video prominently on the website, creating a donation opportunity and adding statistics about the school.

Changes on the website are underway and will likely continue to evolve.

“This will give me a reason to go to the website this semester,” says Mansur.

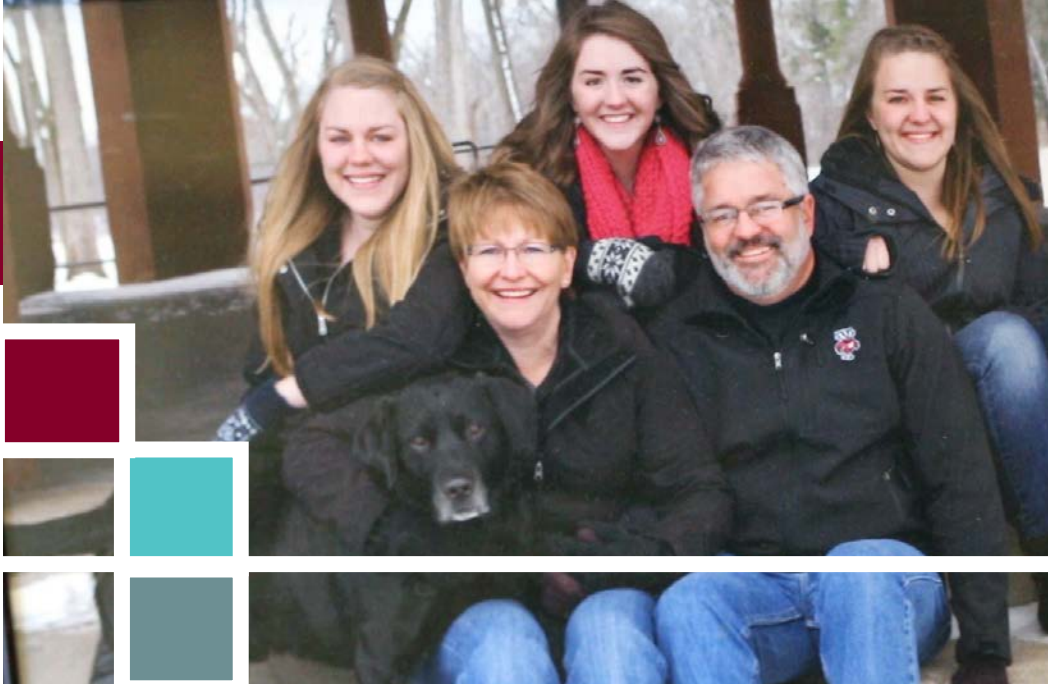
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### ACCOUNTANCY

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- Adler, R. W., **Liyanarachchi, G.** (2015). Successful authors' views on the editorial review processes of accounting journals. *Pacific Accounting Review*, 27(4), 411-437.
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The Jensen family. Sandy Jensen, pictured bottom left, and Alyssa Jensen, top right, share a special bond in the accountancy field.

# BORN TO BE — IN ACCOUNTANCY

## Mother-daughter alums bond over career field

Sandy Jensen is ecstatic in her role as partner at Hawkins Ash CPAs in La Crosse. Recently promoted, she has been working with the company for 15 years. “I kind of always wanted to be partner,” says the 2001 alumna.

Jensen’s path to the leadership position didn’t start off so smooth. She dropped out of UW-Madison because it wasn’t the right fit. Then, she started working part-time while being a stay-at-home mom.

Jensen decided to go back to school when she and her husband moved back to La Crosse around 1994. “I went to UWL, signed up for classes, paid, then found out I was

pregnant,” she remembers. “Now I was a non-traditional student and pregnant.”

Thanks to help from her professors and family, Jensen was able to graduate in 2001 with a degree in accountancy.

Coincidentally, Jensen’s daughter Alyssa —



CLICK IMAGE TO WATCH “SECRET BOND”

the one she was pregnant with as a UWL student — followed a similar path.

Alyssa started college at UW-Madison as a history major before transferring to UWL and switching her major to accountancy. “I never thought I’d be an accountant,” she says. “Now I just enjoy history on the side.”

The Jensen accountants now share a special bond beyond how close-knit the family already is.

“I just want her to be happy and be wherever she needs to be,” says Sandy. “And right now she’s there. I couldn’t be more proud of her.”

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**Kim, S.**, Seo, H., Tompkins, D. L. (2016). The effects of capital infusions after IPO on diversification and cash holdings. *Journal of Accounting and Finance*, 16(1), 2016), 124-134

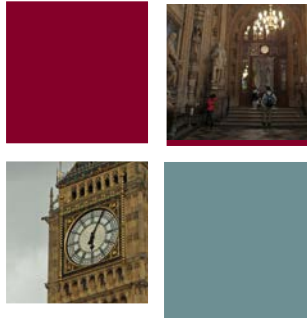
### MANAGEMENT

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Participants in the UWLondon program.

# BUSINESS LAW IN LONDON

Students explore a city that was foundational for U.S. law, government

This summer UWL Associate Professor Elizabeth Brown taught students about the historic roots of U.S. law in the place where it all began: London, England.

Eight UWL students took Brown's class as part of the UWLondon program, June 25-July 23, organized through UWL International Education and Engagement. Students signed up for any two of the four courses offered in London, which included Brown's class on "The Legal and Ethical Environment of Business in London." Other courses were in psychology/sociology, history and English.

"One of the most important learning experiences for me was learning about how our law system has come from England's common law system," explains Anna Sausen, a UWL junior and business management major. "I had the opportunity to experience this first hand."

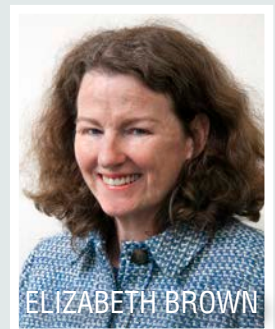
On one of the many group excursions, students saw one of the four remaining copies of the Magna Carta, which English barons presented to their king in the 13th Century. The one-page document limited the rule of the king and became the founding text for

Western constitutional government. Students also visited places that shaped the development of the Magna Carta and the development of the British Parliament. The U.S. founding fathers used British Parliament as a template for the federal House of Representatives and Senate, as well as the bicameral legislatures used by most state legislatures, notes Brown.

Brown took students to visit the Inns of Court and Chancery, where barristers have been trained throughout history. They watched part of a civil trial at the Royal Courts of Justice, and visited the House of Parliament and the Central Criminal Court, more commonly known as Old Bailey. Watching the trials was particularly memorable, says UWL junior Thorin Borreson. While some of the minor procedural details differed, it became clear to him that English Law and U.S. law are still very similar.

"I also had the opportunity to see just how much of our nation's culture, traditions and history are a direct result of its English heritage, while in the most culturally-influential city in the United Kingdom," he says.

**FACULTY MEMBER IS A GREAT FIT FOR PROGRAM**



Elizabeth Brown, associate professor of accountancy, is uniquely qualified to teach in the UWLondon program as she has practiced law in both the U.S. and England. She is licensed as a lawyer in Texas, Illinois, England and Wales. She practiced in the U.S. for four years prior to working in corporate and securities law for Clifford Chance, one of the Magic Circle firms in London for almost four years.



Betsy Knowles, senior lecturer in the Economics Department, earned a 2016 Eagle Teaching Excellence Award.

# TOP TEACHER

## Economics teacher earns 2016 Eagle Teaching Excellence Award

Economics faculty member Betsy Knowles wants students to walk away from her classes first and foremost as great problem solvers.

“I want them thinking about problems and how to address them,” she says. “Any career will have that.”

Knowles own career success has been largely based on her ability to problem solve. While doing community development work for the Cooperative Extension Service in the early 1980s, Knowles used research to help communities better understand issues from development of agricultural land to funding low-use transportation routes. She was helping people solve problems, and also teaching them about the potential solutions.

It helped Knowles see a future in teaching, which led to her next career step as a lecturer in UWL’s Economics Department in 1986. As a teacher, she needed to continuously assess and adapt her teaching style to improve student learning — another form of problem solving. Over the years, she went from a lecture format to actively engaging students in the learning process.

“There is always something to fix. That’s what is great about teaching — you are constantly learning from the students and from that thing you are trying to accomplish — student learning.”

—Betsy Knowles

“I never believe I’ve got it down,” says Knowles in regard to teaching. “There is always something to fix. That’s what is great about teaching — you are constantly learning from the students and from that thing you are trying to accomplish — student learning.”

But it’s apparent Knowles has figured out quite a bit about teaching over her nearly 30-year UWL career. She was among the six UWL faculty nominated by students and selected for the 2016 Eagle Teaching Excellence Award, which recognizes excellence in teaching.

In more recent years, Knowles has taken a leadership role in the CBA’s assessment of learning efforts. She was the CBA’s assessment coordinator in 2013 when the college received a national award from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)

for its use of outcomes assessment to improve student learning.

Knowles also developed the idea for UWL’s Assessment Commons, an annual forum for faculty to share and collaborate on methods to measure and improve student learning.

While Knowles likes the data-driven research to verify if learning has occurred, she also enjoys simply watching it happen. She likes being present at the moment when students move from asking questions to questioning, and then to finding potential answers.

“It is when the understanding of a framework or model or point of view creates a desire to understand the world through a different lens,” she explains. “Teaching becomes learning how to foster those moments.”

# STUDY ABROAD, LIFE ABROAD

## International experience inspires translation of ‘them’ to ‘friend’

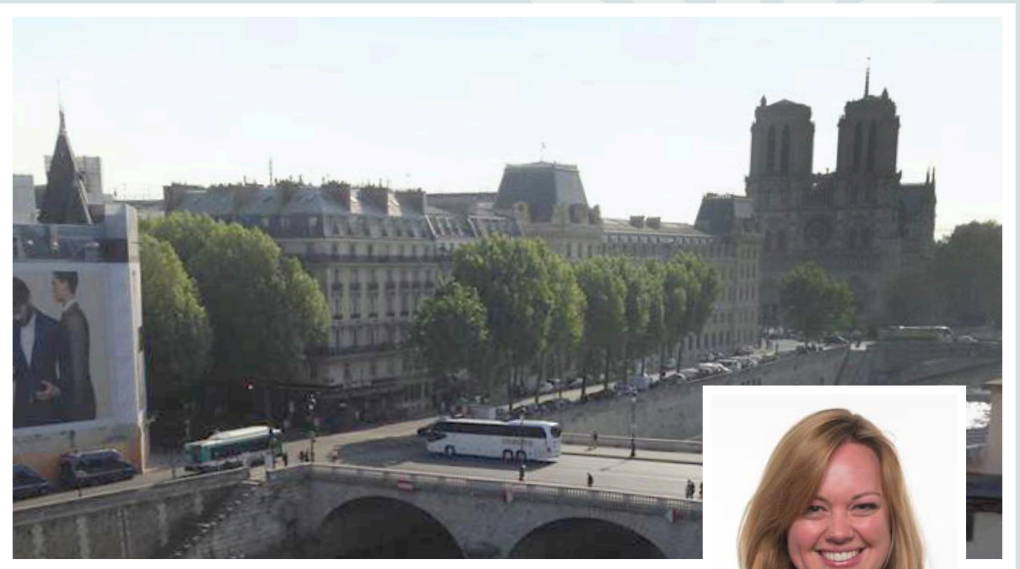
What Rebecca (Michel) Rosinski remembers most about studying abroad in France was meeting 60 Syrians studying at the same foreign school.

A UWL junior at the time, Rosinski had heard about Syria in the U.S. news. It was “a scary place.” But that became a hard fact to reconcile with the 60 people who welcomed her with open arms, taught her Arabic and how to dance to traditional music.

A month after Rosinski returned home to the U.S. in August 2001, the September 11 attacks unfolded. The Syrians she’d met abroad were the first among her friends to check in to see if she was OK. “I have no idea where they are now, but every time I see an image of a Syrian refugee, I see my friends,” she says. “It truly breaks my heart.”

Rosinski’s study abroad experience led to a stint in the Peace Corps and then returning to France to become a language assistant and eventually a permanent resident of the country in 2008. Rosinski’s first full-time job in France was at P&G. She now works as a marketing manager with CEMS, a global Master in International Management degree program taught in 30 countries.

Through her work, she’s visited places like Hong Kong, Singapore, Russia, Brazil, Chile, South Africa, Norway, Poland and Spain. She has colleagues all over the world. She continues to find more friendships and more commonalities than differences.



Rebecca (Michel) Rosinski, '03, an international business and marketing major with a minor in French, studied abroad in Caen, France at UWL. Since then, she has made a career in the country.

“Now, anytime I hear about events on the news, my mind instantly translates ‘them’ to ‘friend,’” she says. “We are all interconnected so much more than we realize and the moment we realize that and treat each other using the ‘golden rule,’ this world will become a more peaceful place to live.”

With an incredibly “intense” job market in France, Rosinski was grateful to have a liberal arts education with exposure to diverse cur-

riculum — a contrast to her French peers who focused more heavily on one core subject.

“Having had exposure to courses in psychology, statistics and economics on top of the more focused courses in marketing allowed me to have a well-rounded perspective in comparison to a lot of my peers,” she says. “There’s no way I would have gotten this far in my career if it hadn’t been for the amazing preparation I received in my undergrad at UWL.”

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# A mountain of opportunity

## International student gains business know-how amid the bluffs

When UWL student Matias Maffei came to La Crosse from Santiago, Chile, he felt comfortable — geographically speaking.

La Crosse's mini mountains — the bluffs — reminded him of Chile's rugged mountain ranges.

But UW-La Crosse made him feel comfortable in more ways than one. Before coming to UWL for the Master of Business Administration program, Maffei had a real estate career in Chile that was growing increasingly uncomfortable. With gaps in his business knowhow, it was difficult to get a raise or apply for higher-level management positions. Business tasks he was asked to do — from accounting to marketing— required more skills than what he'd learned as an undergraduate.

"If someone asked me 'What is your yearly business plan or projections?' I had to Google it and make one," he says. "Every job I did was always related to business in some way. I couldn't seem to move forward."

An MBA seemed like a reasonable next step, so Maffei, his wife and their three-year old

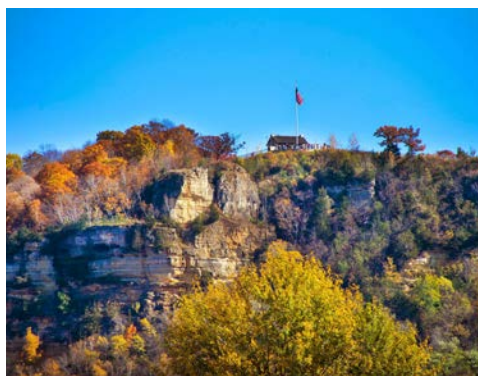


Matias Maffei is an international student who left his career in Chile two years ago to start UWL's Master of Business Administration program.

daughter packed up. They left his real estate career, relatives and home to board a plane for La Crosse in August 2014.

The smaller, Midwestern city was on his radar after he'd lived in Stevens Point 10 years earlier while earning his undergraduate degree. While Stevens Point didn't have an MBA program, UWL did.

Maffei admits it was risky to leave everything behind in Chile to start a new life. And he had



Grandad Bluff on the east side of La Crosse creates a beautiful backdrop to the UW-La Crosse campus. The bluffs around the city reminded international student Matias Maffei of his mountainous home in Chile.

initial doubts about his decision when he received a 60 percent on his first statistics test at UWL.

"I thought maybe I don't have the brains to do this kind of thing — I'm not a math guy," he recalls. "All of these insecurities started happening. I was scared that I had started a failing process."

But instead of backing out, Maffei took more business classes — eventually taking statistics again. Things got easier.

"I think my brain went into survival mode," he jokes. "I realized you can learn anything you want, if you really want to."

Today, a recent MBA graduate, he's ready to try the world of business again.

"I feel more confident in math-related subjects like accounting, finance and statistics — which I really like — by the way," he says.

Maffei aims to start an international career based in the U.S. He'd love to stay in La Crosse where he's found the mountain-like landscape and rivers are a beautiful backdrop for raising a family.



# WORLDLY NETWORKER

UWL student manages social networking company's expansion into new countries



UWL sophomore Yousaf Almazrou, a management major and international business minor, interned at Yik Yak this summer.

International Student Yousaf Almazrou is making the most of his time in the U.S. When he's not leading UWL's International Student Organization or listening to debate on the student senate floor, he's considering how to expand American social media applications in foreign countries.

Almazrou was hired as an international marketing intern this summer at the social networking start up company, Yik Yak. He managed the application's growth in Saudi Arabia, as well as several other Persian Gulf countries.

"I'm trying to take advantage of being here in the U.S.," he says. "That's an awesome privilege."

Almazrou is thankful for his UWL advisors who encouraged him to apply for prestigious internship opportunities like this one. After four, back-to-back, 30-minute interviews with Yik Yak via Google Hangouts, Almazrou discovered he landed the job.

"We loved his energy from the first time we met him," says Elisa Rossi, director of International Growth at Yik Yak. "What helped seal the deal was that he was knowledgeable, insightful and a strategic thinker."

Almazrou's role entailed data analysis on application users, developing marketing strategies, engaging social media communities and more. He relied on UWL training in communications, statistics and economics.

"UWL classes have absolutely been helpful to me to actually do this job," he says.

Almazrou also brings a lot of experience from his campus involvement. In addition to being a full-time student, he is also president of the International Student Organization, a student senator and part of an Islamophobia Working Group on campus, which has been dedicated to combating prejudice against Islam or Muslims.

"Sometimes I think international students don't feel like their voices are heard," says Miranda Panzer, UWL international student advisor. "He is doing his best to show that international students can have their voices heard by being involved in these different organizations."

Almazrou would eventually like to pursue a career in international business.

## UWL RESOURCES HELP

Almazrou had assistance from UWL Career Services and the Office of International Education and Engagement with everything from resume writing to processing paperwork required for work in the U.S. UWL Career Services assisted students in setting up 137 internships this summer, including 123 taken for credit.

## WHAT'S YIK YAK?

Yik Yak is a location-based, social network located on more than 2,000 college campuses.





UWL senior and softball player Emily Holldorf is a double major in marketing and management, with a minor in sustainable business.

Photo by Jim Lund.



# WHAT A SCORE!

## Student-athlete GPA consistently outpaces the pack

**3.23.** That was the combined GPA of UW-La Crosse student athletes in 2015-16. UWL student athletes have a long history of earning a strong GPA — surpassing their peers at schools in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC), as well as UWL’s overall student body GPA.

The 2014-15 school year marked the 16th consecutive year UWL recorded the highest combined GPA among the nine Wisconsin schools that make up the (WIAC). Although conference statistics aren’t in yet for 2015-16, student athletes did again surpass the overall UWL student body GPA in 2015-16, which was 3.19. That marks the 14th time in the last 15 years that UWL student athlete GPA was higher than the overall student body GPA.

UWL senior and softball player Emily Holldorf says participation in athletics nurtures a

competitive drive both in and outside of the classroom.

“I am always looking for ways to better myself,” she says. “Being a management major, softball has given me opportunities to lead and to gain hands-on management experience while doing something I love.”

Holldorf says she prioritizes working hard in the classroom because she owes it to herself to obtain a quality education.

“I think a lot of people fail to see that most learning correlates with the effort you put in, and we always owe it to ourselves to try our hardest,” she says.

### FACT:

The CBA had 114 student athletes in 2015-16, making up more than five percent of business majors.

## ACCOLADES FOR CBA STUDENT ATHLETES

**Jonah Weisse**, Track & Field, Academic All-American

**Justin Anderson**, Baseball, Academic All-American

**Brooke Baldwin**, Softball, Academic All-American

**Simon Brandt**, Tennis, In Life nominee (UWL Athletics award)

**Lucas Collom**, Basketball, True-Grit Award, captain

**Brendan Deiss**, Track & Field, Academic All-American

**Kimberly Drangeid**, Tennis, nominated by UWL faculty for In School Award

**Ian Gregory Ewers**, Cross Country and Track & Field, Academic All-American

**Jennifer Graham**, Tennis, captain

**Katie Henriksen**, Track & Field and Cross Country, UWL Scholar Athlete, Academic All-American, captain

**Emily Holldorf**, Softball, UWL Scholar Athlete, Academic All-American, student-of-the-year nominee, captain

**Benjamin Jordan**, Track & Field, UWL Scholar Athlete, Academic All-American, student-of-the-year nominee

**Anna Landgraf**, Swimming & Diving, CSCAA Scholar All-American Team

**Matthew Lorenz**, Track & Field, UWL Scholar Athlete

**Michael Rosenberg**, Cross Country, Academic All-American, True-Grit Award nominee

**Abbey Singleton**, Cross Country, UWL Scholar Athlete

**Samuel Smith**, Track & Field, Academic All-American

**Leah Spankowski**, Gymnastics, Academic All-American

**Jared Staeger**, Basketball, UWL Scholar Athlete, male athlete of the year, nominated by UWL faculty for In School Award

**Ryan Weber**, Football, male athlete-of-the-year nominee

**Ryan C. Weinmann**, Wrestling, Academic All-American

**Emilie Wiltzius**, Softball, UWL Scholar Athlete

**Cameron Wright**, Football, UWL Scholar Athlete

# CBA HAPPENINGS



CLEARWATER FARM IN ONALASKA

## REAPING REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

Students apply economics lessons at local farm

UWL business students used their economics know-how to help a local farm business grow spring semester.

Students in two of Assistant Professor Mary Hamman's economics classes assisted Clearwater Farm in Onalaska with business planning. Clearwater is a 19th century Onalaska dairy farm that became a non-profit organization dedicated to teaching and advocating for sustainable use of natural, architectural, historical and agricultural resources.

The class helped Clearwater develop strategies for financial sustainability of farm operations and for increasing the farm's impact on the greater Seven Rivers Region. They also created an organizational plan for



UWL Student Samantha McClaire, right, and classmate Nick Federspiel during an initial meet-and-greet with Clearwater Farm.

the Farm's Board of Directors and presented plans at the end of spring semester.

"My aim is to encourage students to apply basic economics and business research tools to authentic problems," explains Hamman. "When they work with real organizations there's more on the line than just their grade — they have an opportunity to make an impact that extends beyond the classroom and develop skills that are of value in the workplace."



## MBA HONORS

### Online program earns top rank

The University of Wisconsin MBA Consortium program was once again recognized as a top online MBA program in the nation by *US News & World Report*.

The UW MBA Consortium tied for 12th in the 2016 Best Online MBA rankings, placing it among the top five percent of online MBA programs in the U.S. The rankings are based on factors such as admissions selectivity, reputation for excellence among peer institutions and academic and career support services offered to students.

The UW-MBA Consortium provides students with the opportunity to complete their MBA degree completely online by partnering with four AACSB accredited business schools within the UW System: UW-Eau Claire, UW-La Crosse, UW Oshkosh and UW Parkside.

UW System's program stands out when it comes to affordability and offerings, says Jessica Franson, distance learning coordinator for the UW MBA consortium. Tuition is lower than nearly all other highly-ranked, online MBA programs nationwide, she says. The entirely-online program gives students flexibility. Through the partnership, students have access to 35 elective courses that cover a wide array of topics, so they can customize their educational experience to best fit their individual interests. In addition, consortium staff strives to provide students with access to the same services and technology support students would receive on campus, says Franson.

Click to go to:

>> [US NEWS & WORLD REPORT RANKINGS](#)

>> [UW-MBA CONSORTIUM](#)

## LEARNING FROM A LEADER

### Former CFO of major car company gives students a big-picture business view



Ana Iglesias, assistant professor of management

Ana Iglesias gave her strategic management students a bird's eye view of business this summer.

Iglesias, an assistant professor of management, invited Deepak Ahuja, the chief financial officer of Tesla Motors from 2008-15, to talk to her business capstone course via video conference. This is the last class business students take before graduation.

During their years in the CBA, students have polished skills finance, marketing or management. What they may lack, notes Iglesias, is the understanding of how those fields fit together to contribute to a company's overall strategy and success.

"It is easy for them — and all of us — to get so absorbed by our day-to-day activities that we lose sight of the big picture," she says.

But learning to see that larger picture is a matter of professional survival in a country where new innovations are constantly changing how businesses operate, she adds. Iglesias gives examples such as Uber, an online transportation network, which transformed the transportation industry, as well as, the rise of "robot" financial advisors that are changing the financial industry. As students embark on careers, they will need to constantly question whether their knowledge and experience are still valuable, she says.

"Indeed, different from their parents' generation, these students may not be able to work for the same organization over many years, so they must develop an entrepreneurial spirit and a strategic mindset," she says.

Ahuja, who was part of the team that strategized to make the mass production of electric vehicles possible, revolutionizing the auto industry, was the perfect person to speak about the importance of a strategic mindset, notes Iglesias.

## QUESTIONS ANYONE?

Deepak Ahuja, Tesla Motors former CFO, shared his career and challenges Tesla faced on its path of growth. He also answered many questions from students including this one.

Q: What is one of the most important skills for someone entering the workforce?

A: Soft skills — learn how to work in teams.

# ALUMNI RECONNECT

CBA alumni met at after work socials in Madison and Chicago in April. The Alumni Association networking events were also an opportunity to meet CBA Dean Laura Milner, who started Aug. 1, 2015.

The Alumni Association plans CBA alumni events in the Madison and Chicago area each year, as well as many other alumni events throughout the year. To make sure you receive an email invite, update your contact information at [www.uwlaumni.org/whatsnew.php](http://www.uwlaumni.org/whatsnew.php).



From left, Heidi Wiess, '05; CBA Dean Laura Milner, and Emily Arnau, '05



Samantha and Brian Mulrooney, both '09



Dave Wambach, '81, and Pam Boersma, '82



From left, Dan Kellogg, '01; Jay Scott, '85; Angie Kellogg, '92, and Janie Morgan, '85 & '86

# Building Bridges

**CBA**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - LA CROSSE

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse