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Maryland Smith professor Jennifer Carson Marr offers a consummate professional’s guide to office romance.

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Deloitte tax consultant Ekaterina “Katya” Tour ’17, MS ’18, made the most of a Maryland tennis scholarship.
QUEST HONORS PROGRAM

Three-year multidisciplinary undergraduate program by the numbers, 2019-20

1,200+ ALUMNI

WHAT DO STUDENTS GAIN?
Responses based on 2019 graduation surveys:
- 97% can communicate ideas more effectively in oral presentations
- 97% feel more prepared to work on diverse teams
- 92% say they have a better story to tell recruiters
- 87% report an improved experience at UMD
- 87% can network and communicate more effectively in diverse professional settings
- 87% are more confident in their ability to get a job
- 82% feel more prepared to solve complex problems

280 INCOMING APPLICANTS
- 90 admitted (32% acceptance rate)

AVERAGE GPA OF INCOMING STUDENTS 3.69
Undergraduate students in the QUEST Honors Program see the potential for a transportation revolution when the light-rail Purple Line opens.

Working with Kimley-Horn, a planning and design engineering consulting firm, students in a capstone consulting course analyzed the 16-mile route and made recommendations for alternative transportation options over the next 20 years.

“The whole project involved analyzing large amounts of data and creating predictive models based on the information that we gathered,” said computer science student Sasha Miller.

She and four classmates presented their findings to Kimley-Horn on May 9, 2019. Among other issues, the students considered Purple Line implications for University of Maryland cyclists, motorists and pedestrians.

“Our team really wanted to give predictions and recommendations that would better the campus not only for students, but everyone on campus,” Miller said.

Others on the team included finance student Michael Khizgilov, engineering student Mary Smith and computer science students Puneeth Bikkumanla and Kelli Webber.

The QUEST course was taught by instructors Christina Elson and David Ashley, and the Kimley-Horn project champion was Maryland engineering alumnus Michael Shindledecker ’16.

QUEST is a multidisciplinary program for select students from three participating schools, has produced more than 1,200 graduates in 27 years.

QUEST STUDENTS SUPPORT AFRICAN ENTREPRENEURS

Connecting smallholder farmers with low-income consumers creates a range of challenges for Stawi Foods, maker of instant fortified porridge in Kenya.

A team of student consultants at the University of Maryland studied the case in spring 2019 and presented recommendations to company founder Eric Muthomi on May 9, 2019.

Muthomi came to College Park, Md., with entrepreneurs from nine other African startups to hear deliverables following a semester-long project in the Designing Innovative Systems class taught by professor Joseph P. Bailey, director of the QUEST Honors Program.

The experiential learning activity, organized in partnership with the United States African Development Foundation, paired multidisciplinary teams of undergraduate QUEST students with companies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda.

The Stawi team, which called itself “Goldilocks’ Four Bears,” included students from Maryland Smith, the A. James Clark School of Engineering and the College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences.

Following the presentations, the African entrepreneurs attended an evening QUEST conference with Maryland Smith former dean Alex Triantis.

QUEST, a hands-on program for select students from three participating schools, has produced more than 1,200 graduates in 27 years.

PLANNING FOR THE PURPLE LINE

Stawi Foods founder Eric Muthomi, center, meets with undergraduate students in the QUEST Honors Program on May 9, 2019.
Jasmine Snead, MBA ’21, has been skating since she was 5. But as a person of color, she struggled to find tights that matched her skin tone.

“I was forced to wear tights, mesh and other paraphernalia in the wrong skin tones because my shade was not readily available,” says Snead, honored on May 2, 2019, as Student Entrepreneur of the Year at the fifth annual Rudy Awards. “It’s frustrating to practice your passion while feeling like you’re in someone else’s skin.”

Her solution was to dye her own tights to match her complexion, but the process was slow and messy. “Years and a stained bathroom later, my mom and I perfected the process of dyeing tights,” Snead says.

When she arrived at the University of Maryland as an undergraduate student, Snead met other performance athletes who faced similar challenges.

She and two classmates, figure skater Imani Rickerby ’17 (Public Health) and dancer Sydney Parker ’18 (Communication/PR), brought the problem to the Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship at Maryland Smith. Working with Dingman mentors, the partners studied the market and launched Aurora Tights in 2019.

The company, winner of the $15,000 grand prize at the 2019 Pitch Dingman Competition chaired by Robert Hisaoka ’79, sells tights in the full spectrum of skin colors.

“We believe buying tights in your shade should be as easy clicking ‘add to cart’ online or shopping at your local sporting goods store,” says Snead, one of DC INNO’s 25 under 25.

The partners started by interviewing parents at local ice rinks and dance teams to gauge demand. Soon they made an important discovery. “It’s not just women of color who have these issues,” Snead says. “Almost nobody likes their tights.”

Their vision is to grow Aurora Tights into a full-service apparel supplier for skaters, dancers, cheerleaders and other performance athletes.

Besides serving as Aurora Tights chief financial officer, Snead has continued her Maryland education. She graduated in 2017 with a Bachelor of Arts in political science and government and African American studies, and is now a joint Master of Public Policy and Smith MBA candidate. /DJ/
Students Spend Summer Growing Startups

THE VIBE WAS DECIDEDLY California cool—a bright white and modern wood industrial office space buzzing with entrepreneurs hard at work building their businesses, sipping cold brew and kombucha.

Not Silicon Valley, but instead a WeWork in College Park, Md., where 15 student teams were selected by Maryland Smith’s Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship to take part in its competitive Terp Startup summer accelerator program.

The students had eight weeks and $5,000 to build their startups with help from Dingman Center experts. Teams could also take advantage of the facilities and services at WeWork, the coworking giant’s first college campus location.

Thanks to support from alumni donors, the Dingman Center expanded its Terp Startup program in 2019 and moved it to WeWork and Dingman’s new shared Diamondback Garage space, part of a $2 billion development push to revitalize Greater College Park and create a hub for entrepreneurs in the region.

“It made our founders take things up a notch,” says Holly DeArmond, MBA ‘17, the center’s managing director. “They weren’t in a classroom in Van Munching Hall. They were sitting beside someone who is paying for WeWork space, working on their startup, trying to raise capital. The networking was really good for the students.”

The diverse cohort included students from many colleges and degree programs, running businesses at various stages. The startups covered a wide range of industries and products, from technology companies to consumer product makers to app designers.

“That led to more peer-to-peer advising,” DeArmond says. “This group really collaborated. They know each other’s challenges, they are outgoing and would ask each other for help.”

The program culminated on July 31, 2019, with final pitch presentations to showcase students’ progress on their startups.

“The workshops and structure really prepared us for the demo day final pitch, and got us well prepared for pitching in front of others outside the program,” says William Sherman, MFin ‘19 and PTMBA ‘19.

His tech startup, Pendulum Analytics, ensures safe financial transactions. “It was great to put my idea and product in front of some angel investors and get their feedback and their interest,” he says. “That gives you confidence.”

In addition to the workshops, Sherman says Dingman staff introductions to potential investors and banking industry contacts have been invaluable for moving forward with his business.

“The goal for the program was to have startups be able to make a ‘go’ or a ‘no-go’ decision on growing their businesses,” DeArmond says. Terp Startup provided valuable fuel as they surge ahead, she says, while others used what they learned to pivot to other ventures. / CH /
Dare To Soar, Speaker Tells Men of Color

More than 225 African American and Latino high school and college men gathered April 26, 2019, at Maryland Smith for the second Smith Business Academy Summit.

“Dare to soar,” opening speaker Eric Cevis told participants. “Everything is not going to be easy. Everything is not going to be given to you. Someone else is not going to come in and do it. You have to do the work.”

Cevis, senior vice president and group president for Verizon Partner Solutions, emphasized the need for young professionals to build their personal brands. “What’s the image you put forth?” he said. “Make sure that people get to know who you are.”

Other participants included Nahom Tekle ’17, finance rotation program associate at Capital One; Khalil Pettus ’15, investment banking associate at Ardea Partners; Christian Phillips ’17, analytics senior consultant at EY; and Jaelin Cook ’18, financial and information systems auditor at Kearney and Co.

The mission of Smith Business Academy is to develop men of color professionally, socially and academically. “This is a program where you walk in as a man and leave as a man of distinction,” said Victor Mullins, associate dean of Undergraduate Programs and chief diversity officer at Maryland Smith.
Smith Covers the World With Micro MBA

More than 62,000 students from 186 countries and territories have enrolled in the MicroMasters for Core MBA Curriculum at Maryland Smith since the program’s launch in fall 2018.

About one in five students come from the United States. The countries with the next highest enrollments for most courses are Canada, the United Kingdom, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Nigeria, Australia and Germany.

Some participants sign up for the full seven-course series, hosted on the edX online learning platform, while other participants pick and choose among the various offerings.

“I don’t have a business background, so all the subject material is completely new to me,” MicroMasters student Adriana Ford told The Baltimore Sun.

Ford, an environmental researcher living in London, has completed multiple courses in the series. “I really like that it covers the core curriculum of an MBA,” she said. “A lot of work has gone into its design and implementation, with a variety of learning tools, including videos, simulations, case studies and reflections on our experiences.”

Verified learners who complete all seven courses may transfer their credits to Smith’s online MBA program.

The next launch in the series will be Data Analysis on Dec. 2, 2019. After that, each course in the series will be offered twice per year on a rotating basis. Several courses will be self-paced, meaning they will be available for students to start at any time.

Overall, the series is designed so students and faculty can get to know each other through video classes and other venues.

Students are grouped into cohorts and can opt to locate themselves on a map, creating opportunities for local connections.

Instructors include many of the same professors who teach in Smith graduate programs, including strategy professor Anil Gupta, marketing professor P.K. Kannan and accounting professor Progyan Basu.

EdX is a nonprofit, open-source learning destination offering online educational programs and courses at edx.org in alliance with more than 130 member institutions.

Terrapins wrestler Jahi Jones ’19 has been awarded the Big Ten Medal of Honor, the conference’s most exclusive award given to student-athletes from the graduating class of each member institution.

Jones graduated in May with dual degrees in accounting and supply chain management. He will continue his education in the Master of Science in Business Analytics program at Maryland Smith.

As a wrestler, he was team captain and competed in the 157-pound weight class. He won several matches during the 2018–19 season, including three victories at the Midlands Championships in Chicago.

“Maryland has allowed me to grow professionally, personally and athletically,” Jones said. “I will forever be grateful for this institution and our conference.”

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Donors Load Baltimore Ravens Bookmobile

Smith donors helped load the Baltimore Book Bank Bookmobile on June 15, 2019, following a semester-long book drive organized by a team of executive MBA students.

The campaign grew from a capstone course that connected executive MBA students with local organizations. “Our team helped the Maryland Book Bank address operational, human capital, marketing and corporate finance challenges,” Dean Ford, EMBA ’19, said. “We organized the book drive as something extra.”

The executive MBA class of 2019 also raised $11,750 to help the Maryland Book Bank cover implementation costs.

The Maryland Book Bank is a nonprofit organization that cultivates literacy in underserved communities, and it uses the bookmobile sponsored by the Baltimore Ravens to deliver donations to local schools.

Overall, the Maryland Smith community donated about 1,000 books to the cause. Besides Ford, campaign organizers included Ryan Haggerty, Kathy King, David Welch and Gretchen MacLeod, all EMBA ’19. / DJ /
Do Something Hard, EVERFI Founder Tells Hisaoka Audience

Glassdoor and The Washington Post recognize EVERFI as one of the best places to work. Founder Tom Davidson said his Washington, D.C.-based education technology company is also one of the hardest places to work.

“People want to feel like they’re part of something, and that they’re part of something hard,” he said April 10, 2019, during the Robert G. Hisaoka Speaker Series, organized by the Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship at Maryland Smith.

Many people associate difficulty with unhappiness, but Davidson said those are very different things.

“I really hit on that big time when I was in college,” he said in a conversation moderated by Robert G. Hisaoka ’79.

“I just always wanted to be a part of something that required an entire group of people to do it. You had to get the best out of each other, you wanted to root people on, and it didn’t work if two of you fell down on it.”

EVERFI picked a massive challenge for itself when the company launched in 2008.

After touring the United States for two years and visiting low-performing schools, Davidson designed a third-party payer system that would bring corporate resources into the K12 education space to tackle big issues like financial illiteracy and summer learning loss.

“The education system is the only place, particularly in K12, where the private sector has fully taken a knee,” Davidson said. “They’re nowhere to be found.”

His company, which has since expanded into higher education with courses on sexual violence and alcohol abuse prevention, now partners with over 4,300 corporate clients. Despite the rapid growth, solutions will not come quickly.

“It’s taken us 400-plus years to disadvantage kids in these communities to the extent that we have,” he said. “It’s not going to play out overnight, the answer.” / DJ /

Author Ian Bremmer is a fan of globalization. But the president and founder of Eurasia Group, a global political risk research and consulting firm, has a different view of globalism.

He highlighted the distinction on April 9, 2019, at Maryland Smith’s Center for Global Business Annual Forum.

Bremmer, author of “Us Vs. Them: The Failure of Globalism,” said globalization refers to cross-border trade, which has lifted more than 1 billion people out of extreme poverty during the past 20 years. Globalism, on the other hand, adds a political component that has left many people feeling disenfranchised.

“Globalists promise that by supporting open borders and the United States as the global sheriff, people in advanced industrialized democracies will be taken care of,” he said. “And that’s a lie.”

Rather than prescribing solutions, he said his book opens dialogue. “This one is less a call to action, and much more a call to understanding,” he said. / KJ /
ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS can be complicated. Office romances, even more so. But they do happen.

According to a survey from job site Vault.com, some 58 percent of workers say they’ve been involved in an office romance. So, if you find yourself in a romantic situation with a colleague, how should you handle it?

Jennifer Carson Marr, assistant professor of management and organization at Maryland Smith, has the answer. Marr literally wrote the book on romantic relationships at work – or, more accurately, the chapter on it. Here’s what she had to say.

It’s a reality that people will date at the office

MARR: In decades past, you may have stayed in your job for most of your career. The implications of a romantic relationship or even a failed romantic relationship may have had a bigger impact on your career. So employees often hid their relationships.

Today, as the lines blur between our personal and professional lives, dating at work is becoming less taboo. People are moving between companies more. So there’s a greater chance of professional rebound if things don’t work out.

Nevertheless, it’s important to consider your company’s culture and norms around romantic relationships. Although office romances may be prevalent, they are often stigmatized.

Always remain professional at work

MARR: My research suggests it’s critical to think through what you disclose to other people. It’s important to always appear professional to your team. But what “professional” looks like depends on organizational culture.

Before your romantic relationship begins, carefully weigh the consequences of others knowing about your relationship.
At larger organizations, HR may change reporting relationships to ensure transparency and fairness. At smaller organizations, the opportunity to rearrange teams may not be available. If that’s the case, a romantic relationship could have a bigger career impact.

Again, be sure to consider those consequences before you begin.

**Be proactive as a manager**

**MARR:** Team leaders need to think about two things: themselves and the dynamics on their teams.

If you sense a budding relationship on your team, remember that intraoffice romances are not uncommon. Work is where individuals spend a lot of time, so it makes sense that someone could meet a future spouse.

Remember that relationships aren’t simply disruptions or bureaucratic headaches – they can be positive. At their best, they enhance morale and productivity.

As a manager, the most important thing is that you deal with relationships on your team positively and proactively. Do this rather than taking a punitive approach, which can backfire, or rather than taking no action, which can lead to problems down the road.

If you’re a manager who is considering a romantic relationship at work for yourself, start by weighing the consequences. Think about what happens if the relationship ends.

And, if your organization permits the relationship you’re considering, define clear boundaries to appear professional at all times. Also think about the type of behavior you are modeling. Contemplate what a romantic relationship says about favoritism, interpersonal priorities and fairness on the team.

**CONSUMERS MAKE** more hedonic choices when their preferences are visible to others, so they can promote the image that they are having fun even if they really aren’t.

Maryland Smith marketing professor Rebecca Ratner and Smith PhD candidate Nicole Kim confirmed the phenomenon in new research.

They used six studies to show that consumers are more likely to choose hedonic items — that is, items characterized by the pursuit of pleasure — when they are making a choice that others can observe or see, compared to a choice that isn’t visible to others.

“The choice shift to hedonic items was impacted by the motivation to present oneself in a positive light,” the researchers wrote. “As such, consumption choices were impacted only when the signaling motive was activated, such as in the presence of a friend, and when consumers anticipate future interactions with the audience.”

**Ask if it will impact your career. Ask if you’re willing to accept that risk. And get ready to live with the decision you make.**

**View it from the HR lens**

**MARR:** Your human resources team may have an HR policy about disclosure of relationships at work. In some cases, you must report a romantic relationship with a coworker. This is frequently true if your relationship has a power dynamic.

For example, a romantic relationship may qualify as a conflict of interest if it involves a subordinate, manager or vendor. No matter the case, it’s important to read your organization’s guidelines on the topic. Locate them in your employee handbook or on the company intranet.

If your relationship creates an uneven playing field at the office, human resources may get more directly involved.

Ask if it will impact your career. Ask if you’re willing to accept that risk. And get ready to live with the decision you make.

**Think about what happens if the relationship ends.**

If your organization permits the relationship you’re considering, define clear boundaries to appear professional at all times. Also think about the type of behavior you are modeling. Contemplate what a romantic relationship says about favoritism, interpersonal priorities and fairness on the team.

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*Illustrations by Ethan Laumann*

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Why Social Media Doesn’t Motivate You

EVERYONE HITS their fitness goals on social media. Or so it seems. They run marathons, lift weights, go on scenic hikes, do yoga with goats. These messages probably give you excellent motivation to get in shape. Right?

Yes and no, Maryland Smith researchers Ritu Agarwal and Guodong “Gordon” Gao find in a recent study with Indiana University’s Chewei Liu, PhD ‘18, published in Information Systems Research.

People with more digital social connections do respond more productively when they see how much exercise their friends are doing. But because those messages often lead people to set unrealistic exercise goals for themselves, they simply fail.

“Strikingly,” the researchers write, “we find that social norms lead to a substantially lower rate of goal attainment as compared with the control message that simply highlights the benefits of setting a goal.” / KJ /

Stop Focusing on Income Inequality and Grow the Pie

PEOPLE WHO WORRY ABOUT income inequality “in and of itself” are focusing on the wrong thing, Maryland Smith professor Rajshree Agarwal argues in a new Academy of Management paper.

She and R. Michael Holmes Jr. from Florida State University lay out an alternate perspective that shifts the focus from wealth distribution to wealth creation.

“Economic value creators worry less about how the pie is sliced,” Agarwal says. “They worry more about how the pie is made in the first place, so they can make more pies and more varieties.”

The authors distinguish income inequality from other social concepts like poverty and income mobility.

“We question the focus on income inequality in and of itself and government intervention as a means to this end,” they write. “A belief that more should be done for the poor and to advance upward income mobility is not addressed by a focus on income inequality.”

People who conflate the concepts assume that society has a limited amount of wealth to distribute, so more for one person means less for another. The authors focus instead on economic growth through enterprise and markets.

“Unequal outcomes are part of this process,” Agarwal says. “Some firms fail. But society wins overall when people with different visions take risks and experiment.”

The authors further argue that using government force to reduce income inequality leads to political inequality instead because it gives the state permission to treat individuals differently.

Once the social planning begins, they say, people already in power turn the favoritism to their advantage. Using the same tools designed to help the poor, they serve themselves through subsidies, tax concessions and other tools of cronyism.

“Government intervention invites interest groups to use political power to advance their own ends,” the authors write. / DJ /
Seven Ways to Look Better on LinkedIn

WHAT IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS YOUR RESUME? Your LinkedIn profile, says Maryland Smith career and leadership coach Rachel Loock. And that’s true even if you’re not actively looking for a job. “It’s often the first impression people have of you professionally,” Loock says. Here’s her advice on how to make sure your LinkedIn page shines as brightly as you do:

1. **TELL A STORY:** “Your profile summary should encapsulate your work experience at a high level and tell the story of you,” Loock says. Once you’re satisfied with the summary, list your biggest accomplishments under each role. “Your actual resume will be more complete, but I don’t recommend posting that on LinkedIn,” she says. “You don’t want your profile summary to read like a resume.

2. **SELL YOUR SKILLS:** Mention your most relevant skills, especially if you’re looking for a new position. Make sure your listed skills echo the ones most in demand for the types of jobs you’d like.

3. **CHOOSE YOUR PHOTO:** A good, professional headshot is an important part of your profile. Don’t think you can get by with a cropped photo from a wedding, for example. And don’t use a decade-old shot, Loock warns.

4. **MAKE CONNECTIONS:** Include the specifics of your education, including where you earned your degrees and when you earned them. Alumni from your alma maters can be great resources for new positions or connections. Also be sure to specify your location. If you don’t include where you live, you could be missing valuable opportunities to connect with others in the same region limits.

5. **INCLUDE EXTRAS:** Recommendations and endorsements on LinkedIn are nice to have, Loock says. Ask a trusted colleague, clients, customers or a mentor to write a short testimonial that showcases your professional competence and your skills in action.

6. **KEEP IT PROFESSIONAL:** LinkedIn isn’t Facebook, Instagram or a dating site. Don’t post personal information; details about your relationships, family, health and politics are off-limits.

7. **THINK BEYOND LINKEDIN:** You’ve heard it before, but keep all your social media profiles looking presentable. More and more, employers are scrutinizing the Twitter accounts of prospective hires, and they could come across your Facebook or Instagram accounts, even if your settings are private. “Just stay away from anything offensive or controversial,” she says. /KJ/
As an ambassador for the world’s largest toy company, Mattel President and Chief Operating Officer Richard Dickson ’90 discovers joy in some unlikely places. He even encounters smiles at international airports following long flights from corporate headquarters in El Segundo, Calif.

“You arrive in the country you are visiting, and the people you meet invariably ask about the purpose of your visit,” he says.

When Dickson explains his link to Mattel, he sees an immediate change in demeanor. People light up with childhood memories of Barbie, Hot Wheels, Fisher-Price, American Girl or other powerhouse global brands within Mattel’s vast portfolio.
“The power of joy is universal,” Dickson says. “You realize the impact of what we do at Mattel in these moments.”

While creating joy is rewarding, Dickson underscores that the work is also hard and constantly evolving. Innovation is a hallmark of success in the toy business. And while the sparks of innovation may come from either art or science, he believes that only when the two unite do you get the game-changing ideas that characterize leading brands and organizations.

And that intersection is where Dickson works every day.

He says innovation at Mattel has always been a synthesis of art and science, brought to life by a diverse and deeply dedicated team of talent. “We have world-class designers working alongside PhDs in data science and psychology, each committed to the next big thing,” Dickson says.

His own role is as a self-described “chief editing officer,” who lives at the nexus of these diverse pools of talent. He focuses on making sure that every new product is “forward thinking, compelling to our consumer, and will create the joy that is Mattel’s ultimate product.”

“Bringing art and science together in relevant ways to inspire joy is one way to describe what Mattel does,” he says. “It is much easier said than done.”

Dickson will discuss his approach during the CEO@Smith speaker series on Nov. 7, 2019. As a preview, he shares the following insights gained over a 30-year career that began at the University of Maryland.

**Honor Your DNA**

The defining feature of Dickson’s office at Mattel headquarters is an enormous wallscape of the humble garage Mattel occupied in its early days. It represents the idea factory that revolutionized the toy business, where some of the world’s most beloved toys and games were first created.

“This inspires me to always remember the heritage that makes Mattel great,” Dickson says. “It was a creative workshop. It was an invention house. It was highly entrepreneurial. Dreaming big isn’t just for kids. It’s also essential to those of us who create for kids.”

Many of Mattel’s early creations became multigenerational brands. Hot Wheels marked its 50th anniversary in 2018. Barbie is turning 60 this year. And Mattel itself will turn 75 in 2020.

“Art drove the early success of the company,” says Dickson, who has his own entrepreneurial roots. Before college, he began his career in his mother’s shop in

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Richard Dickson’s office includes an enormous wallscape of the humble garage that Mattel occupied in its early days. Dickson says the image inspires him to “remember the heritage that makes Mattel great.”
Barbie Fashionistas dolls are more diverse than ever, featuring more than 100 looks to express a wide range of styles. Dickson says Mattel considered everything from skin tone to even the iconic silhouette.

In addition to the brand’s fashion dolls, Mattel added a line of Role Models, or “sheroes,” that celebrates women of achievement.

Mattel also launched a new brand campaign for girl empowerment, You Can Be Anything.

Barbie’s renewed commitment to this purpose has guided a new initiative called The Dream Gap Project, dedicated to closing the confidence gap that plagues some girls as early as age five.

One result has been seven consecutive quarters of growth for the brand.

“Barbie is once again one of the most influential toys in the world,” Dickson says. “The most inclusive. The most diverse. And, committed to the promise of inspiring children to imagine they can be anything.”

New York. After graduating from Maryland, he joined the prestigious Bloomingdales training program, where he excelled in cosmetics retailing.

He parlayed this expertise into co-founding an online cosmetics business and was then recruited to work for Estee Lauder.

From there, he joined Mattel, reinvigorating the Barbie brand just in time for her 50th anniversary.

He returned to New York as chief brands officer for The Jones Group, one of the world’s leading fashion brand portfolios. Then, in 2014, Mattel lured him back to lead the entire brand portfolio.

“When new leaders take the reins of any brand with a legacy, the first thing they need to do is understand what made that brand great to begin with,” Dickson says.

The process requires a historical perspective.

“You need to get deep into the values of the brand and how those lessons are relevant for today and tomorrow,” he says. “I find it incredibly inspiring and clarifying.”

He warns against caretaking strategies, which can be a death spiral for legacy brands.

“Brand management at its best is a dynamic ecosystem of things that work together to keep a brand relevant,” Dickson says. “So standing still or relishing a win for too long isn’t ever an option. We have to constantly be innovating. And really good innovation questions everything.”

**Question Everything**

When Dickson returned to Mattel in 2014, Barbie had big challenges.

“Analytics and consumer engagement showed that Barbie had lost her way with consumers, largely because she no longer reflected the world that girls were seeing every day,” he says.

It was clear that Barbie needed to evolve. “From skin tone to eye color, hair color and texture, and even the iconic silhouette, we rethought everything about the doll, guided by consumer input, by data and by brilliant design,” Dickson says.

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“BE BRAVE; BE BOLD
Tweaking some fad brand is one thing. But mess with a pop culture icon like Barbie or Hot Wheels,

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and people react viscerally. That pushback can lead to a lot of second-guessing and hinder innovation.

Dickson recognizes the trap. “As businesses become more successful, they naturally become more risk-averse,” he explains. “All of a sudden, there are lots of voices and lots of opinions internally and externally.”

In the case of Mattel, there are generations of consumer voices to consider. “It’s not only kids,” Dickson says. “But also parents and grandparents who feel vested in our brands.”

Ultimately, Dickson says, staying the course by not innovating is the riskier strategy because it guarantees irrelevance. It also betrays Mattel’s founding vision and values. “The entrepreneurial spirit that originally made us great is what I believe we are tapping back into,” Dickson says.

Dickson believes that brand engagement is an increasingly important component of a successful toy brand. “You want to connect the brand to its fans in ways that transcend traditional play,” he says. Hot Wheels’ recent Legends Tour, celebrating the brand’s 50th anniversary, is a great example of this.

The tour visits Walmart parking lots across the United States and invites car enthusiasts to show off their life-size cars and share their love of car culture. Hot Wheels designers judge the vehicles for authenticity, creativity and “garage spirit,” and one lucky tour exhibitor is distinguished by having his or her car immortalized as a scaled down, die-cast Hot Wheels car for sale at retail.

Dickson says the program celebrates Hot Wheels fans as artists. “It extends the play experience beyond the die-cast car and, frankly, beyond kids,” he says. “The Hot Wheels Legends Tour has been a big hit with the entire family. Nothing brings brands and fans together like a truly immersive brand experience.”
Wherever Dickson’s travels take him, he makes time to meet colleagues, partners, policymakers and other Mattel stakeholders.

“You need to know and trust your team, and you need your team to know and trust you,” Dickson says.

He is also intently focused on building relationships with consumers.

“Whatever we do, the consumer is the first and most important part of our process,” he says.

Dickson’s commitment to meaningful relationships is partly why he gives back to Smith.

“I love the connection that I have with the University of Maryland,” he says. “Staying in touch, giving back and, in some small way, perhaps helping develop the next generation of leaders at a place that enriched me so much.”

Dickson, who grew up in New York City, says he chose Maryland after seeing its beautiful campus in the 1985 film St. Elmo’s Fire.

“I wanted the ultimate collegiate experience,” he says. “Great academics. Great athletics. A diversity of ideas and people. A strong feeling of community. I wanted it all, and I got it at Maryland.”

Dickson says his degree in consumer economics was a valuable introduction to the business world.

“I’ve always been intrigued with brands, creating demand and connecting with consumers,” he says. “It has defined my success, and the origins of that began at Maryland.”

Today, that skillset is helping lead Mattel to what Dickson sees as a future filled with possibility. Mattel is already making big moves taking its legacy brands beyond toys.

“Art and science will drive Mattel’s transformation,” he says.

As Mattel heads toward its 75th anniversary, Dickson sees opportunities for growth in film, television, fashion, digital gaming, live events, consumer products and more.

“Mattel brands and products represent incredible intellectual property,” he says. “There is so much opportunity as we develop our toys beyond the traditional definition, into entertainment and experiential spaces where kids can play on a much bigger stage.”
FOR MARYLAND SMITH, THE CAMPAIGN MEANS MORE ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS, EMPHASIS ON “PLUS ONE” PROGRAMS THAT ALLOW UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS TO EXTEND THEIR SMITH EXPERIENCE BY ONE YEAR SO THEY CAN HIT THE MARKET WITH A SPECIALTY MASTER’S DEGREE, SUPPORT FOR THE CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE THAT PROVIDE CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH AND HANDS-ON LEARNING FOR STUDENTS, REDESIGNED CLASSROOMS, UPDATED CURRICULA AND MORE.

“WE BELIEVE THAT EDUCATION HAS THE POWER TO IMPROVE THE LIFE OF EVERY PERSON ON EARTH. WITH SUPPORT FROM THE SMITH COMMUNITY, WE ARE DOING JUST THAT. THAT IS OUR FEARLESS IDEA.”

CHRIS DAX, ASSISTANT DEAN FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS AT MARYLAND SMITH

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Investments in academic instruction and other services produce measurable results. Top business publications rank three Maryland Smith graduate programs inside the top 10 in the United States, and additional programs are ranked in the top 20.

To make a gift or for more information, visit: go.umd.edu/smithfearless

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND HAS LAUNCHED A $1.5 BILLION CAMPAIGN, FEARLESS IDEAS: THE CAMPAIGN FOR MARYLAND.

THE COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGN, THE UNIVERSITY’S MOST AMBITIOUS TO DATE, FOCUSES ON ELEVATING AND EXPANDING MARYLAND’S MISSION OF SERVICE, ACADEMIC DISTINCTION AND RESEARCH ENTERPRISE.
Entrepreneur Jitin “Miki” Ahuja ’97, MBA/MS ’02, calls himself a late bloomer. He grew up in Bowie near the University of Maryland and stayed in his comfort zone during his freshman year. Then the campus ecosystem pulled him in. He joined a business fraternity and several clubs, played intramural sports and made lifelong friends while earning three undergraduate degrees. Following management consulting work at PwC, he returned to Maryland for two graduate degrees, making him a quintuple Terp. “I had one personality coming into Maryland and a different personality coming out — for the better,” he says. The lessons learned at UMD have guided Ahuja through the launch of several ventures, with the most recent being an online marketing company called SpaceJet Media. Needless to say, the failures or lessons from prior ventures served as stepping stones to success. Ahuja, who relied on need-based grants as a student, now gives back with financial assistance for business majors from Prince George’s County. He also volunteers as vice chair of the Smith Alumni Chapter Board. “Maryland helped me become who I am,” he says. “That’s why I give.”

“I BELIEVE IT’S IMPORTANT FOR ME TO PAY IT FORWARD.”

KHALIL PETTUS ’15 ASSOCIATE, ARDEA PARTNERS

As the son of a single mother, Khalil Pettus ’15 worried about paying for college. “I knew the financial burden could be pretty heavy for the two of us,” he says. Fortunately, a scholarship funded by alumni donors enabled Pettus to focus on academics during his Smith journey. He made the most of his time, serving as president of the Smith Undergraduate Student Association and participating on the Dean’s Student Advisory Council. He also completed a Goldman Sachs internship, resulting in a full-time job offer after graduation. After two years at Goldman Sachs, he became an associate at Ardea Partners in New York. He also gives back to Maryland Smith in a variety of ways, including as a member of the school’s Young Alumni Council. “Without my scholarship, I might not be where I am today,” Pettus says. “So I believe it’s important for me to pay it forward.”

“I HAD ONE PERSONALITY COMING INTO MARYLAND AND A DIFFERENT PERSONALITY COMING OUT.”

JITIN “MIKI” AHUJA ’97, MBA ’02 ENTREPRENEUR AND ANGEL INVESTOR

Why I Give

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JITIN “MIKI” AHUJA ’97, MBA ’02 ENTREPRENEUR AND ANGEL INVESTOR
Axios Co-founder Brings Product Mindset to News

Creating a profitable news business is difficult. Roy Schwartz ’98, MBA ’01, and his partners have done it twice. Schwartz joined Politico in 2008 during the publication’s early days and helped the journalism company expand in Washington, D.C. Then in 2016, he and two associates left Politico and started Axios. Since then the startup has grown to prominence, grabbing attention with an HBO series and exclusive interviews with news-makers like White House adviser Jared Kushner and Apple CEO Tim Cook.

“Doing it once, maybe you got lucky,” Schwartz says. “But if you did it twice, I think it shows you know what you’re doing. You know how to build a business.”

Among other things, Schwartz credits the diversity of the founding team. Partners Jim VandeHei and Mike Allen come from a journalism background, while Schwartz brings a business perspective developed at Maryland Smith.

“I was there at the most interesting time you probably could have gone to business school,” he says. “It was the internet boom and bust, and it was all the dot-coms and the rise of all these things you could do online.”

Schwartz recalls classroom discussions about the potential of internet commerce. Would people ever buy clothes online? Would they buy shoes online?

“Some of the ideas took close to another 20 years to come to fruition,” he says. “But all of the ideas we now see and think of as commonplace, they all started right around that time.”

Newsrooms struggled with their own adjustments, but Schwartz watched the disruption from a distance. After finishing a Smith MBA, he went to work as a Gallup consultant, managing big accounts like Lexus and Hilton.

Then he met people at Politico and became intrigued by the competitive, fast-paced nature of the news business. “It’s a very visible industry, and it’s also one with nearly immediate feedback,” he says. “So you know if your ideas are resonating or not resonating.”

Schwartz applied a product mindset at Politico and then Axios. Rather than pushing content onto the internet and hoping for clicks, he and his Axios partners started with a listening tour.

“We got a picture that everyone who needed news and information to do their jobs was overwhelmed with the amount of information coming toward them,” Schwartz says.

The response at Axios was “smart brevity,” a brand promise embraced by every employee.

Unlike newsrooms from the dot-com era, which kept print and digital operations separate, Schwartz and his partners designed an integrated space for journalists.

“We love the open feel of it,” Schwartz says. “We wanted our newsroom to integrate so journalists from business, tech, policy are able to have a conversation.”

The startup vibe fits with Schwartz’s entrepreneurial spirit. He was born in Israel but grew up in England, where he drew inspiration from Virgin Group founder Richard Branson.

When Schwartz moved to the United States with his family, he enrolled at the University of Maryland and took his first shot at entrepreneurship during his freshman year.

He saw a video vending machine during a family vacation in Florida and replicated the idea at apartment buildings in Virginia.

He brings the same knack for value creation to Axios.

“Creating something from nothing is very difficult, and it’s exciting,” he says. “Once you know how to do it, it’s something you want to keep doing.”
New Jersey native Jenna Steckler ’94 is not afraid of change. It usually starts with simple intuition, she says, a “little voice” that suggests it might be time for something new.

The description helps to explain how she graduated with a marketing degree and now, 25 years later, runs her own interior design firm that recently remodeled the Sigma Delta Tau house at the University of Maryland.

“I was always the creative type,” she says, but when originally choosing her major she wanted to ensure she was setting herself up for success. When she was admitted to Maryland Smith, she saw a path forward.

“Even if I changed course down the road, having a business degree would never hurt,” she says. Her first career was in corporate sales, and while Steckler categorizes herself as creative, she also loved learning new things, analyzing and working with diverse people. But when the little voice began whispering about interior design after 15 years, she knew it was time to listen.

After obtaining her certificate from the New York Institute of Art and Design, she went to work building Jenna Steckler Interiors.

“Part of me regrets not doing this sooner,” she says. “But I’ve stopped having that regret because having that background of business and sales has given me such a leg up in my own business. Understanding the background work gives me much more freedom to actually be creative and do what I’m meant to be doing.”

When explaining how creativity and adaptability were essential parts of the redesign at the Sigma Delta Tau house, Steckler says she looked for pieces that would serve multiple purposes. “The girls wanted something fresh and modern, and I wanted to make sure it was something returning alumni and parents would appreciate too,” she says.

The project required working on a tight timeline, as the house was only available for renovation for a few weeks at a time. Meeting the challenges of deadlines and design, however, is what Steckler loves to do.

“I was always going back to design,” she says. “I think it’s important to know that it’s never too late to start something else. There’s always more school or a new career path. The most important thing is to listen to that voice inside your head, because if it’s talking, it’s talking for a reason.”
“Having that background of business and sales has given me such a leg up in my own business. Understanding the background work gives me much more freedom to actually be creative.”

/JENNA STECKLER ’94
“The Plus One program saved me time and opened doors.”

EKATERINA “KATYA” TOUR ’17, MS ’18
From Big Ten Tennis to Big Four Accounting

Deloitte tax consultant Ekaterina “Katya” Tour ’17, MS ’18, made the most of a four-year tennis scholarship at the University of Maryland. By the time she graduated, she not only collected 70 singles wins and led the Terrapins to their first-ever Big Ten Tournament victory, she also finished an undergraduate degree and tacked on a Master of Science in Accounting in the “Plus One” program at Maryland Smith.

“I knew I had four years,” she says. “And I didn’t want to miss out.”

Tour, who now lives in Arlington, Va., was born in Russia and moved with her family to Israel in 1999 at age 6. She started playing tennis at 10 — later than most professionals — but she climbed through the ranks and found herself in the final of a Women’s ITF World Tennis Tour event at 18.

“My dad decided to enroll me in tennis classes, and I kept going,” she says. “Over time I started liking it.”

Before coming to Maryland, Tour represented Israel in Fed Cup play and climbed to No. 564 in the WTA world rankings. She could have earned a tennis scholarship almost anywhere, but she chose Maryland for its academics and location.

“I put my education and my career No. 1, and I also wanted to develop as a tennis player,” she says.

On a typical school day Tour took classes until noon, followed by tennis, conditioning and physical therapy in the afternoon. Then she studied or took evening classes. She also worked as a graduate assistant during her final year, which gave her closer access to the Maryland Smith faculty.

“They were so welcoming,” she says. “It’s an example of how I want to be when I’m in a position of power.”

Each professor taught her something different, and she says it was an honor to study with them.

“After 14 years in tennis, I know how to recognize an expert,” she says. “The professors at Maryland Smith are world-class experts.”

The Plus One program, which allows Smith undergraduate students to stay an extra year and earn a specialty master’s degree, fit nicely into Tour’s plan to pack as much as possible into her Terp experience.

“The Plus One program saved me time and opened doors,” she says. Now at Deloitte, she is climbing the ranks again, but this time as a young accounting professional at a Big Four firm.

“Already I have a chance to communicate on a daily basis with important clients,” she says. “Deloitte is trusting me.” / DJ /
Welcome Home, Smith Terps!

The biggest game of the season deserves a party. Don’t miss the Maryland Smith Homecoming Tailgate on Nov. 2, 2019. Stop by this family-friendly event before heading to Maryland Stadium to watch your Terps take on the Michigan Wolverines.

The festivities will kick off at 9 a.m. on Ludwig Field and will include food, drinks and fun for fans of all ages. Challenge your friends in a game of cornhole and enter to win a raffle prize. All Maryland Smith alumni will get a surprise giveaway.

A limited number of game tickets are available for purchase at a special alumni rate. For more information, please contact the Smith Office of Alumni Relations at alumni@rhsmith.umd.edu or 301-405-4206.

Reunion Tradition Grows in 2019

We heard you! Hosting Smith Reunion on Maryland Day in April 2019 proved to be so successful, we are doing it again. Smith Reunion 2020 invites alumni from the classes of 2019, 2015, 2010, 2005, 2000, 1995, 1990, 1985, 1980, 1975 and 1970 to celebrate in College Park on Saturday, April 25, which is also Maryland Day. Reconnect with old friends, reunite with your former professors and relive your college days without exams.
New Volunteers to Lead Alumni Councils

Stacey Lacer ’06 will serve as Maryland Smith Alumni Chapter Board chair through June 30, 2021, after serving the previous two years as vice chair. Entrepreneur and angel investor Jitin “Miki” Ahuja ’97, MBA/MS ’02, a business development executive at SpaceJet Media, will serve as vice chair.

Members of the volunteer board advise the Smith Office of Alumni Relations and serve as ambassadors for school programs and initiatives. The council includes 24 alumni from class years 1981 to 2017.

Additional volunteers serve on the school’s Young Alumni Council, which focuses on helping undergraduate students continue their Smith journey after graduation. The chair for fiscal year 2019-20 will be Stephanie Catherine ’14, a technology consultant at Deloitte; and vice chair will be Maurice Nick ’12, MBA/MS ’16, supply chain manager at Stanley Black & Decker.

Membership on alumni boards is determined by peer or self-nomination. Both groups met Sept. 7, 2019, to set strategy for the remainder of the fiscal year. /DJ/

Three Alumni Join Board of Advisors

Maryland Smith has welcomed three new members to its Board of Advisors, a volunteer council that provides guidance to the school’s senior leadership team.

New advisors include Cydonii Fairfax ’94, general counsel at Metropolitan Transit Authority in Harris, Texas; Rose Bollman ’87, senior vice president and general manager at Pepsi North America Beverages; and Cris Parcelles ’92, director of financial systems for Echostar.

Parcelles previously represented the Alumni Chapter Board as an ex officio member of the board. He will be succeeded in that capacity by Chris Hansen, MBA/MS ’95, vice president at Pariveda Solutions.

Lisa K. Hunt ’97, executive vice president of international services and business initiatives at Charles Schwab, will serve as board chair during fiscal year 2019–20. She previously served as vice chair.
ALUMNINOTES

‘60s
 / NICK SCHAUS ’67 is celebrating grandparenthood with a third-generation Smith Terp grandson.

‘70s
 / LES HATLEY ’76 was chosen to be a featured musical artist with “Cancer Can Rock,” a foundation dedicated to musicians facing aggressive cancer, such as himself. His song, “Say You Will,” will be played by his friend Lynn Hollyfield.
 / MARC LEVIN ’76, MBA ’80, was appointed president and CEO at Maryland University of Integrative Health.
 / RICHARD MINOFF, MBA ’76, an associate professor and director, Undergraduate Business Program at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, was awarded the University’s William F. Homiler Award for Teaching Excellence at the annual faculty recognition day.

‘80s
 / LORRIE NORRINGTON ’81 joined Signal Sciences’ Board of Directors. Signal Sciences recently announced that it has raised $35 million to accelerate its market expansion and technology innovation.
 / JULIA PULZONE ’84, MBA ’93, joined Kaleyra S.p.A., a rapidly growing cloud communications software provider delivering secure application programming interfaces and connectivity solutions, as chief financial officer.
 / DAN SCHRIDER ’87 was featured in an executive profile in the Washington Business Journal for his work growing Sandy Spring Bank as its CEO for the past nine years.
 / CHRISTOPHER CHICK ’89 joined CFG Community Bank as chief lending officer.
 / ERIC TIEVY ’89 was featured in an executive profile in the Washington Business Journal for his work leading the Washington, D.C., office of Consigli Construction.
 / KATHLEEN CULLINS ’90, MBA ’05, joined the American Farm Bureau Federation as chief financial officer.
 / JOHN NUETTEL, MBA ’90, joined Billtrust, the leader in business-to-business order-to-cash solutions, as senior vice president of sales.
 / CHARLES “CHUCK” HICKS JR. ’92 joined NCI Information Systems as executive vice president, chief financial officer and treasurer.
 / ANNIE DONOVAN, MBA ’95, joined the Local Initiatives Support Corporation as chief operating officer.
 / CHRISTOPHER MCPHEE, MBA ’95, joined PKF O’Connor Davies, one of the nation’s largest accounting, tax and advisory firms, as chief information officer.
 / HOLLIS WHITE ’95 was named controller at GEICO.
 / FRANK LAPLACA ’96, MBA ’13, joined NCC Media, the national television advertising sales, marketing and technology company owned by Charter Communications, Comcast and Cox Communications, as senior vice president, corporate development.
 / MARC MENICK ’97 was featured in an executive profile in the Washington Business Journal for his work as president and chief operating officer with KLN.B.
 / MICHAEL HUANG ’97 was appointed to senior vice president, director of finance at City First Bank of DC, Washington’s only commercial bank solely dedicated to community development finance.
 / JAMES BEAVAN III ’98 joined Contract Carpet System as controller.
 / TIM CONNOLLY, MBA ’98, joined Quibi, the mobile-television startup led by Jeffrey Katzenberg and CEO Meg Whitman, as the head of partnerships and advertising.

‘90s
 / J. WEST RIGGS, MBA ’98, was named head of Equity Capital Markets at SunTrust Robinson Humphrey, where he leads a team of 25 bankers responsible for all of the initial public offerings, follow-ons and convertible offerings the firm executes for its corporate issuers.

‘00s
 / PETER CANNITO, MBA ’01, joined AE Industrial Partners, a private equity firm specializing in control investments in aerospace, defense and government services, power generation and specialty industrial markets, as an operating partner. He will also join the Board of Directors of AEI portfolio company, Gryphon Technologies.
 / STEVEN BERGER, MBA ’02, joined Rothschild & Co’s Global Advisory Business as a managing director based in New York.
 / CHRISTOPHER A. GRIFFIN ’02 was one of the 23 professionals elevated to partner at CohnReznick, one of the leading advisory, assurance and tax firms in the United States.
 / MATTHEW SOLOMON, MBA ’02, chief legal officer for the federal government solutions business unit of Anthem, was nominated by President Donald Trump to serve as a judge on the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.
SEAN HEITT ’03 and his wife, Melissa, welcomed a baby girl, Heather Ruth Heitt, to their family on May 7, 2019.

BROOKE MANRIQUE, MBA ’03, was named senior vice president, global human resources and communications at Si Group, a leading global developer and manufacturer of performance additives, process solutions, pharmaceutical and chemical intermediates.

JEANELLE JOHNSON, MBA ’04, has been admitted into the partnership at PricewaterhouseCoopers.

JEFF MARTINEZ ’04 was promoted to president at Performance Foodservice.

MICHAEL-SEAN SPENCE ’04 was promoted to serve as director of policy and implementation at Everytown for Gun Safety, a movement to end gun violence and build safer communities.

DENNIS CINELLI ’05 joined Bird, the leader in Rideshare 2.0, as vice president and head of finance.

SYED ZAIDI, MBA ’05, joined Frontpoint, a nationwide leader in do-it-yourself home security and smart home automation, as chief executive officer.

SHULI TROPP ’05 joined Hebrew Free Loan Association of Greater Washington as executive director.

SUNDARARAJAN VAIDYANATHAN, MBA ’06, CEO at Karsun Solutions, was the recipient of the 2019 Washington Business Journal Minority Business Leader Award.

NAT FORGOTSON, MBA ’07, was promoted to vice president of Science Systems and Applications. Additionally, he serves as the program manager for the Electrical Systems Engineering Services III contract in support of the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center.

JOSEPH ARDO MIRAVALLES, MBA ’08, was selected as one of the 10 mobile journalists for “Standfor Truth,” an online, live-streamed newscast. Now the program is airing on the Philippines’ leading local news channel, GMA News TV.

FRANCIS BONANNO, MBA ’08, chief finance officer of Urban Teachers, was the recipient of the 2019 Baltimore Business Journal Best in Finance CFO Award.

PAUL HAGOOD ’08 was named chief revenue officer at APG Media of Chesapeake.

JAMES SUPRENTAN, MBA ’08, joined Guggenheim Securities, the investment banking and capital markets division of Guggenheim Partners, as senior managing director.

BEN OFFIT ’09 is celebrating 10 years in his financial planning business and is serving as the new president of the Financial Planning Association of Maryland.

BRANDON OWENS ’09 was named vice president of strategic marketing and corporate communications at Nanobiotix, a clinical-stage nanomedicine company pioneering new approaches to the treatment of cancer.

ANN PETERSEN, MBA ’10, executive director at Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley, is one of North Bay Business Journal’s Forty Under 40 notable young professionals for 2019.

G. NAGESH RAO, MBA ’11, was selected by his peers at the U.S. Small Business Administration and the White House to receive a Gears of Government Award for his leadership, work ethic and results over the past six years of public service.

JAMES FAYAL ’12 secured $1 million to grow Zest Tea, a healthy energy drink company.

JOHN SHEFF, MBA ’14, was named director of public and industry affairs for North America at Danfoss.

DEREK ROSENBERG ’17 has joined Oracle, the 10th-largest technology company in the world.

DAN BAYLOG, MBA ’14, was appointed president and general manager at ABC affiliate WZZM (channel 13) in Grand Rapids, Mich.
Get Ready for iSmith and More Innovation

INCOMING FRESHMEN SWARMED the Xfinity Center on Aug. 25, 2019, to start their Maryland Smith journey. These students will do some cool things during the next four years — both inside and outside the classroom.

Academic and extracurricular activities have not always aligned. They exist on separate tracks. But a new innovation called iSmith will help bring the two parts together.

The program, launched in fall 2019, will provide a menu of out-of-class activities from which students can choose. Rather than being something detached, iSmith will fit together with classroom instruction, creating an integrated undergraduate experience.

Opportunities will include case competitions, interdisciplinary honors programs, global immersion trips and consulting projects — all designed to connect classroom learning with real-world business.

“It’s a coordinated all-hands-on-deck effort among faculty, staff, students, alumni and employer partners,” says Victor Mullins, associate dean for Undergraduate Studies.

The initiative is just one example of Smith innovation that will propel the school forward during the transition period while I serve as interim dean. A sampling of five other fearless ideas shows the school’s commitment to educating the next generation of global leaders.

• Alumni engagement: The Smith journey does not end at graduation. The Young Alumni Council, launched in 2017, helps undergraduate students build connections as they launch their careers. Other activities, such as Smith in the City on Oct. 24 in New York, a homecoming tailgate party on Nov. 2, and Smith Day on Nov. 13, create networking opportunities for all 66,000 Smith alumni.

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• Lifelong learning: More than 62,000 students from 186 countries have enrolled in the MicroMasters for Core MBA Curriculum since Maryland Smith launched the online courses in fall 2018. Many students study for free. Others register as verified learners, so they can earn a certificate or apply their credits toward an online MBA at Smith. Executive certificate programs provide additional opportunities for continuing education.

• Analytics focus: The world needs fearless leaders who can help shape strategy and make decisions in a data-driven economy. Smith MBAs will be ready with a new core curriculum focused on analytics.

• Specialized degrees: Students can get a broad overview of business principles at Smith. They also can do a deep dive into one discipline with specialty master’s programs in finance, quantitative finance, accounting, marketing analytics, business analytics, supply chain management and information systems. Increasingly, Smith is incorporating artificial intelligence across various analytics-related offerings.

• Plus One: Bachelor’s students do not have to wait until they graduate to start a specialty master’s program. They can overlap their coursework and finish both degrees in five years or fewer.

Smith has come a long way since my arrival at the school 20 years ago. We are proud to be at the cutting-edge of innovation in teaching and research. Thank you for being part of the journey.

RITU AGARWAL, INTERIM DEAN

“The access to current and future leaders positions business schools as society’s best hope to knock down barriers for women in male-dominated industries.”

/ INTERIM DEAN RITU AGARWAL
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Robert H. Smith
School of Business
MARYLAND SMITH ALUMNI

It’s time to reunite!


Smith Reunions: SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2020

Join us for two celebrations in one: Smith Reunions is happening on Maryland Day. Celebrate your reunion milestone by reconnecting with old friends and favorite faculty members. Not your class year? No problem—all Smith alumni are welcome. We can’t wait to see you! Save the date. go.umd.edu/smithreunions.