

# NEWS AND NOTES

## Foster MBAs master competitions at home and abroad

Call it the Giant Check Index. You may have noticed, in recent issues of this magazine, a proliferation of photos depicting students in business attire beaming behind an oversized check (or trophy of some kind). If the celebratory snapshot is becoming a bit of a cliché, it's because Foster School MBAs are winning so many competitions around the US and the world.

### International All-Stars

The new year rang in with one such victory, at January's **East-West MBA All-Star Case Challenge**. It was the first international business case competition ever held in China, hosted by the Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business in Beijing. Invitations went out to Cheung Kong, Carnegie Mellon, Chicago, Ohio State, National University of Singapore, Tsinghua University, Virginia and the Foster School.

All the teams were assigned the same real-world challenge: devise a new US marketing strategy for Tsingtao Beer, a Chinese company with weak American sales. Students had a month to prepare (instead of the mad 48 hours that are typical of such competitions).

The Foster team—full-time MBAs Josh Holt and Carrie Pederson and evening MBAs Ryan Cassidy and Adam Martin—won the Best School Team prize. It probably didn't hurt that Pederson, who had worked for several years in Taiwan, closed the team's presentation with some graceful remarks in Mandarin Chinese. "But that's not what won the

prize," says Ming Fan, an assistant professor who coached the MBAs. "The judges really admired our students' presentation and communication skills. 'They look so professional,' they said. 'Are they really students?'"

### Marketing genius

In February another team of Foster MBAs dazzled judges and competitors alike at the invitation-only **Wake Forest Marketing Summit**. The team—Kevin Kirn, Lisa Meyr,



Paul Kilian, Hunter Saunders, Annie Akin, Matthew Kuffel and Daniel Liska—was coached by Mark Forehand, an associate professor of marketing, Elizabeth Stearns, a senior lecturer in marketing, and associate dean Dan Turner.

The competition included Brigham Young, Duke, Penn State, Virginia, Wisconsin and Wake Forest. But in this challenge to expand the market for competition sponsor Alltel Wireless, it was really a one-school race. "The University of Washington was able to bring an innovative yet practical solution to the table that we can now work to develop and implement," says Sarah Day of Alltel.

"It's clear that the UW stacks up against the best in the country," says Kirn. "Our professionalism really stood out."

### Global domination

Foster MBAs also won the **Pac-10 MBA Case Competition** in October, and contributed to a win in the **NAIOP Real Estate Case Competition** for the second-straight year. And in April, even a freak Midwestern earthquake couldn't pre-

vent a team of first-year Foster MBAs from winning the **CIBER International Case Competition** at the University of Wisconsin—for the second straight year. Lauren Darnielle, Fran Lalas, Craig Wiley and Paul Zitarelli illuminated the field of domestic and international schools. In the competition to pick a site for Disney's next international theme park, the Foster team selected India and delivered a most compelling case for its decision.

Using a method of storyboarding the presentation passed down by second-year MBA and case competition expert Kevin Kirn, the Foster team won high scores for analysis,



and presentation. "One of the final round judges told us that the decision was easy and unanimous," Zitarelli says. "She emphasized how we presented a cohesive story, and behaved as a team that seemed to genuinely *like* each other."

### Venture dynasty

But not every MBA competition is a problem-solving contest. The Foster School has become a perennial favorite at the **Venture Capital Investment Competition** (VCIC) run by the University of North Carolina.

In the VCIC, student teams assume the role of venture capital firms, evaluate real-world business plans, decide where to invest and defend those decisions to the judges, an exacting panel of actual VCs.

Emer Dooley, a lecturer in entrepreneurship, propelled the Foster School into the VCIC in 2003. "It was a disaster," she says. "We had no clue."



But as the team's coach, she sat in on the judges' sessions and learned fast. She launched an elective in venture capital investment, began an intramural competition and brought in top Seattle-area entrepreneurs and VCs to interact with students. The result? In the 2004 and 2006 VCIC, the Foster School brought home the grand prize. This year the team—MBAs Topher Sabella, Ashita Achuthan, Kien Ha, Paul Meighan and Stuart Young—won the Silicon Valley regional and finished second at the international final in April.

### Pleasure, or business?

Winning competitions is fun. But what does it mean? "In these contests, students have to pull together all of their learning, look at the problem in front of them and apply whatever it takes," says Dan Poston, assistant dean for masters programs.

"Competitions simulate the real business world—the time pressures, the imperfect information, the uncertainty and stress," adds Fan. "They bring out the best in our students."

Most ascribe the credit for recent competition success to the MBA Leadership Program created and directed by senior lecturer Judith Kalitzki. Every Foster MBA receives personalized evaluation and coaching to hone leadership, communication and teamwork skills, which are tested in two required in-house case competitions during the first year. "We customize leadership development to each person," says Poston. "And the result is that students have access to the challenging leadership opportunities they need to truly excel."

### MBA alumna quietly engineers Starbucks transformation



If her finely sketched portrait in the March 18 *Wall Street Journal* is any indication, Michelle Gass (MBA 1999) has arrived.

Since joining Starbucks in 1996, just as she began the Foster School's Evening MBA Program, Gass has quietly become a key player. She has driven development of many products that can be found in the company's 15,000 stores worldwide, including the Frappuccino, Tazo tea, Ethos water and Black Apron Exclusives coffees.

Then came Starbucks' identity crisis. Chairman Howard Schultz returned to the CEO office in January, determined to re-ignite the passion behind the brand and re-connect customers with the famed Starbucks experience. He named Gass senior vice president of global strategy, and tasked her with turning this grand vision into strategies, tactics and products.

In short order, she led a team of top executives to shape the company's new agenda, which begins with a refocusing on the coffee. Starbucks has acquired a state-of-the-art espresso machine for its stores and introduced a super-smooth new blend of drip. Other initiatives include loyalty benefits, a community Web site, and expanded conservation efforts, with entries into the "health and wellness" and energy drink markets on the horizon.

Transformation on such a scale will take more than a few months, of course. And customers will be the ultimate arbiters of Gass's success. With 50 million per week, that's a lot of vested interest. "Any kind of transformation like this is not only about your tactical plan," Gass told the *WSJ*, "but also your recommitment as a leader to be part of the journey."

### Rankings Scorecard

In recent months, the Foster School of Business has been cited in several prestigious rankings.

*Financial Times* ranked the Foster Full-Time MBA Program 44th in the world, 21st among schools in the United States and 6th among US public universities. In the ranking survey, Foster School alumni three years out reported significant increases in current salary, career progression and aims achieved over the previous year.

In recognition of the School's rapid ascent of the FT rankings in recent years, French-language *JDN Management* named the Foster School the 4th fastest-rising business school in the world, proclaiming it "*L'unique Américaine*" and noting its "*plus belle progression*."

*The Economist Intelligence Unit* ranked the Foster Full-Time MBA Program 26th among the world's top 100 business schools—and 15th among universities in the United States. It also rates the Foster School's Executive Education among the 9 best in the world for customized programs.

*BusinessWeek* ranked the Foster Evening MBA Program 16th nationally and 2nd among public universities. The rating suggested that student quality has continued to increase even with the program's recent doubling in size.

*BusinessWeek* also rated the Foster School's Undergraduate Program 33rd nationally, 11th among public institutions, and 5th overall for return on investment.

### Foster chapter of Beta Alpha Psi sweeps regional competition

At April's annual meeting of the Beta Alpha Psi Northwest region, students in the Foster School's delta chapter won all three best practices competitions for the second consecutive year. The sweep qualifies the Foster chapter to compete at the national best practices competition of this venerable society of financial information students and professionals.

The regional winners were:

**Best practices in strategic planning** – Andrew Alwood, Fanny Shellenberger, Bonnie Walter and Megan Yeung.

**Best practices in financial literacy** – Stephanie Chu, Vildana Kunduklija and Whitney Langendorfer.

**Best practices in making a difference** – Roya Labib and Brad Williams.

Through the nine-month projects, Beta Alpha Psi members generated the region's best 10-year plan for their organization, educated the UW community on personal finance issues, and made significant contributions to autistic youths in Seattle high schools.

Membership in Beta Alpha Psi requires high scholastic achievement, professional development and community service. The Foster School's delta chapter is one of the organization's largest and oldest, dating back to 1921.

### Mariner great shifts careers in Executive Development Program

Many pro athletes retire to a life of leisure. Edgar Martinez moved on to a demanding second career in business. The legendary Seattle Mariner helped found Plaza Bank, Washington's first Latino financial institution. And he is CEO of Branded Solutions by Edgar Martinez, a new local promotional marketing agency that is an evolution of his family's embroidery business.

Branded Solutions custom-decorates merchandise and apparel for corporate marketing needs, expertly navigating the 3,000 suppliers and million-plus logo-worthy products of the \$19 billion branded merchandise industry.

It's no walk in the ballpark, even for one of the greatest designated hitters in Major League Baseball history. "I need a challenge, and running this business challenges me every day," Martinez says. "I have some background, but there is a lot to learn. It's like being a rookie again."

To speed his development, Martinez enrolled in this year's Foster Executive Development Program, a nine-month exploration of each facet of business from a top-level view. It appears that the same passion and preparation that made him such a prolific hitter transfers pretty well to the classroom and the office.

But can Martinez really change direction so completely after 18 seasons in the majors, seven All-Star appearances, two batting titles and five Silver Slugger Awards? Can he ever be just a face in the crowd when the league's designated hitter award and the street outside Safeco Field bears his name?



Just watch him. Or better yet, don't. The soft-spoken Martinez is happy to trade the limelight for more time with family, on philanthropy and at his new business. He rarely attends Mariners games—hardly even watches at home any more. "If my kids were really big fans, I'd probably be going to games all the time," he says. "But my son loves music and my daughters are too young to really care about baseball."

Not long ago Martinez's name carried a kind of heroic hush of expectation: *Here comes Edgar to the plate*. Now, he's just Edgar again, out to prove himself in a new arena. And that's fine with him. "You know, I can blend in pretty easily," he says. "As years go by, it will get easier and easier."

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## CENTER NEWS

**Global Social Entrepreneurship Competition moves social responsibility to the bottom line**

The Global Business Center received 80 business plans for this year's UW Global Social Entrepreneurship Competition. This record number, doubling the previous year's submissions, came from universities in Bangladesh, Canada, China, Estonia, Japan, Morocco, Philippines, Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, Uganda and around the United States, including 15 multi-disciplinary teams from the UW. Their charge was to create innovative, commercially sustainable ways to improve the quality of life in developing countries.

The grand prize went to KAITE, from the German Christian-Albrechts-Universität, an organization that promotes sustainable organic farming of specialty products in Zimbabwe. Second-place went to the Rabuor Sunflower Farm, a collaboration of Foster MBAs and an Evans School student promoting the production of sunflower oil as a means of economic development in Kenya.

The Global Health first prize went to Help for Malaria, a collaboration of UW and Harvard students providing free testing and inexpensive combination drug regimens in Burkino Faso. The Global Health second prize went to WaterPLUS, a team of students from the University of North Carolina, Duke and Stanford developing water treatment through UV-LEDs. The Investor's Choice was Slag Bloc, Ltd., from the University of Trinidad & Tobago, that converts industrial waste into construction masonry. And the People's Choice award went to Help for Malaria.

GSEC sponsors were Microsoft, the UW Department of Global Health, the Foster School of Business, Symetra Financial, Howard & Lynn Behar, the Peg & Rick Young Foundation, Fluke-Danaher, the UW Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and the UW Center for Global Studies.

"The social entrepreneurship movement is gaining momentum these days and the concept is becoming more mainstream than ever," said Bill Clapp, founder of Global Partnerships, in his keynote address at the GSEC awards banquet.

Added Foster Dean Jim Jiambalvo, "GSEC gets to the noble purpose of business."

**Business Plan Competition winner to vie for Silicon Valley prize**

Talk about leverage. The winning team of student entrepreneurs at this year's UW Business Plan Competition (to be vetted May 22) will have an opportunity to increase its \$25,000 grand prize winnings tenfold—in less than a week.

The Silicon Valley venture capital firm of Draper Fisher Jurvetson has invited the UW champ to compete in its own DFJ Venture Challenge, May 28 in Menlo Park. This is the first time any school outside of California has been invited to this exclusive event. The competition? Victors of high-tech entrepreneurial competitions held at prominent universities around the Golden State, including Stanford, USC, UC-Berkeley, UCLA, UC Davis, Cal Tech and CalPoly. At stake is a \$250,000 investment by DFJ, to be disbursed upon the winning company's incorporation.

But the real prize, of incalculable value, is a few minutes in front of some of the world's most potent VCs.

The UW Business Plan Competition is organized by the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the Foster School of Business. A record 89 entries were cropped to 34 for the investment round, April 23. Final rounds are May 22.

**BEDC celebrates African American achievement**

The UW Business and Economic Development Center's Celebration of African American Business Achievement featured a panel of innovators and trendsetters that included Anthony Ray, better known as "Sir Mix-a-Lot," the Grammy Award-winning pioneer in hip-hop music and culture whose "Baby Got Back" hit number one on the charts in 1992.

Other panelists were Craig Dawson (BA 1985), founder and CEO of Retail Lockbox, Lori Milton (BA 1990), senior loan officer for the Evergreen Community Development Association, and Robert Jeffrey, founder and publisher of *Colors Northwest* magazine.

Sponsors included Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Ernst & Young, Moss Adams, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Seattle Hip Hop Youth Council, Thaddeus Spratlen & Lois Price Spratlen, Undergraduate Diversity Services at the Foster

School of Business, the UW Alumni Association and Washington Mutual. Proceeds from the event support the Association of Black Business Students (ABBS) Endowed Scholarship which will provide financial aid to African American undergraduate students at the Foster School.

**Global Business Case Competition celebrates 10th year**

To mark the 10th edition of the UW Global Business Case Competition, the hosting Global Business Center invited all previous winners and welcomed past champions from Korea, New Zealand, Singapore, Denmark, Germany—as well as the Foster School—to the 2008 field.

At play was a strategy to expand Starbucks' Entertainment Division to non-US markets. The judges picked the National University of Singapore for top honors, while the Foster School team of Gib Lopez, Jenny DeWhitt, Kyle Floyd and David Wang won the first People's Choice Award, selected by competing teams, audience members and viewers of the competition's first-ever live webcast.



The week-long cultural convergence included the Dean's Global Business Roundtable on global demand for talent, a screening of the locally produced film "Outsourced," and a morning spent preparing students at local high schools for their own international case competition.

Students in the Certificate of International Studies in Business (CISB) program provided much of the leadership for the GBCC. The Global Business Center received support from Avande, Boeing, Costco, Expeditors International, F5 Networks, Fluke, Holland America, Microsoft, Starbucks International, T-Mobile and Wells Fargo.

**Eco-entrepreneur emerges from Creating a Company**

Adrienne White hasn't always been an environmentalist. Entrepreneur, either. Both latent tendencies came forth when the Foster School senior enrolled in *Creating a Company*, a course that

calls on student teams to conceive, incorporate, launch and operate a business over two crazy quarters.

The class sparked White's first venture, Greenovations. The concept: customized home energy audits that quantify inefficiencies in construction, appliances and habits, and estimate both costs to fix and resulting energy savings.

"We chose something that makes sense for people who want to save money, as well as make their home healthier for their families and better for the environment," she says.

With several classmates and modest seed funding from the course, White took Greenovations to the streets, and the Seattle Home Show. They audited homes, published the 2008 Green Guide and put on a series of workshops at the Green Lake Community Center.

Small profit earned. Big lessons learned. The class is done, but not White. She's in talks with local utility companies and general contractors to potentially extend Greenovations' services to their customers.

**Foster undergrads take first at Emory, third at Georgetown**

Xayachuck Toan Viradet, a senior studying finance and economics, won first place at the Goizueta Business School's Student Leadership Conference case competition, held in February at Emory University.

Viradet and Benjamin Wood, co-chairs of the Undergraduate Business Council, represented the Foster School at the prestigious leadership conference that convenes students from the top 25 undergraduate business school programs in the US, as well as leading schools in Europe, Asia and South America. For the case competition, students from different schools were mixed-and-matched to form teams, with Viradet pacing his to victory.

In March, Viradet led a team of Foster undergrads Olivia Miasik, Luis Silva-Behrens and Queenie Man to third place at Georgetown University's Business Strategy Challenge, delivering a comprehensive fundraising and management plan for the Academy for Learning Through the Arts (ALTA), a charter school in Washington, DC.

## Afghanistan veteran, novice dad logs MBA Journal for *BusinessWeek*

*BusinessWeek* has returned once more to the Foster School well for its student-logged online MBA Journal. One of only five first-year students chosen this year to chronicle the MBA experience, Nathan Kolmodin is following in the fingerprints of Foster grads and past MBA Journalists Cintra Pollack (MBA 2005) and Anne Turchi Ruybalid (MBA 2007).

Kolmodin certainly makes for a fascinating narrator. Only 26 years of age, he's already led an Army field intelligence team in Afghanistan. He's also fluent in Spanish and Arabic, conversant in Italian and French, and taking up Chinese.

Oh, and he's a proud new papa; his daughter, Madeleine, was born just days before the start of classes.

But the *BusinessWeek* editors probably were not expecting the poignancy in Kolmodin's intimate accounts of the extraordinary circumstances that led to his Foster School studies.

"My life before B-school may appear idyllic, but the tale is not for the faint of heart," he opened his introductory journal entry. "Mothers-to-be should be careful in reading on."

After a happy, sheltered childhood, Kolmodin graduated from the University of Washington in 2003 with degrees in economics and political science and ambitions to join the US Foreign Service. Toward that end, he enlisted as an Arabic linguist in the Washington National Guard. Five days before his deployment to Afghanistan in 2005, he learned that his wife, Hygel, was pregnant.

After nine months criss-crossing the extraterrestrial Afghan outback, Kolmodin returned home on leave for the birth of his daughter. Little more than a week later, she died, afflicted by a congenital disorder. "Somewhere between all of the surgeries, the nights spent reading to our daughter while she was in a drug-induced paralysis to prevent her from pulling out the half-inch tubes protruding from her neck, and the nine days it took for her tiny body to wear out," Kolmodin wrote, "I figured out that the military could not afford the new level of stability that our family now needed."

He decided to pursue an MBA as a path to an international career under his command. "The process of applying



turned into positive steps toward progress and healing," he wrote.

Now the demands of the full-time MBA Program and family, including his healthy new infant daughter, ensure that he lives in the present, with glimpses of the future allowed on occasion. He makes extra time to offer pragmatic advice to readers of his MBA Journal. Like seeking financial aid in obvious and less-obvious places (he received support from the Army and the Foster School's W. Hunter Simpson Scholarship). And working in teams (his first cohort of six spoke more than 10 different languages). And picking the right MBA program (rather than promising success as an entitlement, he notes, the Foster School develops the skills needed to achieve success). And re-calibrating expectations once you get there ("Everyone in the program has succeeded in everything they've done," he says. "Now you're working harder than ever before, but you may find that in the MBA, you're just average.")

Most touchingly, Kolmodin shares hard-earned wisdom on balancing the priorities of school and family life. His young daughter has opened a rich new topic of discussion along the lines of time—and energy—management. "It is easy to fill the entire day with activities and work, but I believe you must allow normalcy to reign from time to time, whatever normalcy might be for you."

Not bad advice, even outside of the MBA maelstrom.

## Harden experiences life in the glow of soccer's most dazzling star

All but lost amid the general hysteria attending the arrival of David Beckham to America last year, another blond debuted for the Los Angeles Galaxy of Major League Soccer, stancher in stature if weaker of wallet than his celebrated English teammate.

Ty Harden departed the Foster School just a few credits shy of his marketing degree when he was selected in the 2007 MLS Super Draft. But converting a third-team All-America, four-time All-Pac-10 and three-time Pac-10 All-Academic resume into success in the pro ranks is not easy.

Harden did it in one year. Playing before screaming—sometimes squealing—throng of fans in stadia across North America, he became the rock of the Galaxy's back line. And all this for the pauper's developmental salary of \$17,900 (negotiated slightly higher mid-season). The league's strange economics allow teams to field pros paid like line cooks alongside multimillionaire celebrities. Like Beckham. But Harden doesn't begrudge his iconic teammate.

"I didn't know what to expect," he says. "So much fame, so much success in soccer, so much attention on every



aspect of his life. But honestly, David's one of the most down-to-earth guys I have ever met. In the locker room, he's just a regular guy."

Doesn't mean he doesn't draw a crowd, from delirious 15-year-old girls to Hollywood glitterati. Mid-season, the entire team received invitations-by-association to a gala for the Beckhams thrown by Tom Cruise and Katy Holmes, Will Smith and Jada Pinket-Smith, and stocked with A-listers.

"It was surreal, a huge celebrity party," Harden says. "I was the least famous person there, by far."

And he likes it that way. Off-season, Harden quietly decided to depart professional soccer to follow his parents' footsteps in philanthropic endeavors. He also plans to finish that degree from the Foster School.

## IN BRIEF

### Corporate responsibility panel encourages students to make a difference

At a forum presented by the Retail Management Program, a panel of experts from Ben Bridge Jeweler, Starbucks, Microsoft and the Gates Foundation discussed the expanding opportunities for young people to make a positive impact on the world through their business careers.

"When I graduated, the idea of philanthropy was kind of theoretical," noted Robert Bernard, chief environmental strategist at Microsoft. "But can you find a work culture where you are encouraged or empowered to take on the issues you are passionate about? Are there opportunities to make a difference today—or to learn something that will allow you to make a difference tomorrow? Don't underestimate the power of your time and IQ put toward an issue that's important to you."

### MBA Challenge for Charity auction raises \$175,000

Proceeds from the C4C "Best of the Northwest" Dinner and Auction Gala, hosted by Foster MBAs, will support Special Olympics Washington and the Boys & Girls Clubs of King County. The February event is part of the year-long competition among nine prominent West Coast business schools to provide the most support to local service organizations. The Foster School has won C4C seven of the past nine years.

At this year's auction, the 260 attending revelers-with-a-cause bid on everything from a dinner party prepared by the fishmongers of Pike Place to a tour of the Microsoft art collection to a guided ascent of Mount Rainier to a poker night with Foster faculty. Miller Nash provided lead sponsorship for the event, with additional support from Microsoft, Gilead, Fluke, Group Health, HP, UI Evolution and Watson Wyatt.

### Rick Steves tells how he made a mint on budget travel

At a March event for Foster alumni, Rick Steves (BA 1978) recounted how he built his travel business—Europe Through the Back Door—from a funky guide operation to a \$40 million empire of tours, books, media and merchandise. He also delved into his social activism, explaining that his mission has refocused somewhat on the political value of travel in broadening perspectives. Despite the money he may have lost by airing his controversial views, business is still booming. "I have managed to turn something I've always loved into a business that gives me a lot of energy, a lot of joy, employs 80 people well, and has made me quite wealthy," he said.