

# MBA Newsletter

VOLUME I

FALL 2010

## Message from the Dean

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Milgard School's MBA Newsletter. Students in the Milgard MBA program enjoy a select group of peers with diverse educational and business backgrounds, and demonstrated leadership ability. They are bright, ambitious, enthusiastic, and are constantly looking for opportunities to make a positive, social impact. They bring real-world experience and insight into the program.

Our students build lifelong relationships as they develop their managerial skills in the Milgard MBA's dynamic learning environment. They are continuously challenged by our top notch faculty, and the rigor and intensity of our program. The Milgard School faculty consists of outstanding teachers and renowned scholars who create knowledge and tools that are the basis of a relevant business education.

A number of CEOs and other senior executives

serve as advisors on the Milgard School's Board, speak in our classrooms, and mentor and counsel our MBA students. We pride ourselves on our small class sizes, which give the program the feel of an executive MBA.

The Milgard MBA has been substantially revised in recent years. We have added several courses including *Operations Management*, *Managerial Accounting*, and *Corporate Social Responsibility & Ethics*. Our students are able to avail of a generous number of elective options at our campus and those offered at University of Washington Seattle including their global study tours. Several successful initiatives of recent vintage include a quarterly executive speaker series and the mentoring program, where 2nd-year MBA students are mentored one-on-one by executives serving on our business advisory board.

Please join us for our quarterly TGIFs—the next one is scheduled for Friday,



January 28, 2011 at The Swiss. At this event you have an opportunity to connect with former classmates, alumni, faculty and current MBA students. This event is hosted by the Milgard School of Business. Additionally, the MBA program is organizing its first ever networking event—February 28, 2011. All alumni are invited to attend.

I join my colleagues in wishing you a wonderful holiday season and a very happy new year!

Shahrokh M. Saudagaran  
Gary E. and James A.  
Milgard Endowed Dean

## Milgard MBA Program

We hope you enjoy reading our MBA newsletter. You will find some priceless communication tips from Dr. Kent Nelson, and learn more about alumni, students, our MBA adviser, and MBA faculty of the year, Dr. Doug Wills.

In the future, we plan to add an alumni class notes area to the newsletter so please keep us apprised of happenings in



your lives—new job, promotion, relocation, marriage, additions to the family.

We would appreciate your recommendations of the MBA program to colleagues, friends and family. At the Milgard School, we are proud of our well rounded program, small class sizes, cohort model, high quality faculty, a student body with substantial real world experience, and many resources of the University of Washington.

Our priority deadline is May 1st, with a secondary deadline of July 1st.

Please stay in touch. I look forward to seeing you at the next TGIF and our very first networking event. Along with Dr. Zoe Barsness, Dr. Fei Leng, and Dr. Arindam Tripathy, we wish you all the best for the season and coming year.

Eugene Sivadas  
MBA Program Director  
Associate Professor  
Marketing

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### POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **TGIF Event**—Friday, January 28, 2011, 5:00-8:00 p.m. The Swiss, 1904 Jefferson Avenue. Refreshments will be provided.
- **MBA Networking Event**—Monday, February 28, 2011, 6:00-9:00 p.m. UW Tacoma campus, GWP building, Tacoma Room.
- **GMAT Training**—Milgard School is offering free GMAT training on Saturday, March 12, 2011 (six hour training). Pass the word along to anyone who might be thinking about pursuing an MBA. Contact Aubree Robinson for the exact time and location: aubreer@uw.edu.
- **Alumni Class Notes**—if you're an alumni with information regarding new additions to the family, a new job opportunity, or with a story to share, please let us know! For next edition, please provide no later than February 18, 2011. Contact Aubree Robinson at aubreer@uw.edu.

## Communication Tips from Associate Dean, Kent Nelson, Ph.D.

It's no secret that communication is the lifeblood of any relationship. The quality of our communication with others shapes the outcomes we experience with them. Our communication either contributes to, or contaminates, our relationships. The very fabric of organizational effectiveness is the ability to establish constructive, collaborative relationships with others. Yet one of the great ironies of contemporary life is that, despite unparalleled advances in technologies designed to enhance communication between people, many of us do not relate well with others interpersonally. As communication scholar Robert Bolton states, this "interpersonal gap is now one of the major social problems for our troubled society." For this reason, Bolton has described effective interpersonal communication as "humanity's supreme achieve.

So what are the major barriers to effective communication? Why do we experience so much difficulty relating to others? John Gottman, a professor of psychology at the University of Washington, gives us some helpful guidance. Even though his work has focused on why marriages succeed or fail, his advice is instructive for all kinds of relationships, including those in businesses. In short, a major communication problem is what Gottman calls the "cycle of negativity" that is deadly for relationships. This cycle stems from two human patterns: the tendency to judge, and the tendency to defend.

Judging communication involves messages of disapproval and criticism directed at another. Rather than simply observing or describing what we don't like about others, we make

subjectively negative evaluation of them. Judgment involves attacking someone's personality or character with blame, rather than simply pointing out a specific behavior that we don't like. It's one thing to air a complaint about someone's behavior—pointing out how his/her behavior is problematic for you—and quite another to judge someone's value and worth as a person. The former is actually very helpful and healthy in relationships, while the latter is destructive. It's the difference between: "You always have to have your own way...you're so selfish." (*judgment*) and "I'd appreciate the chance to have some input on this decision. When you make unilateral decisions it ignores how I might be affected." (*complaint*).

The problem with judgment is that people are naturally inclined to become defensive when they feel attacked and criticized. Defensiveness usually becomes with a negative emotional reaction, and the most common form it takes is attacking back. When we feel criticized, we also feel justified in criticizing the other person in return. This is a typical defense mechanism we use to deal with another person when we perceive they are judging us. But the problem is that this defensive response fails to move the situation forward or help us resolve our differences with the other person. In fact, it adds fuel to the fire of the conflict, thus escalating the emotional volatility between people. This leads to an attack-defend cycle that perpetuates negativity in the relationship.

So what can we do to ward off this cycle of negativity? First, beware of sending messages that may sound judgmental, even if you don't mean them to. The impact of communication is not only in *what* we say, but

*how* we say it. Judgment is often communication in a person's tone of voice (angry or sarcastic), body language (aggressive), and use of loaded language such as "you always" / "you never" or character assassinations such as "you're lazy." Any form of communication that is emotionally charged is likely to be perceived as judgment, thus setting off defensiveness

in the other. So it pays to be careful about how you word a potentially negative message, and to guard against "paralinguistics" that take signal disapproval of the other. Second, avoid the human tendency to take things personally when someone confronts you. It's important to recognize and validate the other person's reality, and express understanding of his/her point of view, rather than getting wrapped up in your own position. Non-defensive listening is one of the most powerful forms of communication that can diffuse the cycle of negativity. This involves resisting the temptation to interrupt the other person, or argue with the point he/she is making, or find holes in what he/she is saying. Instead, agree with the truth. If you know that part of what the person has said to you is true, acknowledging that truth will validate the other person and create common ground from which to proceed.



### Milgard School's MBA Advisor



Aubree Robinson joined the Milgard School of Business as an academic adviser in June of 2008. In October of 2009, Aubree began advising the school's MBA students.

Previous profes-

sional experience includes four years as an academic advisor at Pacific Lutheran University (PLU). While at PLU she worked with student organizations and new student orientations.

Growing up in southern California, Aubree moved to the Tacoma area to attend University of Puget Sound, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 1999. Her interest in working in student services lead her to

complete her Master of Arts in Student development Administration in 2003.

Aubree enjoys spending time with friends and her family, participating in local races, baking, and in the last year has developed an interest in Husky basketball.

## Meet MBA Candidate JOEL GJUKA

Joel Gjuka is currently an MBA candidate at University of Washington Tacoma, Milgard School of Business. He is also a candidate for an MBA certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of Washington, Michael G. Foster School of Business in Seattle. Joel is also an MBA representative on the Student Leadership Council for the Milgard School's Center for Leadership & Social Responsibility. Past education includes a BA in Geosciences from Pacific Lutheran University, and he is a Certified Public Accountant.

When Joel entered the Milgard MBA program in the fall of 2008, he says he could never have predicted the direction his education would take. "I'd been working with our management consulting team at Moss Adams, and I wanted to build my mastery of corporate strategy." But somewhere along the way, Joel became enamored with marketing. "I thought of marketers as a bunch of touchy, feely artists, and telemarketers who call you at inconvenient times. But, as a discipline, I discovered marketing lies at the heart of strategy. In truth, marketing melds the disciplines of



economics, psychology, and finance to deliver products and services that create value to both the firm and the customer."

Joel says that Dr. Sivasdas' course on brand strategy opened his eyes to the importance of understanding consumer insights. But it was Dr. Altaf Merchant, with his experience as a global brand manager at leading consumer product companies, Reckitt Benkiser and GlaxoSmithKlein, who inspired Joel to leverage those insights to bring a product to market. "While in Dr. Merchant's class, Laura Barrentine, Kristy Yerger, and I worked on the marketing plan for Emergent Detection, a medical device start-up I cofounded with then Milgard MBA candidate Keegan Hall and two MBAs from the Foster School of Business, Eric Fogel and Amanda Mathes. Our Emergent Detection team took third in the Foster School's 2010 UW Business Plan Competition out of 92 teams and, more importantly, Keegan and Eric have gone on to raise almost \$300,000 in early stage funding."

*"...marketing melds the disciplines of economics, psychology, and finance..."*

The Milgard MBA program has given Joel every opportunity to develop his expertise in marketing. Last summer he spent two months analyzing the European sporting goods market for Cascade Designs, owner of premium brands such as Therm A Rest, Platypus,

MSR, and Seal Line. At the same time, Joel was conducting academic research under the tutelage of Dr. Merchant and Dr. Greg Rose. "It was a terrific experience analyzing how companies are using vicarious nostalgia—nostalgia for a time we never lived—to establish their brand heritage. We see examples of this everyday from leading brands, such as Wells Fargo, Coleman, Jack Daniels, and even Mountain Dew. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. We believe we've uncovered why that is.

A summary abstract of this research has been submitted to the Academy of Marketing Science for the May 2011 conference in Florida. Whether or not they get to present, Joel says "it's been a real privilege working with leading researchers in the fields of nostalgia marketing and consumer behavior."

## Meet MBA Candidate TYLER MICHAEL FOSTER

Tyler Foster works for Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company as a senior mechanical engineer, located at Naval Subbase Bangor in Kitsap County. Tyler helps maintain an array of critical ground support equipment in support of the U.S. submarine fleet. His job involves a lot of troubleshooting to reduce production delays and preventive maintenance to avoid critical breakdowns. Previously Tyler worked as a thermal engineer at Knolls Atomic Power Lab in Schenectady, NY, where he provided technical support and worked on new reactor designs.

Tyler earned his Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Brigham Young University in 2004. Tyler's thesis was about improving design techniques for small unmanned aerial vehicles and involved extensive flight testing of RC airplanes to gather data. He also has a Bachelor's degree in Russian, though he has not yet been able to use his language skills in his professional career.

Tyler has a beautiful (and patient) wife and three kids, ages 10 months to 4 years. Of course they cannot wait for him to finish up the MBA program to have him home more often. Tyler is very active in his church, and finds special satisfaction in helping out as an adult leader for the youth program.

The Milgard School of Business MBA program has given Tyler a broader perspective of what it takes to be a business leader. Originally, he was mostly interested in the technical business skills that were not a part of his college curriculum, hoping that they could improve his future career opportunities. However, the more immediate impact on his job has been from application of the "softer" skills involving, communication, interpersonal dynamics, and networking. He now appreciates that his methods and styles for interacting with people, motivating coworkers, and handling conflict are just as critical to success as the particular technical skills he brings to his job. Tyler believes that pursuit of the

Milgard MBA degree is helping him to become a well-rounded business leader of the future.



## Alumni Profiles

**Laraine Quail, MBA 2004**  
**Manager, Finance & Treasury**  
**TrueBlue, Inc.**

Laraine graduated from Bellarmine High School in Tacoma, and then spent the next 5 years of attending Tacoma Community College, studying and travel overseas, as well as the University of Washington Seattle. This resulted in a BA in International Studies from the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies and proficiency in two foreign languages.

Laraine's career began at Weyerhaeuser in their International Trade Services group. This beginning step followed into progressive positions locally, in the midwest and east coast. As Laraine became more exposed to higher-level leaders and saw the types of responsibilities they had, she wanted to do what they were doing! It was clear to her that an MBA would give her an edge and provide the skills these leaders had mastered.



At the same time, the University of Washington Tacoma's MBA program was brand new. Laraine had applied to and been accepted at other schools, but chose the University of Washington Tacoma for the fresh enthusiasm of the professors and the professional caliber of students. At the time, the finance focus was not yet developed but the program was willing to work with her so that she could take all of her electives in finance and effectively receive enough credits to consider it a secondary focus. The combined curriculum focus of change management and financial could not have been more appropriate disciplines to apply to Laraine's work.

The technical skills Laraine learned at the University of Washington in change management, finance, and strategic planning have been lynchpins in her career. In fact, her MBA texts sit on the windowsill behind her desk—and they DON'T collect dust.

As Finance & Treasury Manager, not only does she have to know the technical skills, but she must know how each function within the company inter-relates, and how to apply her leadership skills to champion and support change.

**Paul Werner, MBA 2009**  
**Director**  
**Cisco Systems, Inc.**

Paul earned a Bachelor of Arts in economics from the University of Washington Seattle, and graduated from University of Washington Tacoma, Milgard School of Business MBA program. Paul has been employed in the technology industry for over 20 years; 8 years at IBM and over 13 years at Cisco Systems. Today, Paul's role is a Director where he leads the US-based sales efforts in data center technology. The work environment is fast paced and highly collaborative. The skills Paul acquired while attending the Milgard School of Business have increased his business acumen across finance, marketing, sales and product development.

On any given day Paul interacts with large cross functional teams to bring data solutions to customers and partners. Today for example, Paul is traveling to San Jose to meet with product marketing teams to discuss enhancements to server platforms requested by customers. A short while later he will meet with Cisco channel teams to address gaps in market strategy. Finally, he will end the day with an evening reception for partner communities in the United States.

Paul chose to pursue an MBA at the Milgard School of Business to keep his career moving forward and to refresh his skills. He chose the University of Washington Tacoma and the Milgard School of Business for the flexibility it afforded him in meeting educational goals and timeframes. Paul adds that the faculty and staff at Milgard School of Business are first rate, and worked closely with them to tailor a program that fit within his busy professional and home life. He also enjoyed the academic freedom and encouragement to go deeper into subjects that really interested him such as finance and economics.

All in all, Paul says that the experience was nothing but positive and has allowed him to grow both professionally and personally.



## MBA Executive Speaker Series: Ellen Boyer, Kibble & Prentice

By Chris Inverso, 2011 MBA Candidate

With fifteen to twenty percent margins, operating as an insurance brokerage firm can be quite lucrative. However, such a company must be ever vigilant with its cost controls. This is especially important during a soft market like the present when revenues per client are eroding. Typically, the largest costs for an insurance broker are the commissions that it pays to its salespeople. For this simple reason, it is imperative, from a managerial accounting perspective, that an insurance broker's commission structure be strategically crafted to simultaneously maximize profitability and customer value.

Strategically designed compensation packages are a specialty of Ellen Boyer, a CPA and veteran of accounting and financial management field. Ms. Boyer currently serves as the Chief Operations Officer and Chief Financial Officer at

Kibble & Prentice, an insurance brokerage firm headquartered in Seattle, Washington. Despite its boutique feel, Kibble & Prentice offers a product mix commonly associated with national brokerage firms. At the same time, it prides itself with providing the highest level of service to its commercial and private clients. At the heart of the firm is a world class service offering—a team of heralded salespeople.

Ms. Boyer would be the first to admit that Kibble & Prentice could not succeed unless it rewarded its salespeople handsomely for their efforts. At the same time, all forms of sales activity are not equally desirable, and poorly constructed commission plans often reinforce unprofitable behavior. To maximize long term shareholder benefit, Kibble & Prentice has gone to great lengths to devise a compensation structure that incentivizes

its salespeople to focus on creating an optimal mix of new and existing clients that generate revenue in excess of minimum company requirements.

In her presentation on Tuesday, November 16, 2010, Ms. Boyer addressed current MBA students from the Milgard School of Business with a message that outlined the core elements of Kibble & Prentice's commission structure. She continually engaged students with questions and challenged them to think critically about the compensation related issues that a brokerage firm faces. As she concluded, Ms. Boyer advocated rigor in area of cost accounting, but she also stressed the importance of considering the human side of any accounting strategy.

Our thanks goes out to Ms. Boyer for speaking to the MBA students!

## Q&A—Faculty Profile with Doug Wills, Ph.D., CFA

By Levi Botkin, Milgard Scholar, MBA Marketing Intern

**Q: When did you arrive at UW Tacoma's Milgard School of Business?**

A: Fall Quarter 2002.

**Q: The Milgard School of Business is rather new (established 1994). What drew you to the business school?**

A: The school's program was innovative and student-centered so I was very excited to be a part of that.

**Q: What do you like about the MBA students?**

A: The same thing I like about the undergraduates. They are typically a little older, and from that additional experience they have learned that education is one path to a better life. As such, they are willing to work very hard if they believe what they are learning is useful. Therefore, I spend a lot of time thinking about what material is useful for them and then explaining why it is.

**Q: What were you doing before you came to UW Tacoma?**

A: I taught at a private liberal arts college in Virginia. As my students know, it is a great source for many examples about economics.



**Q: Can you tell us about your professional experience?**

A: Since finishing my doctorate, I've done a little consulting, written a few newspaper columns, and given the occasional speech. For the most part, I've focused on teaching.

**Q: What type of work did you do before you decided to teach? And, why did you choose academia?**

A: I worked as a financial analyst for a couple of years and before that as an economist at a public policy think tank. Probably my most useful experience was installing and repairing telephones. I chose academe because I like to learn and talk about economics. I still do.

**Q: Can you tell us about the research you are currently undertaking?**

A: My research is in economic history, usually on the development of financial markets and the role of property rights. I've also done some work in the history of economic thought. Generally I only pursue research topics that supplement my teaching.

**Q: What business awards or honors do you hold, and are you currently affiliated with any organizations?**

A: I've won a few teaching awards, which I appreciate.

**Q: Is there any additional information that you**

**would like to share with the MBA candidates at the Milgard School of Business?**

A: Whether an MBA is worthwhile or not greatly depends on a student's attitude. If you pursue a MBA, with a focus on grades and obtaining another credential, then you're wasting your time. However, if your focus is on upgrading your skills and learning, then it can be very beneficial.

*"I chose academe because I like to learn and talk about economics."*

Published by:

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