A long-term dream became reality in August 2013 when the Lee University MBA program welcomed our initial cohort of 25 students after nearly six years of planning. Our first cohort, pictured here, is a talented and impressive group of young professionals. They represent a wide variety of undergraduate majors and professional backgrounds. Many of them completed their undergraduate degrees elsewhere and are attending Lee for the first time.

The MBA curriculum is built upon the success of our undergraduate program with a focus on experiential learning. Beginning with the first course, our students are actively engaged in solving real business problems. Each course is designed to combine current business research with the students' professional experiences. One of our students, John Maupin, recently said, "the great thing about the Lee University MBA is that it has immediate, real world impact."

We created a unique hybrid format to combine the convenience of online learning with the personal interaction of the classroom. The semester is structured so that the weekly classes alternate between two courses with asynchronous, online assignments required between class meetings. With this format, students can complete the entire program in just 23 months while attending class only one evening per week.

Donna Sockell, Executive Director of the Center for Education on Social Responsibility in the Leeds School of Business at the University of Colorado at Boulder, wrote in the Chronicle of Higher Education, "there’s no longer any question that critical thinking about obligations to society must be as much a part of business success as finance and other traditional skills. It’s up to business schools to make new ways of business thinking contagious." This idea isn’t new to us – it’s who we are. We could not be better positioned to deliver an MBA that meets the needs of our society.

We believe the Lee University MBA is the best available blend of quality, price, and faith integration. By accepting only 25 students each year, we can ensure the personal interaction that is not available in large lecture hall classes. Our MBA is designed to provide graduates with a framework upon which to make difficult strategic decisions, to lead when the outcome is uncertain, and to create value for the organization by doing what is right. We are excited to offer the MBA as we expand our opportunities to make a difference in the lives of students and influence the future direction of business.
This year we have focused on shoring up a number of changes that are in the works and maturing. Recent changes include developing emphases within the business administration program, revamping the information systems curriculum, launching the MBA, and adapting the healthcare administration major to comply with our accreditation standards. As we reviewed and analyzed our curriculum, we decided to collapse the financial services emphasis with the finance emphasis. To further strengthen the curriculum, we revamped the curricular requirements in the minor in information systems and international business.

As an old timer involved in Phi Beta Lambda during my student days, I am pleased to report the reactivation of the club. The organization suffered from a lack of leadership at the state level for many years; however, new leadership was appointed by the national organization and new initiatives developed. Our local chapter benefited from this renewed interest and was reorganized last year. Our local president, Nathan Byram, was honored last year as an outstanding young leader, and the local club received an award for experiencing significant growth. The current president, Rebecca Thomas, came into office with the same enthusiasm and introduced several new initiatives. For example, she cooperated with the local Chamber of Commerce in several ways. The Chamber hosted one of the chapter meetings, invited the club to attend a Chamber Coffee, which is a networking event for local Chamber members, and invited Rebecca to a Board of Directors meeting to suggest ways in which local companies could cooperate with the club. Rebecca proposed the notion of a mentoring program where local business leaders might mentor club members; the Board was enthusiastic about the program and several plan to be involved in the fall with the mentoring program.

The inaugural MBA class is an impressive class. You will hear more about the class and the MBA program elsewhere in this newsletter; however, let me just say that we have a great blend of Lee University alums and students from other schools; additionally, we have several students who bring a wealth of management and professional experience to the classroom. You know us and you know that we are not satisfied with the status quo, so be watching for changes, modifications, and new twists to the program.

Our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA) is in its seventh year. VITA is a government program where 19 of our students, under Mr. Greg Della Franco’s supervision, complete tax returns for lower income families. As of the writing of this newsletter last year, our students completed 375 returns. That number was dwarfed by the 540 returns completed to date. This year Mr. Della Franco was asked to visit Life Bridges, a local nonprofit organization who serves the mentally handicapped, and investigate ways that students might help with taxes. As a result of his visit, Mr. Della Franco and his students were responsible for completing 55 returns for Life Bridges. VITA continues to be a significant avenue for our students to use their accounting knowledge and expertise to serve the local community. What a wonderful model of Christian love in action!

If you recall last year’s newsletter, you will remember my discussing our cooperation with People for Care and Learning (PCL). I encourage you to look this organization up and see all the ways they serve people in Southeast Asia and in Cleveland, Tennessee. Our most recent endeavor is a joint program distributing artificial flowers designed and produced by Cambodian women who would otherwise be in poverty. Our students assisted by developing a business plan and arranging the flowers once those flowers were shipped to Cleveland. I should mention these flowers are made from, well basically, trash. It is unbelievable how decorative and elegant discarded chewing gum wrappers and discarded plastic can be.

I certainly hope you will keep us in your prayers as we continue to live out our mission: We exist to create opportunities for our students now and in the future. Well, you are part of that mission in that we want to stay connected and be part of your future. Let us hear from you.

Dewayne Thompson, D.B.A.
Chair, Department of Business
This semester the Business Advisory Council member spotlight is on Glenda P. Weinert from Asheville, North Carolina. Weinert graduated from Lee University in 1985 with a bachelor of science in accounting. She received her M.B.A. in organizational management from Kennesaw State University in 1994 and is currently completing her D.B.A. at the University of Phoenix.

As an efficient executive, Weinert planned and operated five for-profit child day care facilities in the Asheville, North Carolina, area. Her visionary plan grew one family-owned company to five locations with an enrollment of 550 children and 100-plus employees. She also planned and designed the construction of six different day care facilities while containing costs and increasing the quality of child care in each of them.

Weinert’s experience extends into the community with her involvement in United Way Education Focus Group, North Carolina Education Advisory Council (a governor appointment), North Carolina Child Care Commission-Board Chair, board member of Children’s Welfare League of Asheville, as well as many other county and community boards. Since 2009, she is the owner/operator of BrightStar Healthcare, a home health care franchise with territory including all of Western North Carolina, where she is responsible for oversight and financial management, hiring, and supervision of key staff. As adjunct faculty at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, she also teaches Introduction to Business, Supervision and Principles of Management, and HR Management.

“I grew up with my mentor quoting this to me daily, ‘I can’t hear what you say because your actions make so much noise.’ I try to live by this guide! It is incredibly important to me to be dependable, loyal, and ethical. I want people to know they can count on me,” she says. “Lee was a spiritual experience that helped me to mature in my spiritual walk; however, as significant to me are my lifelong friendships. My ability to remain connected to the university is so important to me. In other words, Lee is part of who I am.” A scripture passage that guides Glenda Weinert’s life is Psalms 139:1-4 particularly verse 4 that she translates as: “You are intimately acquainted with all my ways.” Her goal is to teach and lead by example, integrity, and work ethic.
The Business Advisory Council of the Department of Business held its annual meeting March 21-22 on campus. This is the 28th year of the Council, whose purpose is to advise the Department on issues such as curriculum, strategic planning, and program development. The Council is composed mostly of senior-level managers or business owners from various industries; however, some members represent universities and consulting firms.

Members of the Business Advisory Council include: front row from left to right are Dewayne Thompson, Tanya Mazzolini, Matt Carlson. Second row from left to right are Matt Ryerson, Evaline Echols, Mava Wilson, Glenda Weinert, Dana Ayers, and John McIntosh. Third row from left to right are Craig Sarine, Bill Jaber, David Velie, Alan burns, and Rodney Bryant. Fourth row from left to right are Mike Harden, Mike Seago, Shane Griffith, Guy DeLoach, David Smartt, Alan Smith, Randy Miedaner, Randy Joiner, and Paul Stumb.
In August 2011 Randall Miedaner joined the Lee University faculty in the Department of Business as Assistant Professor of Business. An accomplished tax, business and investment banking attorney, Randall not only teaches accounting, taxation, and corporate finance courses in the Department of Business, but he is also involved in community, civic, and professional organizations.

Dr. Miedaner received the Juris Doctorate from Louisiana State University Law School. During his tenure at LSU, he taught classes that included income and corporate tax, estate tax, financial, intermediate and advanced accounting, auditing, and business law. Because of his dedicated ability to convey complex information in meaningful terms, the student body at LSU ranked him in the top 10 percent of Business School faculty. He has also served as adjunct faculty at Lakeland College Business School and Oglethorpe University during his professional career, and most recently was a visiting professor at Birmingham Southern College.

Miedaner held positions (vice president and senior vice president) at Wells Fargo Bank, Suntrust Bank in Atlanta, Georgia, and Wells Fargo Bank and Trust (Midwest Region) where he established the Family Asset Management Group that represents high net-worth families. In addition to teaching, he is author of “Add Asset Protection Planning in Your Client’s Estate Plan,” The Wisconsin Lawyer (2001), and “Protecting Assets from Law Suits and Creditors While Saving Income and Estate Taxes,” The Tax Adviser (August 1993). He has also presented numerous papers at professional conferences.

In an interview with Dr. Miedaner, he stated that he really enjoys the opportunity to work as a team with the business faculty. When asked about his relationship with his students, he had this to say: “I feel I get as much back from the students—hearing about their Christian experiences—as I hopefully give to them in the classroom.”

In the words of Dr. Dewayne Thompson, chair of the Department of Business, “Dr. Miedaner represents a valuable addition to our accounting faculty. He brings a plethora of rich professional experience that illuminates concepts, principles and theories for his students.”

Married to Tamara with two children, Miedaner enjoys running, swimming, fishing, and playing tennis.
Every fall the Business Department at Lee University hosts a gala for junior and senior accounting majors to meet with prospective employers in the local community. The Accounting Gala was instituted seven years ago; and even though it began with only 12 employers and 24 students attending, this year 35 employers and 65 students participated. The large turnout filled the Centenary Room nearly to capacity and Greg Della Franco, the gala’s founder, expects it to grow even more. When asked about the issue of having a location big enough to host everyone, he said that it is a “positive dilemma” and the faculty advisors for the gala, which include Randy Miedaner and Ingrid Hart, will be addressing the problem very soon.

The students who choose to attend are required to dress in business formal wear as well as bring copies of their resumes and business cards. The stipulations prepare them for the short interviews with representatives from various CPA firms and local businesses. Juniors and seniors are the targeted group because the employers are looking for students who are about to graduate and enter the work force. According to Della Franco, a large number of the students at the gala end up working for one of the employers. Overall, an estimated 95 percent of the graduates from the Accounting program find jobs almost immediately.

The Accounting Gala is one of the department's greatest achievements in providing assistance for students in finding employment after graduation, and in some cases, with internships before they graduate. With news spreading among the students, and businesses in the area, the event is sure to grow and serve in an even greater capacity.

VITA Program

Lee University has a long history of award-winning service to the local and global communities. The program that put the university on a level that excels in service learning is the partnership Lee has with the Internal Revenue Service’s Volunteer Assistance Program (VITA). Every tax season, junior and senior accounting students who have IRS certification serve the community by offering individuals free tax preparation and assistance in filing their taxes. They met every Saturday from January 31 until May 12 from 9 a.m. to noon in the Walker Memorial Building.

The program is helpful for not only those being served, but it also provides valuable experience for the volunteers—experience that reflects well on resumes. Volunteers engage in a personal manner with clients who become more like friends and even grandparents, which brings them back year after year.

“I foresee an issue with getting volunteers in the future due to changes in service hours required,” stated Greg Della Franco, the program’s coordinator. While volunteer numbers are slightly down, the number of clients served is not. VITA has filed more than 750 returns with $750,000 in refunds. Over the seven years of operation, the program has helped file $5 million (accumulative) in taxes. Each new season brings back old and new friends seeking help in filing their taxes. Many of the clients are the elderly in the area; but as more students on campus learn of the free service, they find that it is a wonderful opportunity to learn how to keep financial documents organized for a faster and more efficient filing next season.

“Although the service is free, many volunteers try to pay the student,” stated Della Franco. “We tell them, ‘No, it’s free; they are volunteering.’ However, I do bring the students donuts or Chick-Fil-A sometimes.”
Dr. Mava Wilson has been granted a sabbatical for the 2015 Spring semester. She applied for her sabbatical during the Fall 2013 semester. Many of her responsibilities will be shared by other faculty members while she is away. She stated that a sabbatical pertaining to educators is mainly a time for professional development without the distraction of other responsibilities.

Dr. Wilson teaches Programming and Database Design and with departmental duties, faculty duties, assisting student in their learning process, teaching classes, and committees; there is not much time for enhancing her knowledge of the subject. She plans to attend conferences during the sabbatical that will further develop her understanding of technology, and she hopes to take classes on new and upcoming information in her field. She is particularly interested in learning about mobile application design, as it is growing in popularity and would be useful knowledge for her future students. Besides growing professionally, the sabbatical will also be a “time of refreshing.”

Lee University looks forward to Dr. Wilson bringing back new knowledge to share with her students and wishes her a pleasant sabbatical.
Greg Della Franco usually leads trips to Italy to give students a better understanding of the culture in Italy. During an interview with Dr. Bill Jaber and Greg Della Franco, they shared how they are planning for the Italy trip this year, although the date of departure is not certain.

I was told about the last trip to Italy, which was coordinated by Dr. Bill Jaber during the absence of Greg Della Franco. He told me the trip he coordinated consisted of the students visiting two different countries—Greece and Italy—which are rich in culture and religion.

The trip began in Athens, Greece where the students toured the nearby museums and other historical sites such as the Parliament and the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The students also attended two lectures at a university and had a lot of time to interact with the nation’s locals.

The next stop for the students upon leaving Greece was Italy; the students started their trip from North Italy and ended in South Italy. Some of the cities in Italy the students visited were, Venice (a historical environment because the city is built on water); Milan (a church where the first picture of the last supper was painted), Florence (the statue of David) and lastly to Rome. While the students were in Italy, they had a lot of great experiences like participating in a lecture in a local university. They also visited a lot of historical landmarks such as St. Peters Square, the Parthenon, and the Roman coliseum.

The trip only lasted 10 days and the maximum number of students allowed to go so far has been 24. The length of the trip was not enough to see all the historic landmarks of the countries, but the trip helped the students become more enlightened about other cultures in ways they could never learn in a classroom.
Lee University’s Department of Business Lambda Pi chapter of Delta Mu Delta held its induction banquet and ceremony on March 25, 2014 in the Centenary Room. Faculty and guests observed twenty-five new members say their pledge and accept their certificate and key (society badge). Dr. Hermilo Jasso challenged the students to strive for excellence. In his words, “In life if you seek excellence, always surround yourself with people who are better than you. Excellence is not about talent alone. In fact, a major part of excellence has nothing to do with talent. It is what you do with the talent that matters. Talent needs to be justified by actions.”

Admittance into Delta Mu Delta (DMD), International Honorary Society for Business, requires a GPA of at least 3.5 and a ranking in the top 20 percent of the class at the junior, senior, or graduate school level. Inductions are held once per academic year, usually in the spring semester. This year marks the fifth group induction, bringing the cumulative total to 114 life-time members in the Lambda Pi Chapter.

Mr. Greg Della Franco was inducted as an honorary faculty member. Officers for next year include: Tamara Malakhov, president; Osaretin (Osas) Okpefa, vice president; Miaaela Frye, treasurer; Bethany Whitlock, Secretary; Elizabeth Rankin, public relations officer; and Alex Ingram, Chaplain, were elected.

DMD exists to promote higher scholarship in education for business and to recognize and reward scholastic attainment in business subjects. As such, they provide scholarship opportunities and other post-graduation benefits. Additional information about the Delta Mu Delta International Honorary Society for Business can be found at www.deltamudelta.org.
Two years ago a Phi Beta Lambda chapter was reactivated on Lee campus. Last year, the Lee University Phi Beta Lambda chapter was ranked in the top five fastest growing chapters in Phi Beta Lambda nationwide, starting with fifteen and expanding to thirty-five members.

The chapter had a variety of wonderful speakers present to the club. U.S. Representative Mark Meadows spoke on March 20, 2014 about his experience in Congress, the impact that young people can have and current issues facing the American people. It was exciting to share this opportunity with the school, and about 130 students attended the event as well as professors, the President of Lee University Dr. Paul Conn, and representatives from the Lee Clarion. In addition, the Lee chapter has done multiple service projects, had eight members qualify for national competition, and made connections with the local Chamber of Commerce. The chapter is now able to attend some of the networking events that the Chamber organizes.

The Lee chapter has experienced many new opportunities, and the PBL members are excited to see where the Lord will take them next. Currently, the chapter is working on starting a mentorship program between Phi Beta Lambda members and business professionals within the Cleveland community. If you are interested in joining our mentorship program or any other areas and activities of Phi Beta Lambda, they would love to hear from you. Please contact Phi Beta Lambda through their e-mail address at phibetalambda@leeuniversity.edu.
Taylor Jones graduated from Lee University in Spring 2010 with a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting and business administration. During the past four years he has been a frequent guest speaker for business classes at Lee, including my business communications class.

Taylor currently serves as CEO of Whiteboard, an award-winning creative agency whose client list includes Chick-fil-A, the Bitcoin Foundation, Passion Conferences, Youth for Christ Fenway Strategies, Q Ideas and more. Taylor and fellow Lee alumnus, Eric Brown, founded Whiteboard in 2010.

Whiteboard works with organizations around the world to build platforms that connect audiences with powerful stories that incite action. Specifically, Whiteboard provides branding, web design, web development, application development, and related support services.

Taylor also serves as a technology strategy consultant, educating clients on the impact, effect, and opportunities surrounding successful technology implementation both for internal information systems and external marketing efforts.

From 2003-2011 Taylor built the web services business unit, improved support and information systems, implemented and managed financial and accounting systems and software packages at Expert Computers where he helped restore them to financial sustainability before departing in 2011 to found Whiteboard.

Whiteboard has received several international awards for its work. In April 2014, Whiteboard was honored for Best Professional Services website in the 18th Annual Webby Awards. Hailed as the “Internet’s highest honor” by The New York Times, the Webby Awards, presented by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences (IADAS), is the leading international award honoring excellence on the Internet.

“Honorees like Whiteboard are setting the standard for innovation and creativity on the Internet,” said David –Michel Davis, Executive Director of The Webby Awards. “It is an incredible achievement to be selected among the best from the 12,000 entries we received this year.”

In the words of Eric Brown, co-Founder and Chief Creative Officer, “This honor is a credit to the entrepreneurial spirit found within Chattanooga, and to the dozens of individuals who have spoken into the personal and professional lives of our team.”

In the words of Dr. Dewayne Thompson, Chair of the Department of Business at Lee University, “It is no surprise to me that these young men received this prestigious award. Taylor was a standout student who consistently performed at the top of the class; therefore, recognition by IADAS confirms what the Lee Department of Business faculty acknowledged during his undergraduate career.”

Taylor currently lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee with his wife Eren, and their lazy dog, Riley.
With no doubt in mind, the Department of Business at Lee University is opening frontiers, expanding to new heights in academia and aiming for excellence in and out of the classrooms. As a student of this department, I can affirm this and assure that one of the main purposes of this department is to equip and enable students to utilize the right tools to face not only the world of business, but also have a life that reflects God in the decisions we make. The professors are dedicated to teach and pour a solid foundation for the students in equipping them for life and future careers.

Being a business student allowed me to understand it is more than just attending class, having individual or group presentations, and turning papers in on time. One of the most important concepts I have had the privilege to learn about in business is management—learning to utilize the resources at hand such as time, capital, people, money, equipment, etc.… in a wise and correct manner. Applying this concept of management as a student, one of the most important aspects to manage is time. Learning how to effectively split time between school, jobs, social life, and personal life can help us be more effective in the business world and make us versatile people.

The book of excellence, the Bible, says in Ecclesiastes 5:15-16: “So be very careful how you live. Do not live like those who are not wise, but live wisely. Use every chance you have for doing good...” If we can be faithful and wise with our time now as students, there is no doubt that we can succeed later on in life with more challenging and difficult tasks and make an impact in our organizations, societies and our world. Being faithful in the little things can assure us that we can be faithful and effective in the great.
As a part of our experiential learning in the Department of Business, I would like to thank a group of students in one of my business communication classes for their involvement in this issue of THE BOTTOM LINE. The research of “How to Write an Effective Newsletter” and most of the articles were written by students who interviewed faculty members, wrote the articles, were involved in the editing process, and finally the proofreading processes—then presented their research to the entire class toward the end of the semester.

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