REAL-WORLD CONSULTING PROJECTS PREPARE STUDENTS FOR CAREERS
Reimagined Education

Business
Leveraging technology to enhance learning. DePaul professional skills through new certificate programs offered to expand opportunities for alumni and others to refresh their skills they've learned. In the coming year we also plan to upgrade all of our programs, giving students a chance to apply what they've learned in this issue's feature story—continue to be an important part of the community. Experiential learning opportunities—such as the real-world student consulting projects highlighted in this issue’s feature story—continue to be an important part of all of our programs, providing students with a chance to apply the skills they’ve learned. In the coming year we also plan to expand opportunities for alumni and others to refresh their professional skills through new certificate programs offered by our Hay Center for Leadership Development.

Leveraging technology to enhance learning. DePaul has invested significantly in new classroom technologies, and our faculty members have embraced training that empowers them to teach engagingly in person, online and in hybrid modes. We are offering courses in a wider range of modalities that provide students the flexibility they need to complete their business education while fulfilling work and family responsibilities. This spring our college launched a Business Education in Technology and Analytics (BETA) Lab to accelerate the infusion of technology into our courses, research and community collaborations.

Elevating student and faculty engagement, we are focusing more resources on delivering a personalized, engaging and compassionate educational experience to our students through a new role at our college, associate dean for student success; fresh collaborations with DePaul’s admission and student affairs offices; and faculty mentoring programs.

Reimagining our curriculum. Our faculty will launch a revised bachelor’s in business program this fall. Guidance from alumni and business leaders on the skills that make graduates successful. The updated program emphasizes analytical and data-based decision making, entrepreneurial thinking that drives innovation, and socially responsible leadership. Experiential learning opportunities—such as the real-world student consulting projects highlighted in this issue’s feature story—continue to be an important part of all of our programs, providing students with a chance to apply the skills they’ve learned. In the coming year we also plan to expand opportunities for alumni and others to refresh their professional skills through new certificate programs offered by our Hay Center for Leadership Development.

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Revised Bachelor’s in Business Degree Curriculum Debuts This Fall

The Driehaus College of Business has reimagined its Bachelor of Science in Business (BSB) core curriculum with input from employers about the knowledge and skills they seek when recruiting graduates. Debuting this fall, the revised program begins with three new courses—Business Fundamentals and the Entrepreneurial Mindset, Business Analytics, and Business for Social Good.

“By completing this series of courses early in the program, students gain an immediate understanding of how business organizations operate and the range of potential career fields they can pursue, while developing highly marketable analytical skills and a mindset for becoming innovative, socially responsible business professionals,” says Thomas Donley, interim dean of the college.

Note from the Interim Dean

This July the Driehaus College of Business will welcome Sulin Ba, the Treibick Family Endowed Chair in Information Technology at the University of Connecticut, as our new dean. Professor Ba and I are working closely on a leadership transition that supports the continued success of our college, and she looks forward to joining DePaul, connecting with our alumni and getting to know the Chicago business community. I invite you to read more about our incoming dean in this issue.

Reflecting on my tenure as interim dean, I’m thankful to have had the opportunity to lead a college community that cares so deeply about our students and the DePaul mission. With support from our alumni and the business community, we have overcome many challenges caused by the pandemic and advanced student success in a number of ways:

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One of the council members who helped lead this initiative, in particular, is my alma mater, DePaul University. I had the opportunity to lead a college community that cares so deeply about our students and the DePaul mission. With support from our alumni and the business community, we have overcome many challenges caused by the pandemic and advanced student success in a number of ways:

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The revised program also provides more flexibility for students to take electives and add minors tailored to their individual career ambitions.
Sulin Ba, a higher education leader dedicated to fostering research, interdisciplinary collaboration and global learning, has been appointed dean of the Driehaus College of Business, effective July 1.

Ba is currently a professor and the Treibick Family Endowed Chair in Information Technology at the University of Connecticut. In her nearly 20 years at UConn’s School of Business, she has held multiple leadership roles, most recently as the associate dean of academic and research support. She also served as the executive director of the Connecticut Information Technology Institute and faculty director of the Center for International Business Education and Research.

“Sulin immediately impressed me with her deep understanding of today’s higher education landscape,” says Provost Salma Ghanem. “She recognizes what a leading business school like Driehaus must do to develop our students into talented global citizens who can make positive changes in the world. Her collaborative leadership style, visionary ideas and dedication to inclusive learning will without a doubt benefit DePaul University.”

As associate dean, Ba championed faculty research. She successfully implemented new policies and procedures to increase productivity and incentivize high-quality research. In order to better support junior faculty, she initiated and implemented the business school’s first mentoring program. Ba also launched several initiatives to foster collaboration across campus. Recognizing the importance of preparing students for the global economy, she led the development of dual-degree programs in business, Spanish and German studies. Each program includes a semester abroad at a partner university, as well as an overseas internship component.

As innovation plays an increasingly important role in the U.S. economy, Ba made it a priority for students to have more opportunities to engage in entrepreneurship and experiential learning programs across UConn and outside the university. She is a founding member of the board of directors for Innovation Place Hartford, an initiative jointly funded by the State of Connecticut and other public and private sectors to catalyze technological innovation. As part of the board’s work, she brought together UConn’s Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the University of Hartford, Trinity College and other organizations to launch several entrepreneurship programs, such as the InsurTech Accelerator and Ignite Hartford. Both programs are embraced by students as well as major insurance companies in Hartford.

“Universities can and must be engines of innovation for society. Business education is at an inflection point,” Ba says. “With its strong connection to the vibrant Chicago business community, the Driehaus College of Business has an outstanding foundation to be on the forefront of the rapidly changing business education landscape, to be a driver of economic growth and social mobility. I am honored to be the next dean of the Driehaus College. I look forward to working with the talented faculty, staff and students to elevate the college to even further levels of success.”

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–Provost Salma Ghanem
Anissa Patterson (seated fifth on the left) and DePaul sports business classmates review fan letters as part of a customer service consulting project for the Chicago Cubs.

**Growing Demand for Consulting Skills**

Since 2012, the number of management consultants working in the United States has continued to increase every year. According to Statista, which specializes in market and consumer data, 734,000 consultants worked in the U.S. in 2020. Although consultants can provide a range of expertise, graduates with business degrees offer a blend of teamwork skills and business acumen that employers often seek. According to a Graduate Management Admission Council survey, 93% of consulting sector recruiters said they expected to hire MBA graduates in 2021.

Given this demand, the Driehaus College of Business is actively preparing students to enter the workforce poised for consulting careers or to use consulting skills to increase their success within organizations. A recent college survey found that 76% of the faculty incorporate consulting, case studies and other real-world projects into coursework.

**Real-World Consulting Projects Prepare Students for Careers**

By Jaclyn Lansbery

Anissa Patterson (seated fifth on the left) and DePaul sports business classmates review fan letters as part of a customer service consulting project for the Chicago Cubs.

A nissa Patterson (BUS ‘21) took her first sports management class at the Driehaus College of Business three summers ago. At the time, Patterson was earning a business administration degree and unsure of what field she wanted to pursue, but she had always been an avid sports fan. So when she learned about a business class that would allow her to work directly with the Chicago Cubs organization, she signed up immediately.

During the eight-week class, Patterson gained a first-hand look at what it would mean to work as a consultant who provides expertise for a specific problem. Students in the undergraduate course, taught by Andy Clark, director of the Driehaus College of Business Sports Business Management Program, worked with the Chicago Cubs Service Excellence Program and became “secret shoppers” who tested the quality of all aspects of the professional baseball team’s customer service. The class showed Patterson not only what it would be like to work in the sports industry, but also how to identify and solve problems for organizations.

“It was really nice to be treated like a professional during my experiential learning classes with Professor Clark,” Patterson says. “It wasn’t just making a presentation in class—you’re presenting to real execs who work in the industry. That was a great experience to have and to put into your résumé, and it helped me get a job.”

Today, Patterson works as the client services coordinator on a Chicago professional ice hockey team playing in the American Hockey League. She credits her classes not only for helping her gain marketable skills and experience but also for helping her learn how to communicate with multiple stakeholders who have different perspectives, a skill that consultants must utilize when taking on projects.

“When you are consulting with someone,” she says, “you have to make sure you’re communicating on a level that everyone understands.”

**Solving Human Resources Challenges**

For Rachel Collins (MBA ‘21), gaining hands-on experience meant learning more about the human resources industry through a consulting lens. For several years Collins worked in a variety of events and sales roles and eventually found her passion for working with people in human resources. She came to DePaul after hearing about the human resources graduate program and decided to pursue an MBA.

To gain more real-world experience, Collins decided to enroll in a consulting skills course, taught by Associate Professor Jaclyn Jensen, which allows students to work on quarter-long projects with real clients. In winter 2021, Collins worked with four other students to help United Airlines develop a hiring and retention framework for the Chicago-based airline’s human resources division. Collins worked closely with United Airlines HR professionals to identify their needs and then interviewed several of the organization’s employees. At the end of the class, Collins and her team presented their findings to United Airlines' chief learning officer.

The project, although challenging at times, helped her become more comfortable with leading interviews and problem-solving. “Sometimes in consulting, the company you’re helping thinks they know what the issue is but in reality there may be a lot of underlying issues,” says Collins, who now works in talent acquisition for a Chicago-based trading firm. “I think that kind of came up in this project, and that was a big challenge for us. It made us learn to be flexible and be willing to [initially] fail. But sometimes that’s okay because it means you’re getting closer and closer to the end result.”

**Consulting Expertise “A Big Differentiator”**

As a graduate of DePaul’s Sales Leadership Program, Matt Almeranti (BUS ’18) had an opportunity to utilize consulting skills early in his career. Almeranti credits his experience in an analytical sales course for preparing him for his current role as regional account manager for global clients at LinkedIn.

The undergraduate course challenged students to address a business case scenario in which they were consultants tasked with persuading 3M corporation to buy Salesforce software. While the case was hypothetical, the students had to make a presentation to actual Salesforce employees who came to their class.

Almeranti says his experience with the class was “single-handily the biggest differentiator I had coming out of college,” igniting his passion for sales and teaching him to apply consulting skills in his career.

Although his current role at LinkedIn is in sales, Almeranti says it’s important to be seen as a collaborator with expertise that clients can rely on. “When you are working at a company like LinkedIn where you’re so strongly positioned in the market, coming off as a consultant and a trusted advisor and a problem-solver is much more impactful than someone who is trying to jam product down someone’s throat the entire time,” he says.

As a consultant, “if you build trust, you can earn responsibility and really scale your career, whether that be for internal projects or externally with customers,” he says.
When Brian Ruben (MSA ’95) started his graduate program at the School of Accountancy & MIS nearly 30 years ago right around the time he began working at Deloitte in Chicago—he wasn’t sure which direction he wanted to take in his professional career. He chose accounting because “it’s the language of business and every organization needs a good accounting function.” But something sparked for him in the DePaul classroom as he listened to guest lecturers talk about their careers. “It was inspiring to hear directly from professionals in accounting and learn how they navigated their careers and built their networks, because I was at a stage where I needed to do that from scratch,” Ruben says. “It made an impression on me, seeing a successful professional share their knowledge and having access to that knowledge. That’s something DePaul does really well, leveraging business connections to bring real-world experiences into the classroom.”

Fast-forward years later and Ruben is the one speaking to DePaul students, sharing lessons from his own career journey. Whether he’s in the classroom as an adjunct instructor or guest lecturer, or at a student event as a panelist or recruiter for Deloitte, where he is currently an audit and assurance partner, Ruben is an active and influential business alumnus, following a mantra of “giving back” that he says is the DePaul way.

“I know so many alumni who continued to stay connected to DePaul after graduating, giving back through service or dollars, and over the course of my career, I’ve benefited from the time many of these people have taken out of their busy careers to mentor me,” he says. “Now that I’m in a stage in my career where I feel like I can make a difference, I feel a responsibility to do so.”

Ruben is a proud donor and champion of DePaul. He helps recruit DePaul students and even led a fundraising initiative as part of the university’s annual Blue Demon Challenge in 2021. His efforts helped raise more than $300,000 (and counting) from individuals and the Deloitte Foundation to fund student scholarships and faculty support.

“It was a great way to bring DePaul alumni together at Deloitte and very exciting to see hundreds of alumni in offices around the country rally around something we all have in common,” he says.

Most recently, Ruben supported DePaul’s participation in a Deloitte MADE (Making Accounting Diverse and Equitable) initiative, the Deloitte Foundation Accounting Scholars Program. This scholarship program, for students pursuing a fifth-year master’s in accounting, is part of an effort to increase representation of racially and ethnically diverse students in accounting.

Ruben also has helped faculty members incorporate the latest business innovations into the curriculum. When DePaul Finance Associate Professor Lamont Black approached Ruben to collaborate on designing a course on blockchain, Ruben obliged, bringing in his blockchain Deloitte colleagues to provide the knowledge and coaching needed to help develop the course, which is now in its third year.

“I love that DePaul faculty aren’t lecturing out of a book and are truly dedicated to being at the forefront of the most cutting-edge information to bring back to students,” he says. “I think it’s important to contribute to that, as a business professional, for the next generation.”

One of Ruben’s most long-standing contributions has been his service on the Driehaus College of Business Advisory Council, a 60-member group of business leaders who offer industry insight and resources to the college. Ruben has been involved in the council for 10 years, and in his role as a council task force chair this academic year, he has been instrumental in re-envisioning how the business college can engage the strengths, talents and industry connections of council members to support the college and its students.

“Through all these experiences, I’ve learned so much about myself, the challenges that academia and universities face, and how to help another organization grow. It’s not all just about giving, giving, giving. That’s certainly a priority, but you also have to get something in return,” says Ruben.

“My connections with DePaul have benefited my personal and professional success in many ways. If I can be helpful and promote DePaul and give back insights and opportunities to students who are sitting where I once sat, that’s really satisfying and rewarding for me. I hope I can inspire others to do the same.”

—Brian Ruben (MSA ’95)
“I remember my freshman year when I had no idea how to pay for college or how financial aid worked. Then I received a scholarship that really helped me focus on my education instead of worrying about student loan payments. DePaul saved me when I needed financial help, and it’s made my educational experience ten times better!”

—Yuliya, Finance (BSB)

When you donate today to the Driehaus College of Business, you help students like Yuliya focus on their studies and not the financial burden.

Make your gift today at give.depaul.edu/business or scan the QR code below!