

MarketPlace

*Florence Merryman, '05,
lead counsel for Climeworks,
a global pacesetter in carbon
emission removal*

DRAFTING PEACE

**FLORENCE MERRYMAN'S
LEGAL MIND IS LED BY
HIGHER HANDS.**

Literacy, Latrines, and Leadership | Blessings from Business | Challenges and Opportunities of AI

Dean's Note

Stephanie Sheehan, '05, PhD
Dean, School of Business



From our current location in Brock Hall, we've had a near perfect view of the construction site for the new Ruth McKee School of Business. For a while, the view remained relatively unchanged. Work was happening, though we could not see the critical infrastructure being established below ground that would ensure a strong, stable foundation. Once the concrete was poured and the steel structure began to take shape, the hallway chatter in Brock took on a tone of excitement that continues to grow daily. Hope for what was promised transitioned to student and faculty confidence in what will soon be "home." A place of belonging and beginning.

Our campus and community were invited to be a forever part of the building by signing one of the steel beams. As the day of the beam signing neared, I thought it would be cool, or in Gen Z lingo, "lit." As I uncapped the gold Sharpie to sign my name, it was as if I heard God whisper:

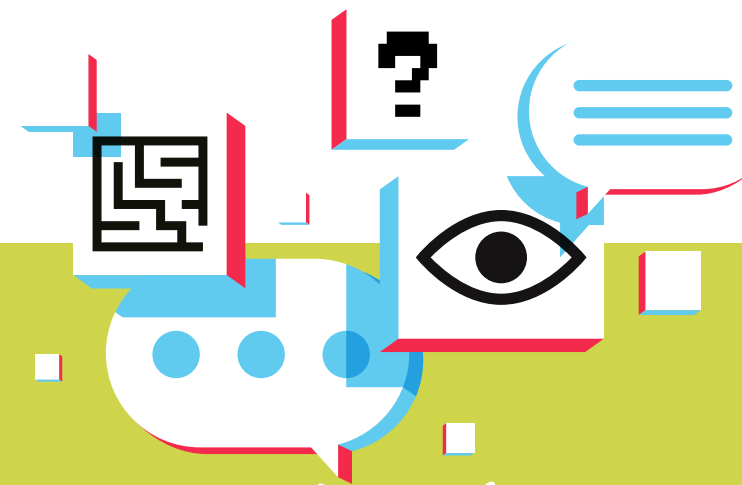
Just as this new building is being constructed, I am building a kingdom. Foundation piers were necessary for the building; you are tasked with helping students establish or reinforce their kingdom foundations. Just as you are signing your name on the beam, you sign your name and Mine upon the life of each student. What is being written? Will it lead them closer to Me?

Southern's School of Business recognizes our role in Adventist education as being much greater than teaching relevant, quality curriculum and preparing students for the workplace. We also have the responsibility to build and reinforce invisible pillars in hearts and minds that help establish their ability and desire to be kingdom seekers and kingdom builders. We are building for eternity.

Thank you for making temporal and eternal construction possible.

MarketPlace

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16

The Challenge and Opportunity of AI

Artificial intelligence redefines how business is taught, practiced.

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City of Chattanooga Honors Alum for Work with Homeless

School of Business alum David Grabiner, '07, was named Best Landlord of the Year by the City of Chattanooga's Office of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. Recognized for his dedication to providing safe housing, Grabiner helps numerous individuals transition from homelessness to stability. "We focus on connecting people with resources they need and working with them on payment plans, when necessary," Grabiner said. "We aim to create community, not just a collection of renters." Grabiner grew up in Zambia and Kenya with missionary parents, and his experiences instilled a deep sense of service and an understanding of diverse needs. Those traits were further developed while studying at Southern. "I was particularly influenced by professors Robert Montague and Braam Oberholster," Grabiner said. "They came from a missionary background, too, and emphasized how business could complement missions. Their wisdom and insights have been invaluable in shaping my approach."

Student Scores in 99th Percentile for Global Simulation

Southern's MBA students are required to participate in Conscious Capitalism, an online simulation that trains future business leaders in building and measuring their societal impact. Last fall, current graduate student Ru Kirk, '03, received the highest score ever for Southern, ranking in the 99th percentile of more than a million students who participated over the lifetime of this simulation hosted by an external educational resource company. Conscious Capitalism asks students to start a 3D-printed carbon fiber bike company, perform market research, design products, build a marketing plan, manage the financing, and expand globally. "Ru's exceptional performance was the result of a strategy that not only included product and market-based elements, but also focused on care of the employees and community," said professor Braam Oberholster, DBA.

Southern Launches Revised, Integrative MBA Program

Beginning in Fall 2025, Southern's MBA program will shift to a more integrative approach that deepens applied learning outcomes and better addresses industry needs by targeting advanced critical and innovative thinking. School of Business dean Stephanie Sheehan, '05, PhD, is excited about how the revised curriculum—elements of which are unique to Southern within the higher education market—will increase employee and employer return on investment. "Students will more rapidly learn to leverage the interdependence of organizational functions," Sheehan said. "As their acumen develops, they will incrementally grow in confidence and become more adept at integrating faith and business." For more information about this new 30-hour MBA program, visit southern.edu/mba.

Drafting Peace

a legal mind gets led by higher hands



HAVING PLANS IS IMPORTANT, ESPECIALLY IN THE BUSINESS WORLD, AND ATTORNEY FLORENCE MERRYMAN, '05, HAD LOTS OF THEM—PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL.

THEN AGAIN, LARGER FORCES ARE AT WORK.

The attorney just wanted to get the meeting started. But the service staff weren't around, and the drink buffet was in the hallway. It was her first meeting with executives for the world's largest oil company, Aramco, and she was ready to get down to business.

As a non-national and female, she was familiar with being overlooked, or slighted, as when an executive chose to speak in Arabic, a language that she didn't speak or understand with any level of proficiency. But despite such moments occurring multiple times over her years in business law, she had yet to become the help. She adjusted the attaché case under her arm and carefully pushed the drink buffet into the conference room, making a cup of tea and taking her place at the conference table. Eyes representing four different countries turned in her direction, silently asking "Why is *she* sitting down?"

"Good morning," she began, as if nothing had happened. "My name is Florence Merryman, and I'm your legal and compliance counsel. Let's begin."

Merryman unexpectedly found employment with Climeworks, a global leader in carbon emission removal. Pictured above is a new Climeworks facility in Iceland.

Merryman's journey to that conference room had not been a straight line, but it was exactly where she was supposed to be.

Aramco was a wonderful company to work for; this was her third round working for them. They took great care of their employees and provided education and infrastructure to heretofore nonexistent communities. Saudia Arabia was built on oil, and after Aramco's IPO in December 2019 (the largest IPO in the world), it was—and still is—one of the most valuable companies in the world, valued by Marketcap at \$1.7 trillion. But Merryman had never wanted to work in Saudia Arabia, and she couldn't imagine where following God there would eventually take her.

The success of big oil and green alternatives and remedies, such as direct air capture technology, ride on the winds of political change. The public's desire for sustainability drives green energy, while affordable reliability keeps big oil relevant. Which energy source pulls forward or gets pushed back at any one time depends on the political climate and associated financial backing. Merryman's curiosity and God's providence has given her the opportunity to represent both sectors.

Business, Baseball, and Big Oil

After graduating from Southern Adventist University in 2005 with a degree in international business, Merryman wasn't sure where her career trajectory would take her. She worked for a Major League Baseball team and a congressman before moving to the Netherlands to complete graduate work at Leiden University. Law school wasn't even in the plan. She thought she would work in human rights or maybe full-time missions. But according to Merryman, "My career path is not my own. My story is punctuated over and over again with two words: But, God."

Notwithstanding her wandering career start, Merryman did need a job while working on her master's degree. Because it was within a bike ride from the Leiden campus, she applied for a law clerk opening. That temporary position set in motion events that have taken her around the world to serve some of the largest companies on the planet. Merryman marvels, "God's plans never stop. His connections have given me the ability to share my faith by how I live in ways I never would have imagined."

Merryman's time at Southern instilled the truth that we have a caring and all-knowing Father overseeing the trajectory of our lives. "We make our plans, but the Lord



Florence Merryman

determines our steps." Her plans included being close to her family, living in a place with four seasons, forming lasting friendships, and the possibility of meeting her future spouse. "I had a plan," Merryman recalls, "but God had different steps than I imagined for getting there."

God's step orchestration began early and with a bit of unexpected intrigue. "I was interviewing for a legal position with Aramco in Houston," Merryman remembers. "I was checking off all the boxes, working through all of the interview steps. Suddenly, one of the interviewers nonchalantly mentioned that this position was in Saudi Arabia. Say what?" She sat there stunned. She never would have interviewed for this position if she'd had any idea that it was on the other side of the world and checked off none of her planned boxes.

In hindsight, Merryman finds that God has a great sense of humor, working to place her exactly where He could fulfill the dreams and desires He gave her in His own ideal—albeit around-the-world—way.

Originally from the island of St. Maarten, Netherland Antilles, Merryman had lived most of her life on the lush East Coast of the United States. She felt completely out of her element in the Arabian Desert. There were two seasons—

Watching God guide Merryman's life step by step gives her great hope for the future.

kind of. Nearly everyone from the West identified as Christian, but most were not interested in a spiritual walk with Christ. The fellow expat friends she did make frequently left the country. She felt isolated and lonely.

"And so, I prayed," Merryman said. "I prayed to know when it was my time to let go of this opportunity and seek a more fulfilling life elsewhere." But God had an unexpected answer. Just as she began her prayers, COVID hit. She was brazenly stuck. "I walked a lot in Saudia Arabia," Merryman recalls. "I walked and talked with God. One day on my walk, through a podcast, I heard my heavenly Father ask me, 'If this had to be where you stayed for the rest of your life, what do you need?' I knew the answer immediately and I told God, 'Peace. I need peace.'"

COVID didn't bring peace to the world. But it put Merryman in an 18-month lockdown where all she had was God. It gave her time to search for the peace of God that passes understanding. Merryman put to paper the goals she had always known but hadn't been able to articulate until then—things like a community of friends and a church family made their way from ideas to papered goals. She began to experience God adding peace to each dream as she wrote it down.

Peace After Prayers

When the world opened back up in 2021, Merryman resigned from Aramco and decided to take six months of reprieve with her parents in Florida. It was great to enjoy her family after being apart from them for so long! She slowly started the job search process again; this time intentionally looking for U.S.-based positions. An oil company in Texas expressed interest. A pharmaceutical company in New Jersey made an offer, but an internal nudging told her that it wasn't where she was supposed to be. Instead, Merryman booked a six-week trip to Switzerland to visit friends and check out the job market in a country with four beautiful seasons. Within weeks, she had three job offers.

Now, three years later, Merryman is lead counsel for the cutting-edge, direct air capture company Climeworks, a global leader in carbon emission removal. She is daily drafting agreements with some of the largest companies in the world while working to reduce their carbon footprint.

Her work is fulfilling, and she is deeply respected by her colleagues and clients. But God didn't stop there. She experiences some of the most scenic topography in the

world, has settled friends and a church community, and the love of her life asked for her hand in late 2024.

"God is unknowable," Merryman said. "His thoughts and plans are nothing like mine (Isaiah 55:8). I do not know why God didn't put me on a career path that met my goals in my 20s or 30s. But I do know that God has never left me in a place one second longer than He needed me to be there. And He's never moved me a second before His will was accomplished."

Despite the dreams come true, Merryman still wonders, at times, why God didn't put her in a role where she could serve Him more directly, more easily. But she continues to receive glimpses of His plan.

"My spiritual idiosyncrasies are known and respected around the office," Merryman said. "The other day my coworkers announced that I would be leaving a meeting early to keep the Sabbath. They make sure foods served at events accommodate my clean diet. They comment on my simple, professional attire because I don't wear jewelry."

Merryman has never called attention to these spiritual practices, but others have noticed and now inquire about the standards she sets for herself. "What could be seen as oddities instead open up conversations and provide me with space to share about the God who has been the guide of my entire journey."

Merryman's personal experience with God, watching Him guide her life step by step, gives her great hope for the future. As she drafts corporate covenants and procurement agreements for one of the most-fought-over commodities in the world, she's reminded how much bigger God is than this earth's natural resources.

Besides God, "Who else has held the oceans in His hand? Who has measured off the heavens with His fingers? Who else knows the weight of the earth or has weighed the mountains and hills on a scale ... all the nations of the world are but a drop in the bucket (Isaiah 40:12, 15). Whether this planet drills for oil or captures carbon, Someone wiser is guiding it all—just like He has guided Merryman's life journey.

"Thankfully, my career and life journey has never been my own," Merryman said. "The disappointments and delays are just for a moment. God has a much bigger plan." Her dream now is to fit into that bigger plan. "While I'm here, I have a job to do. My true calling is to make the connections with people that my Father puts in my path." ■

by Ellen Hostetler, vice president for Advancement

Global Blessings

Through Business

AS A CHILD, JUSTIN DELHOVE GOT MORE STAMPS IN HIS PASSPORT THAN MOST PEOPLE DO IN A LIFETIME. TODAY, THOSE COLORFUL MARKINGS ARE EVIDENCE OF SEEDS PLANTED THAT FORMED HIS GENEROUS WORLDVIEW AND PASSION FOR HELPING PEOPLE.

Justin Delhove, '13 and '14, has an unusual childhood. His father worked abroad for Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), an international organization which offers assistance in many areas, such as disaster relief, food security, education, advocacy, water, sanitation, and hygiene. So, it is no surprise his family lived all over the world: South Africa, Kenya, Bosnia, Haiti, Indonesia, and Madagascar. Through hands-on experience and constant exposure to his father's work, Delhove's understanding of the nonprofit sector grew rapidly.

"My dad had me learning a little bit of everything throughout my entire childhood: how to stack commodities in warehouses, construct dirt-strip runways in remote locations for our aviation partners to use, perform spot visits to field activities to verify proper implementation, learn what a clean audit should look like, and scout out new implementation areas for future programs."

However, Delhove lacked one key piece of knowledge. Where did the money come from and how did it get to the field? In a quest to sharpen his business acumen, Delhove enrolled at Southern Adventist University in

2009. His Finance class with professor Braam Oberholster was particularly memorable. In it, he honed his critical thinking skills, learned to carefully consider and articulate his opinions, and developed a deep respect for deadlines.

"Despite Oberholster's rigorous academic challenges, his soft-spoken manner revealed how much he cared about his students and the world around us," Delhove said. "He helped me find my purpose in work and encouraged me to reach for achievements I never thought possible."

More Than Numbers

When Delhove studied organizational behavior in his MBA program at Southern, he learned that successful managers are people-focused and are able to see beyond key performance indicators to the human behind the work. He also discovered the importance of asking for help from experts and absorbing and incorporating their wisdom into his work instead of trying to be completely self-reliant. His positive interactions with professor Lisa Kuhlman were particularly impactful, helping him to develop a sense of duty and accountability.



"My education at Southern shaped my outlook on life," Delhove said. "The camaraderie, biblically based principles, and incredibly supportive staff prepared me to take on my career with confidence."

After graduation, Delhove wasn't sure where he wanted to go with his career. Because of his upbringing, he was extremely familiar with the realities of what it takes to do humanitarian work on the ground. He was also intimately acquainted with the dire living conditions and needs of those less fortunate than himself. He wanted to help others but wasn't sure how to go about it.

"God called my family to do mission-focused work early on. I'm the son of a third-generation missionary, but I knew my strengths weren't in preaching or church planting and lie more on the business and management side of things," Delhove said.

Initially he applied for a variety of jobs in the for-profit sector. As many doors shut and new ones opened, it gradually became clear that God was calling him back

to ADRA. Upon further investigation, he was pleased to discover that his natural strengths and the knowledge he had acquired during his time at Southern had prepared him for support work at ADRA in its Business Development Unit.

He started as an intern in 2014, and his immersion in this new environment gave him a comprehensive answer to his childhood question of where money comes from in a nonprofit and how it makes its way to the field to transform people's lives. Delhove worked his way up to his current role as Business Development Unit director. In this position, one of his primary responsibilities is to shape proposals seeking U.S.-based government funding for international work. To date, his teams have secured more than \$210 million for relief work.

Although his role in ADRA is vastly different from his father's, Delhove feels blessed to be part of the team. He believes the import of their work is summed up by Matthew 25:40 (NABRE) "And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

It Takes All Kinds

ADRA's purpose is to serve the world so all may live as God intended. In 2023, they helped nearly 13 million people in more than 120 countries, and they continue working hard to touch as many lives as possible. This work is more challenging than ever. In January 2025, ADRA experienced disruptions to its mission due to a funding pause for global humanitarian aid by the U.S. government which resulted in significant staffing and programmatic reductions. "We are exploring new funding sources ... to continue delivering vital support," said Korey Dowling, vice president of people and excellence for ADRA.

For current students who are interested in a future in humanitarian work, Delhove encourages them to explore the possibilities and not be deterred if they feel—like he did—that perhaps they do not have the traditional skill sets one expects to encounter in mission work. Business knowledge was once seen as exclusively useful in the for-profit industry is now highly valued in the nonprofit sector, as well. The idea of "profit-for-good" is a big part of the sustainable future of humanitarian work.

"It takes all kinds of folks," Delhove said. "Don't be afraid to jump in. Don't be afraid to fail. Do be prepared for God to work in mysterious ways. When I started at Southern, I didn't think I'd be in this position, much less at this age, doing this type of work. But being willing to learn from failure, and acknowledging that it's going to happen, can turn failure into opportunity." ■

by Angela (Ford) Baerg, '06





"We spent a lot of our time visiting the community and learning about their way of life." -Chase Slikkers, junior business cybersecurity major

SOUTHERN'S ENACTUS CHAPTER SERVES UGANDAN VILLAGES THROUGH MULTI-YEAR PROJECTS ADDRESSING A VARIETY OF NEEDS.

LITERACY, LATRINES, AND LEADERSHIP

Southern's chapter of Enactus offers first-person experiences for students to create meaningful change. Guided by academic advisers and business experts, the organization enables students to implement community empowerment initiatives. In 2023, Southern's team won third place at the Enactus United States National Exposition, competing against more than 300 other teams. Today, students hone their entrepreneurial skills by leading projects that benefit communities around the globe.

Students learn fantastic project management skills," shares Sergio Bellino, professor in the School of Business and adviser for Enactus. "They get to take on leadership roles in a structured organization, and they have people outside of Southern depending on them to follow through on their promises."

In January of 2024, OurGanda, a nonprofit organization located in Uganda, reached out to Enactus and requested a program that could help promote financial literacy among the villages they served in the Bundibugyo district of western Uganda.

The project was a perfect fit for Enactus. "Our focus is social enterprise," Bellino explains.

"We innovate to create solutions for people through self-sustaining projects that continue long after we move on to other needs."

Several students began work on the financial literacy program, titling the project Thrive Uganda, or THRU. They created nine educational modules about financial literacy for OurGanda to teach. The modules introduce individuals to crucial skills, from defining money to investment and loans.

In 2024, nine Enactus students and faculty worked with Southern to create a Vision Trip, traveling to Bundibugyo and visiting the community they'd helped from across the sea. As one of the elected project managers for THRU the following year, Chase Slikkers, junior business cybersecurity major, joined the trip to see the impact of the first financial literacy course.

"We spent a lot of our time visiting the community and learning about their way of life," Slikkers shares. "We were excited to find that many villages pooled their money together and loaned it out to community members with interest if they needed extra cash, which appeared to be a result of our lesson on saving."

As the next phase of THRU began in August, insights from the mission trip informed the team's decisions. They drafted a second level of the financial literacy modules to focus on creating and growing a business.

"We teach them to find needs in the community that their business can meet."

Slikkers explains, "We researched extensively to ensure that the small-business strategies we share will work in the villages." More than 120 individuals have been served through the initial modules so far, and with the second level sent to OurGanda in 2025, the number continues to grow.

OurGanda approached Enactus with a new project last semester. "Based on assessments of local schools, 180 girls in the villages miss school every week or drop out because there are no facilities for them to use during their monthly cycle," Bellino shares. In response, THRU created a latrine blueprint for OurGanda.

THRU partnered with Brick to Brick, a nonprofit organization that has created a simple, sustainable way to make quality brick structures. Zach Mace, freshman engineering major, was recruited to the project, lending his expertise to the designs. "We're creating a sustainable and replicable design for latrines that can be built by OurGanda with relative ease," Mace explains.

"I've researched extensively and consulted multiple people with expertise and experience to ensure I create a design with structural integrity and design efficiency,"



Students engaged in a prototyping process so they could receive feedback and tailor products to the region.



Mace shares. The team has engaged in a lengthy prototyping process with OurGanda so they can receive feedback and tailor their product to the region.

"Once the latrine designs are verified, OurGanda will only have to amass the materials needed to build latrines for schools across the region," Slikkers says. THRU recently sent OurGanda the first prototype to be built and tested in real-world conditions.

"Working on THRU has helped tremendously with my leadership and interpersonal skills," Slikkers shares. "I've been able to put into practice many concepts that I'd previously only learned about in the classroom."

Enactus plans to continue working with OurGanda until sometime in the 2025-2026 school year, when they will phase out of the process and allow OurGanda to continue serving with the resources they've been provided.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity that I've had through Enactus to serve," Mace says. "It's been an incredible blessing." ■

by Chehalis Eno, senior English major

Enactus members shared small business strategies with villagers.

Board, Never Bored

SERVING AS A TRUSTEE FOR MULTIPLE NONPROFITS IS FAR MORE THAN NOBLESSE OBLIGE FOR SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR FRANKLIN FARROW, '93. HE'S ALWAYS ENJOYED GIVING BACK!



He had never felt more grown up. His heart had never raced that much before. His brown shoes crushed the low-pile red carpet in the church sanctuary as he approached the pastor. “I want to donate this to the building project,” he said as he handed over a crisp \$10 bill.

Farrow was 6 years old and had spent the last several summer Saturday nights playing in the church yard while his dad attended the church’s building committee meetings. In the car rides home, his dad would talk about the new church and how it would make space for more programs to help the community.

Farrow was transfixed that something as simple as money could make a project that big just happen. When his grandfather gave him money for his sixth birthday, he knew he wanted to be a part of this.

Philanthropy has been at the core of Farrow's life ever since. He watched it modeled—not as an act of responsibly, but as a way of life. His mother set the first example by supporting those in need with food, clothing, or small cash gifts. Later, after moving to Collegedale in the early 1980s, Bill Hulsey became the family's neighbor and hired Farrow to do odd jobs around his farm. Farrow heard him talking about business deals and then doing this or that for Southern Adventist University. The idea of earning money in order to give it away to make things happen just kind of always went together.

But philanthropy wasn't just about making deals or writing checks. When Farrow was 28, Hulsey, who had taken the young man under his mentorship wing, invited him to sit on the board of Inasmuch, Inc., a sister entity to the Samaritan Center. This local thrift store offered clothes and home goods to the community. It was intimidating to sit on his first board—not sure what he brought to the table and not even certain what boards did. But he watched and listened and learned while Collegedale pillars such as Chick Fleming, Bill McGhinnis, and Hulsey created a lean organization and the revenue generating backbone to keep it afloat.

Twenty-five years later, Farrow has seen the Samaritan Center through a fundraising campaign, renovation, and leadership changes. He now serves as its board chair. He's paying respect to his mentor and serving the community in ways that even Hulsey didn't foresee when he asked a young Southern alum with little experience and no influence to join his board.

Hulsey never imagined the culture of service that he passed on to Farrow, who now serves on five local boards and one national board in addition to multiple advisory councils and initiatives, such as The 10 Project. After years of business negotiations and success, Farrow has found that "Board involvement is a way to get things done and move the needle."

Morning Pointe Senior Living, the business he owns with partner Greg Vital, '78, does incredible things every day. Their facilities support aging residents and their families and provide an essential service in the communities they operate as an employer and care provider. But that isn't enough for Farrow. He sees a greater, bigger calling. More places that he wants to move the needle.

His board involvement is tied more to the people in his community than it is to a specific passion; he serves on boards with missions for education, music, land conservation, and aviation. There really isn't a thematic centerline. It's about getting things done. He sits on the national Trust for Public Land with Theodore Roosevelt's fifth-generation grandson



Franklin Farrow visits with Erin Westberg, executive director for the Samaritan Center, where he serves as board chair.

and Lucas St. Clair, the son of Burt Bees founder Roxanne Quimby. "I'm networking with household names who are down to earth and, like me, just want to make a positive impact," Farrow says. "We come from a wide range of experiences and perspectives but join ideologies to conserve and protect our land." While some board involvement is a rubber stamp on administratively decided actions, Farrow's 25 years of board experience make him a much more active participant. He serves on multiple committees within the boards, spending close to a fourth of

his year on board-related activities. He isn't afraid to lead discussions, even tough ones, especially when it's a cause close to his heart. Asked about Farrow's 15 years on the Southern Adventist University Board of Trustees, President Ken Shaw, '80, commented, "Franklin's spiritual vision, blessed by his business and leadership acumen, has made him a formidable and influential board member. He leads by example."

The Lord has richly blessed the 6-year-old boy who was willing to give up his birthday gift for his church's building project. After more than a quarter-century serving his community, Farrow is still the proudest of his work with the Samaritan Center.

"It's where I started—Where I saw how to read a room, learned when to speak and when to stay quiet. It's where I first felt like I was really making a difference."

All of this impact started because Hulsey showed Farrow—just by the

way he lived—that business and service were synonymous. Farrow feels a deep sense of responsibility to use the resources and talents entrusted to him in a way that is life-giving and community-changing. "It's a weighty charge," Farrow affirms while simultaneously remembering that everything he has is God's. "I give financially and of my time and experience with an open hand, without strings. God can handle the rest."

As Farrow looks to the future, he doesn't know what board he will serve on next. He doesn't carry any aspirations or opportunistic aspirations. He doesn't really have time for any more—if he consults his calendar, which he is slightly afraid to do in light of his current commitments. For him, it isn't about climbing an influence ladder or status building. Its about missional service wherever God opens the door and calls him to serve.

And it's about one more very important thing. He wants to pass

on his philanthropic and service philosophy to the next generation. Just as Farrow's parents and Hulsey instilled generosity and serving others in his DNA, he wants to see his children pick up that mantle. Years ago Farrow and his wife, Tamatha, put their property (which now includes the land of his mentor, Hulsey) into the Land Trust for Tennessee. It means a great deal to his children, Jack and Aubrey, that the pastoral homestead where they grew up—regardless of whether or not they will be living in the area 30 years from now—is protected from development as Hamilton County experiences rapid growth.

"I want what this land means to my kids to translate to how my children view all of the resources they have been given. Everything they hold is to make eternal things happen. That's the legacy I hope my philanthropy and service leaves to my kids and the next generation." ■

by Ellen Hostetler, vice president for Advancement

Farrow's involvement is tied more to the people in his community than it is to a specific passion; he serves on boards with missions for education, music, land conservation, and aviation.



The Challenge and Opportunity of ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF BUSINESS VIEWS
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AS A CRITICAL DRIVER OF INNOVATION
AND EFFICIENCY IN A RAPIDLY EVOLVING DIGITAL LANDSCAPE,
CAPABLE OF REDEFINING HOW BUSINESS IS TAUGHT AND PRACTICED.

Rather than only perceiving AI as a threat to traditional models of instruction, Southern has strategically positioned itself to harness AI's potential for creating value. By integrating AI tools and methodologies in its teaching, the School of Business aims to provide students and faculty with a competitive edge, preparing graduates to lead in an increasingly digital global economy. Faculty recognize three critical industry trends to explore, learn, and integrate in their instruction for missional intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship.

Agentic AI

AI is transforming business operations by enabling data-driven decision-making, seamless execution, and continuous learning with minimal human intervention. According to a 2025 Gartner report, agentic AI has emerged as the leading strategic technology trend of the year. At the recent AI Action Summit in Paris, Google CEO Sundar Pichai predicted that AI represents the most significant technological shift of our lifetimes, poised to enhance human creativity and productivity. He highlighted the emergence of "agentic workflows," where AI systems autonomously execute complex tasks based on natural language instructions, effectively acting as digital co-workers. These intelligent AI agents are unlocking unprecedented levels of efficiency, enhancing customer experiences, and accelerating revenue growth.

Industry experts estimate that generative AI could add up to \$4.4 trillion annually to the global economy by 2030. Recognizing this potential, the School of Business formed an academic partnership with UiPath, a global leader in robotic process automation, to integrate agentic AI into classroom learning. This collaboration equips students with cutting-edge AI skills, preparing them for leadership roles in an AI-driven business landscape.

Data Analytics

Data-driven decision-making is at the heart of modern business, and AI plays a crucial role in extracting insights from large datasets. In tandem with its collaboration with UiPath, Southern's School of Business has established a strategic academic partnership with Alteryx. This alliance is designed to integrate AI-powered data analytics into the curriculum, equipping students with the skills to analyze complex datasets and generate actionable insights. By leveraging platforms from both UiPath and Alteryx, the institution enables students to work on live case studies involving predictive analytics, customer segmentation, and market trend analysis. These initiatives bridge the

gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring that graduates are proficient in using AI and data analytics tools to drive business outcomes.

Ethics and Global Governance

The rapid advancement of AI technology has sparked vigorous discussions on ethics and global governance. Global political and business leaders stress the need for robust ethical frameworks and international cooperation in regulating AI. One notable remark from the AI Action Summit stated, "AI must be harnessed responsibly, with transparency and accountability, ensuring that its benefits are shared equitably across global communities."

This call resonates with Southern's commitment to ethical leadership. The School of Business actively incorporates AI ethics in its teaching, examining topics such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the societal impact of automation. Students are encouraged to critically analyze the ethical dimensions of AI, preparing them to advocate for responsible AI governance in their future careers.

Enhancing Learning Efficiency

Faculty in the School of Business are increasingly integrating AI-driven tools to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of content delivery, student engagement, and academic assessments. AI is being utilized across various aspects of teaching, from course planning and assessment design to teaching advanced concepts such as statistical methods, correlation analysis, and financial modeling, in an attempt to ensure enriched experiential learning and to foster a more interactive and efficient learning environment.

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Beyond content delivery, AI is used for data analysis, business intelligence, and automation. Faculty integrate tools such as Celonis for process mining and Automation Anywhere for accounting system automation. AI also significantly summarizes marketing research reports, extracts key insights, and supports ideation for research projects. Additionally, AI helps faculty integrate faith-based learning by curating devotionals that align with ethical business principles. Students leverage AI to identify and customize Python models in econometrics, generate business project ideas, and structure marketing strategies.

As the School of Business continues to embrace and integrate AI for effective student learning, it remains committed to ensuring AI usage will enhance rather than diminish students' critical thinking and analytical skills. Faculty carefully guide students on responsible AI utilization, emphasizing its role as a complementary tool rather than a substitute for independent problem-solving and creativity.

Alumni Businesses and AI

Southern alumni are leveraging AI to drive growth in their industries, as well.

Alistair Huong, '12, is executive director of AudioVerse, an online Seventh-day Adventist media ministry with over 40,000 audio messages in its library.

"Many of these recordings we receive from churches and other organizations come with little more than a title and speaker name," Huong said. "This creates challenges for

making the content discoverable to search engines and end users. So, we use AI to transcribe the MP3 files and other AI tools to extract relevant metadata from the recordings such as a summary, key Bible verses used, main topics covered, key questions answered, and other useful details."

Danny Houghton, '98, is co-founder and president of Carbonaut, maker of low-carb products with no artificial ingredients, fillers, preservatives, or sugar. His business, which is exploring potential AI functionality in multiple areas, is already applying it for marketing.

"We use a variety of platforms, including Jasper to assist with copywriting across the marketing spectrum," Houghton said. "We're also experimenting with a new platform called GenStudio, which leverages generative AI to create campaigns, content, social media activations, and monitoring of brand compliance across various channels, and also to provide insights on what content is resonating with social media followers."

Conclusion

As AI continues to evolve, the School of Business remains committed to adapting and innovating its programs, ensuring that students are not only consumers of business integrated with tools and technology, but also creators of new solutions that drive economic and social progress. The strategic focus on AI, underpinned by robust ethical frameworks and academic-industry collaborations, positions the institution as a leader in integrating AI into business education. ■

-Charles Benjamin, professor, School of Business



Professor Ben Schnell praying with students

Immediate Value, Eternal Values

SOUTHERN'S BUSINESS STUDENTS RECEIVE RECEIVE TOP-NOTCH TRAINING FOR CAREER SUCCESS, BUT BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES WITHIN CURRICULUM PROVIDE EVEN GREATER RETURN ON INVESTMENT.

Mason Harmon, '25, was impressed when he visited Southern Adventist University's facilities as a prospective student, but it wasn't the beautiful campus that made him decide to enroll. While touring with his parents, his mother had a major medical emergency and had to be hospitalized for a couple of days.

"I told the recruitment staff what was going on, and they did everything they could to accommodate my family, adjust tour schedules, and even provide an extension on housing

without any extra cost," Harmon said. "Fortunately, my mom made a full recovery, but the school's response showed me Southern's true character. It was exactly what I was looking for: a godly, service-oriented college."

When students like Harmon enroll in Southern's School of Business, they know that they are entering a strong academic program where graduates demonstrate exceptional knowledge and analytical skills, ranking in the 96th percentile on the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Major Field Test for Business. What sets Southern

apart, however, is that the faculty support and class content they receive is built on solid biblical foundations.

"I think that Adventist education and service-learning are important because they provide a Christ-centered education experience like no other," Harmon said. "At the core of the education system are a devout love for Christ and a desire to share Him through all aspects of the academic experience."

In the School of Business, every course begins with a biblical concept map that students can examine in

AS THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS CONTINUES TO EMBRACE AND INTEGRATE AI FOR EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEARNING, IT REMAINS COMMITTED TO ENSURING AI USAGE WILL ENHANCE RATHER THAN DIMINISH STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS.



Students in professor Sunia Fukofuka's Principles of Management course examine the biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

their syllabus. This flow chart has a central objective. For example, in Financial Accounting, the overall course concept is “accountability.” One of the underlying principles in that course is that God cares about details (Exodus 25:9). The map explains this is the reason why students are held to high standards in the classroom and why, in their future careers, it will be crucial to perform every step of the accounting cycle with integrity and attention to detail. Many additional points are mapped out and supported with Bible verses to help the professors seamlessly integrate faith and education.

“We try to instill in our students a biblical worldview as it relates to the business world,” professor Sungin Ahn, PhD, said. “For instance, my economics classes are focused on God’s love for mankind as it is manifested in our libertarian freedom. We also discuss His will for us to continue to grow through cooperation and innovation.”

Landon Asscherick, '25, especially enjoyed the Macroeconomics course that he took from professor Mark Guild. A recurring theme in the class was God’s economy. Any time they would study a topic such as wealth, they would turn to their Bibles to cross-reference their studies with God’s word. Asscherick really appreciated how his professors allowed classroom conversations to be flexible to incorporate a biblical perspective. He was also deeply impacted by how Southern’s professors show God’s love through their personal interactions with students.

“The teachers clearly care about students in ways I did not experience at the secular college I attended before,” Asscherick said. “Our whole world is built on biblical foundations. Any education worth having ought to also be grounded in these truths.”

Professor Sunia Fukofuka, PhD, makes it a point to include Bible stories alongside the business case studies that students explore in Principles of Management. For example, while studying fraud, students reference the story of Joseph and the temptation from Potiphar’s wife. They discuss how there will always be pressure

and opportunities to be dishonest and how easy it is to rationalize poor decisions. Then they compare and contrast that story to modern examples of the same behaviors. Fukofuka regularly reminds students that the only reason Joseph prevailed was because he had the Spirit of the living God in his heart.

“The Holy Spirit is the only solution for each of us as well,” Fukofuka said. “In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White writes that ‘The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul’ (595). We cannot fail in that area, or we fail our students.”

Making an Impact

Southern’s professors prioritize hands-on, real-world business experiences to help students gain familiarity in the community and use their skills as a vehicle for mission work. The School of Business encourages students to shine their lights in the world in many ways. Preston Waters, '25, particularly enjoyed putting these principles into practice during his involvement with Enactus, a global organization dedicated to inspiring students to improve the world through entrepreneurial action. The name “Enactus” is derived from a combination of “entrepreneurial” and “action.”

Under the supervision of professor Sergio Bellino, Waters’ team has worked on projects ranging from studying solutions for microplastics in the Tennessee River to helping Heritage Academy build tiny homes and greenhouses. They are also working on a project called Rainbow Porridge, which would launch a nutrition-dense porridge to help combat malnourishment in the West African nation of Burkina Faso.

“Professor Bellino has helped us understand how God is using us to make a difference,” Waters said. “With each of these opportunities to serve, the School of Business also fosters a Christ-like character in each of its business students. At the core of every business concept and lecture

is the idea that business should be done as Christ would and should be based solely on His example and guidance.”

Students can also gain practical experience and show Christ’s love to the community through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). Last year marked the 11th year Southern students have volunteered to complete tax returns for low-income and elderly community members who could not otherwise afford any assistance. Participating students take a class and an exam and become certified by the IRS to file tax returns. Over the last decade, the program has secured \$3.67 million in refunds for those in need in the greater Collegedale community.

The Greatest of These Is Love

Hannah Hagan, '25, watched her two older sisters thrive in Southern’s business program and graduate from it as strong, caring women with successful careers. Rachael Hagan, '19, is currently a litigator for the City of St. Louis, and Sarah Wilcox, '23, is the head of the marketing department at St. Louis Composting. Deeply inspired by her sisters’ journeys, Hagan knew that Southern’s School of Business was the right place to nurture her faith and pursue her dreams as well.

According to the College Impact Study, students who attend an Adventist university are eight times more likely to experience professors who helped them develop spiritually and/or develop spiritual values while in college

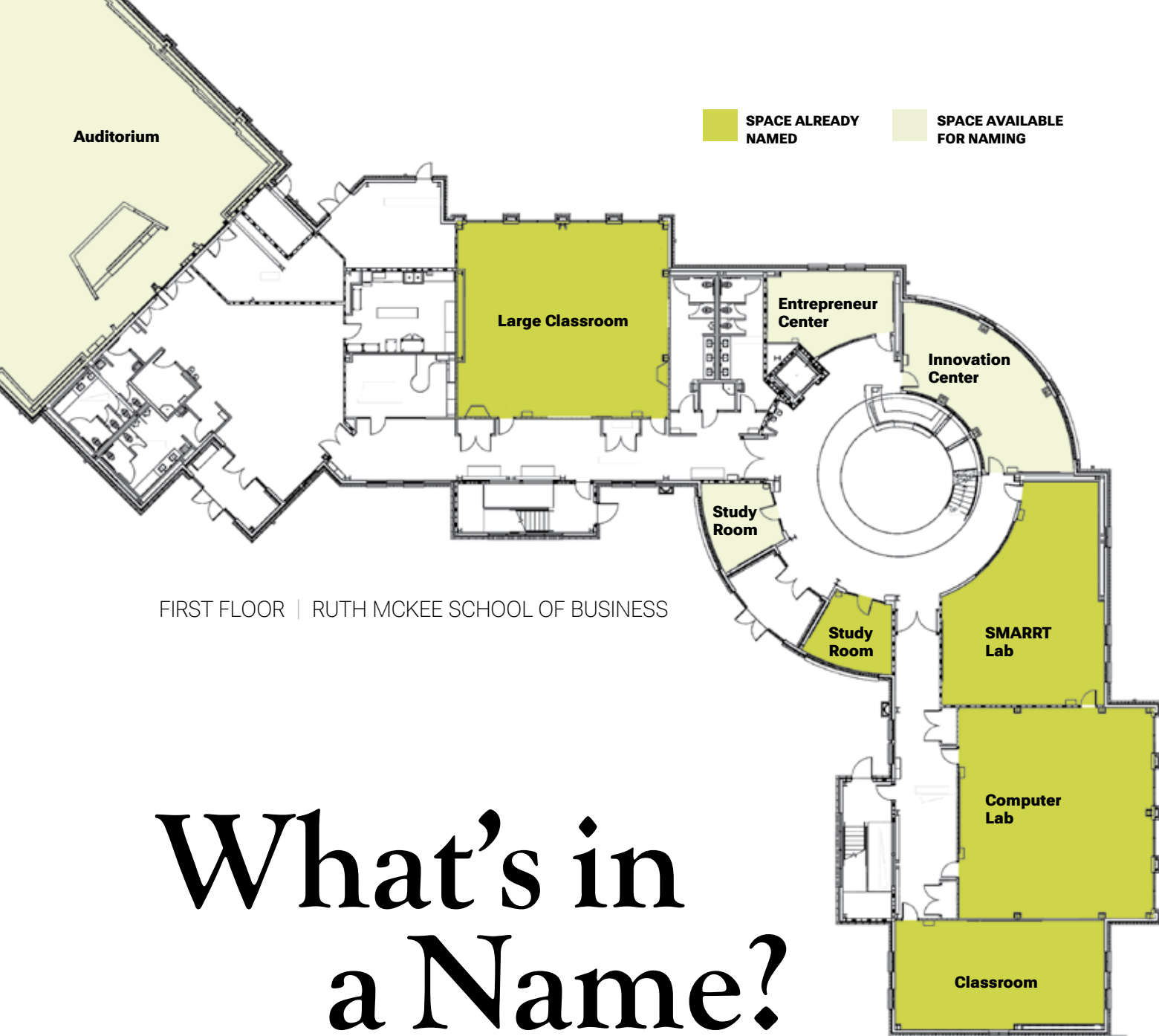
Every course begins with a biblical concept map where the class’ primary objective is supported by scripture.

than their Adventist peers from public universities. This was definitely Hagan’s experience. She felt encouraged by her teachers’ compassion and support and thrived on having her lessons presented in a biblical framework. Seeing her teachers strive for excellence every day made her want to give her best as well.

“I attended public high school and now that I’ve experienced Southern, I can’t imagine going back to an educational framework that doesn’t highlight faith,” Hagan said. “The professors, faculty, and staff make an incredible effort to reflect the character of Jesus. There is something special about deepening your understanding of your courses while also strengthening your relationship with Christ.” ■

by Angela (Ford) Baerg, '06





What's in a Name?

As construction progress helps the Ruth McKee School of Business take physical shape, additional work is occurring behind the scenes to ensure project success. Named spaces within a building shine a spotlight on the legacy of professors, family, and others who inspired donors and whose support provided them the opportunity to give back. This highly personal form of philanthropy forever connects the donors—or others the donors chose to honor—with Southern's mission.

The color-coded rendering above shows spaces already designated for naming on the first floor of the Ruth McKee School of Business. Donors have also chosen areas on the second, third, and fourth floors for naming; however, additional opportunities remain. Scan the QR code below to view each floor's available spaces. To learn more about naming a space in Southern's new Ruth McKee School of Business, email advancement@southern.edu or call 423.236.2829.



Topping Out Celebration

Staff, alumni, students, and community members participated in a topping out ceremony on March 5 by signing one of the final beams for the new Ruth McKee School of Business. President Ken Shaw, EdD, signs his name along with dean Stephanie Sheehan, PhD, the AdventHealth chair for Business Administration. Southern's School of Business is the second-largest academic department on campus. The new building will increase space from the current 9,000 square feet to approximately 53,000 square feet, providing much-needed room for students. To learn more, visit southern.edu/gobusiness.



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