



## **PCLE NEWS**

**PAMPLIN COMMUNITY FOR LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT**

October 2023

Hello everyone, this edition of the PCLE NEWS is being distributed to provide you with a recap of our recent in person PCLE meeting in Blacksburg. Please remember that as members of the PCLE it is important that you share your PCLE experiences with your fellow advisory board members, so further distribution of the PCLE News is appreciated.

## New Members

It is a pleasure to welcome the newest member of the PCLE-

- Donna Gibb represents the Apex Center for Entrepreneurs Advisory Board. Donna is Founder/President of ProTask, Inc.

Please join me in welcoming Donna to the PCLE. We appreciate the service of Brian Karlisch, who preceded Donna as the Apex representative to the PCLE

### **PCLE Meeting, Sep 28, 2023**

Jim Hatch, PCLE Chair welcomed everyone present, both in person and via Zoom. Jim then introduced Pamplin Dean Saonee Sarker to the group.

## Dean Saonee Sarker

Dean Sarker expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to lead Pamplin, stating that it was an honor and privilege. She thanked everyone for their tireless efforts, service and commitment to the College. She expressed her appreciation for her predecessors and strong alumni support which have created a strong platform for which to take the College onward and upward.

The Dean talked about implementing her vision for Pamplin through a number of initiatives that will evolve into the College's strategic plan, which will be in alignment with the University's goals. Meeting with approximately 100 individuals in Pamplin in her first 90 days has been an important priority and has provided great insight into the current state of Pamplin. A key takeaway has been that there is nothing that needs to be transformed or fixed, although there are opportunities to innovate and increase collaboration within the College and with other colleges in Virginia Tech. Noting that people are an important asset of Pamplin, the Dean expressed her view that there are opportunities to build upon Pamplin's reputation and rankings.

**The three R's.** The pathway forward for Pamplin, in the Dean's view lies in **Resources, Reputation** and doing all this with a sense of **Responsibility**. These

principles will guide the College's pathway forward and serve to further alignment with the University's priorities. It is important that the University value the role of Pamplin and the importance of a business education as a core value of Virginia Tech. Pamplin is well positioned to support Virginia Tech's ambitions to be in the Global 100 rankings, as well as its aspirations to join the AAU. The first step in this journey is to be re-accredited by the AACSB. The Pamplin accreditation report was submitted to the AACSB in early September and an on-site visit will occur in early November. The next step will be to identify a series of targeted initiatives that will help guide the development of the new five-year strategic plan.

The Dean presented a series of six targeted initiatives-

1. Analyze Pamplin's current set of educational programs (both graduate and undergraduate) to assess gaps, overlaps, bottlenecks, and redundancies and identify areas of excellence that can help in enhancing the reputation.
2. Expand Pamplin's graduate educational programs, as well as experiential learning opportunities.
3. Increase the impact and reputation of Pamplin's scholarly activities.
4. Expand Pamplin's efforts at societal impact and deepen its sense of responsibility.
5. Coordinate/Increase Pamplin's global efforts.
6. Ensure affordable excellence through innovation, both programmatically and through physical spaces.

The Dean wants to better understand the student experience and identify opportunities to better prepare the student to enter the workplace and have employers want to hire them. The College wants to understand what skills employers need. We want our students to be prepared and not have to learn once they enter the workforce.

Continuing with the theme of the Three R's, the Dean emphasized the importance of experiential learning and aligning with the interests of our corporate partners.

By extending the impact of faculty contributions to academic journals to inform a broader audience will be a way to expand Pamplin's influence and reputation.

Addressing the third “R”, the Dean spoke about the importance of performance measurement with faculty and staff and that it should not be one dimensional, but multi-dimensional, acknowledging and rewarding performance.

Dean Sarker talked about the concept of what she calls affordable excellence. Affordable excellence can be achieved through innovation, programmatically and through physical spaces. The Data & Decision Sciences building, the first phase of GBAC represents a big step in this direction.

The Dean described the work of a task force focusing on Reputation. This task force will look at scholarly reputation and programmatic rankings. In the spirit of excellence and innovation, a new task force has been formed to focus on AI, which is tied to the concepts of innovation and sense of responsibility. One of the top comments from the most recent senior survey was that Pamplin should incorporate more modern innovation into our curriculum in a more coordinated way. The AI task force will address this in two different ways: coming up with a cohesive strategy and how we infuse AI into our programs. With a sense of responsibility we need to focus on how we manage the use of AI in teaching and learning. While the University has some broad guidelines on the use of AI, they are not really implementable at the college level. Pamplin can lead the conversation and provide a model for the University.

The Dean announced that an organizational review has begun, working with the consulting firm Segal. Once we have a vision, a mission and a new strategic roadmap, it has to be complemented by the right organizational structure, which includes the people, positions, processes and policies. Determining what the future curriculum looks like will determine what kind of talent will be needed in targeted areas of the faculty.

Chair Hatch then discussed the history of the PCLE for the Dean’s benefit, noting that the PCLE strengthens the Pamplin community by providing a means for the 22 alumni advisory boards and four student advisory boards to collaborate, share best practices and enhance members general awareness of many of the numerous Pamplin initiatives at the departmental and center level. The PCLE affords the

opportunity to promote collaboration while maintaining the uniqueness of each individual advisory board.

## **Master of Accounting with Data and Analytics (MADA) Program** **Nadia Rogers, ACIS Associate Professor of Practice**

As a member of the ACIS faculty, Nadia serves as the Director of the Master of Accounting and Information Systems Program (MACIS). The MACIS Program currently has 75 students, who choose one of five options: Accounting, Analytics, Audit, Financial Services, Information Systems and Tax. The MACIS program attempts to bridge the gap between the knowledge classroom and what is going on in the profession.

KPMG approached the ACIS Department with a proposed Master of Accounting with Data and Analytics program (MADA) that they had developed. KPMG reviewed applications from a number of colleges and universities, offering to partner with them by sponsoring this concept. Only nine schools were selected to participate in the program. The course work goes beyond traditional accounting principles and expands into the technology realm. Students have access to KPMG's proprietary tool as well as other tools. Through access to KPMG's cloud, students are afforded greater access to software that would not otherwise be available with standard academic software. The KPMG program offers students the opportunity to acquire technology skills to supplement their accounting knowledge and therefore better prepare them for their jobs.

The KPMG MADA program provided curriculum support and enabled the Accounting Analytics option to be added. Students in the program take classes in the Fall, participate in an internship with KPMG in the Spring semester, and then return in the Summer for their remaining courses. Students sign a three-year full employment contract with KPMG, who then pays for tuition and fees for the students. These scholarships are funded by a three year, \$100,000 per year commitment from KPMG.

Nadia then introduced MACIS student Diego Lopez, who spoke about how the KPMG MADA program had enabled him to not only gain financial assistance, but gain valuable experience during the internship with KPMG.

## APEX CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Sean Collins, Director

Sean began the presentation by describing what Apex does: “We inspire students to turn their passion, purpose and ideas into action.” Promoting action is a central theme of the Apex Center, creating the 21st century career training start-ups while students are on campus. Students typically work on a startup while at Virginia Tech and then apply those lessons learned in a job with a mid-size or large company. Apex is about teaching the start up ethos and entrepreneurship in order to develop the skills and competencies for the modern workplace.

Sean then introduced Dr. David Townshend, Associate Professor in the Management Department. David described the academic programs that offer courses at the Undergraduate, Graduate, and PhD level. The Entrepreneurship program recently won the Model Program award from the US Association of Small Business. The Management Department has introduced a number of new courses, including subjects such as the intersection of AI and Entrepreneurship, employing technology in commercialization, global entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial leadership. The Entrepreneurship living, learning community, Innovate has been in existence since 2013 and is ranked as the #1 Entrepreneurship LLC in a University of Kentucky ranking of similar programs.

The Entrepreneurship program has a global reach, including a partnership with Xidian University in China where approximately 125 Chinese students spend a year at Virginia Tech and Virginia Tech faculty teach in China.

Research is also an important activity within Management Department programs at the PhD level. The research mission is “Translating leading-edge scholarly research into impactful research that engages, inspires, and empowers the entrepreneurial community.” A great example of this research is a study by Barry Vanderwal, who is an Executive PhD student. Vanderwal’s research is focused on Transitional Entrepreneurship among military veterans with PTSD.

David then introduced Ayesha Mahajabin, a dual Pamplin and College of Science major. Ayesha is also Chief Recruiting Officer for Tech Fellows, an organization that focuses on bridging the gap between entrepreneurship and technology. Currently in its first year Tech fellows has a class of 30 students who split into groups working with companies. This semester the groups are working on five projects. A technology mapping project that is focusing on creating a large language model application for technology. Another project in the medical field is to develop a rapid test for genetic testing. A team is working with Boeing in support of the aerospace industry to develop a natural language processing platform using neural networks that will help engineers and designers. An additional team is working on building a drone for Boeing and NASA. Finally, there is a project to develop hydrogen as a green energy source. The primary emphasis of Tech Fellows is to concentrate on the commercialization of technology.

Sean introduced Sebastian Uscher who recently presented at an international conference with his start up, Blast, which is a platform which would be like a better way to do SBA loans, trying to figure out what customer basis their technology can solve.

Sebastian indicated that he believes that his experience working with the Apex Center, coupled with his BIT major has given him a means to bridge the gap between entrepreneurship and technology. These two things, taken together, represent the best decision for Sebastian and enabled him to adapt and innovate in a more global setting.

The next student to speak was Levern Currie, a PhD student who is on a Department of Defense Fellowship who has developed an AI gesture automation

platform. She is preparing to roll out her platform as a test with some local restaurants. The platform will enable restaurant customers to place orders using talk, touch or sign based gestures. The system supports several different languages and accepts orders regardless of speech or hearing capability.

Responding to a question about what the Apex Center for Entrepreneurs is all about, Sean characterized Apex as a three legged stool. The first leg are the pure experiential programs, such as the one that Levern is pursuing. The second leg of the stool is the academic or credit bearing courses offered by the Management Department. The third leg of the stool is research. Apex currently has 879 students engaged in entrepreneurial endeavors representing all nine colleges at Virginia tech.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging  
Janice Hall, Associate Dean for DEIB

Janice returned to the PCLE to provide an update on Pamplin’s DEIB progress, beginning with her describing an award Pamplin’s DEIB program received from *Insight Into Diversity Magazine*. Upon announcing the award the publisher of the magazine said: “This award is being presented to the people and programs that encourage and inspire a new generation of people to consider careers in business. Your award-winning program continues to make a significant difference through mentoring, teaching, research and other efforts worthy of national recognition.”

Janice then presented to new 2022-2023 Impact report which highlights the Pamplin DEIB progress in the last school year. The report describes and pictures many events and milestones of note in its 45 pages.



Janice described the goals for Pamplin DEIB implementation plan as follows:

- Build the college infrastructure in Pamplin to ensure sustainable transformation in areas of DEIB.
- Achieve representational diversity in Pamplin
- Advance the academic mission of Pamplin through diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.
- Foster an equitable, inclusive community where stakeholders have a sense of belonging.

With respect to achieving representational diversity, during the 2022-2023 school year Pamplin achieved 41% underrepresented or underserved students in its freshman undergraduate class. Pamplin is the first college at Virginia Tech to reach or exceed the university's goal of 40% underrepresented or underserved students.

Janice described a very successful program for Pamplin; the Pamplin Inspiring Possibilities Academy or PIP. The PIP is a Summer program that brings high school students to campus and gives them exposure to various programs and majors. The program offers these high school students the opportunity to be exposed to the benefits of attending Virginia Tech.

DEIB is expanding its educational opportunities, one of which is by expanding the Core Curriculum Integration Plan. The goal is to instill in our graduates cultural humility and better knowledge around DEIB. Another initiative supported by the DEIB programs is the Student Org Coalition, which is an effort driven by Pamplin student organization leaders who desired greater education and experiences on DEIB and cultural humility to educate members of their organizations.

DEIB Around the World is a new program offering a 10 day global travel and cultural exposure opportunity to students who would otherwise never get the opportunity to have the experience. This past Summer 26 students participated in the program which pays all of their travel expenses. Janice introduced three students who talked about how much the international experience meant to them and how it helped broaden their perspective on the world stage.

Janice informed PCLE members that there will be a new quarterly newsletter, the DEIB News. The PCLE is expected to help spread the word by further distributing the DEIB News.

Finally, Janice presented her DEIB team members, who are assisting her in building out the Pamplin DEIB program. In addition to Janice, the other members of the team are:

Cassy Kost, DEIB Specialist  
Coral Rojas, Assistant Director Outreach  
Emily McCorkle, Director Student Success  
A'me Dalton, Special Projects Manager

## 2024 Pamplin Engagement Summit

The Chair then presented an overview of the exciting Pamplin Engagement Summit, which is scheduled for next April. The Summit is being sponsored jointly by Pamplin and the PCLE. PCLE Chair Hatch also serves as Chair of the Pamplin Engagement Summit Steering Committee which is charged with the planning for the Summit, working with a Pamplin Advancement team led by Crystal Jefferson. **All PCLE members are asked to spread the word to all of their advisory board members and encourage their attendance at the event.**

We are quite pleased that Dave Calhoun, CEO of Boeing will be our luncheon keynote speaker. Online registration will be available in early December. In addition, a Summit website will be online soon, with more information.

### **2024 pamplin Engagement Summit**

Date: April 18-19, 2024

Location: Hotel Roanoke

Invitees: All Pamplin Advisory Board, Council and society members, faculty and a student cohort.

Theme: Building bridges, forging futures, impacting globally

Thursday, April 18, 2024- Individual advisory board meetings, PCLE meeting.  
- 6:00pm Reception for all attendees

Friday, April 19, 2024- 8:00am Plenary session with President Sands, SVP for Advancement, Charlie Pflegar and Dean Sarker  
9:45am- First Breakout Session  
10:45-Second Breakout Session  
12:00 Noon Luncheon and Keynote Speaker Dave Calhoun  
1:30 (approx) Hotel Roanoke Session concludes  
3:30 (approx) Summit reconvenes at the Data & Decision Sciences Building in Blacksburg, where we will be joined by additional students.  
Student presentations and dialog: Who is the Pamplin Student, yesterday, today and tomorrow  
Reception with students

**Breakout Session Topics-** Attendees will be able to choose from a menu of interesting topics in meetings with smaller groups.

- Pamplin's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan
- Reimagining the alumni lifecycle and perpetual engagement
- Implications of AI in modern business education
- Pamplin Student Mentoring Strategy
- An Exploration of the Potential Value of Student Advisory Boards
- Supporting Entrepreneurship in Global Business Education
- Corporate Panel: Industry/Academia Engagement

Next PCLE Meeting (Zoom)  
December, TBD

Jim Hatch, Chair  
PCLE