



Department of
Management

Newsletter

Spring Edition - June 2025 ♦



Rendering for the New Gordon Ford College of
Business Building to open Fall 2025

To Greater Heights

Greetings alumni and friends of the Management Department!

In May, we wrapped up another successful academic year by **celebrating the graduation of 127 management majors**. The ceremony was the culmination of years of hard work for our students under the guidance of our dedicated faculty and staff. We are so proud of our graduates and look forward to tracking their achievements as alumni of WKU.

In addition to our students, several faculty members were singled out for recognition. **Dr. Feng Helen Liang** was awarded the GFCB Public Service Award for her contributions to our community and promoted to Full Professor – a significant achievement. **Dr. Gihan Edirisinghe** received the GFCB Student Advisement Award for his work with Delta Sigma Pi. **Ms. Angela Spiller**, won the GFCB Part-Time Faculty Award for her efforts in the classroom and as our department's Dual Credit Liaison.

Several faculty members were also recognized by students with Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning Honors. Congratulations to **Dr. Gihan Edirisinghe** (Fall & Spring), **Dr. Bob Hatfield** (Fall & Spring), **Dr. Dana Henson** (Spring), **Dr. Ashley Hockensmith** (Fall), **Dr. Helen Liang** (Fall), **Dr. Rahul Nilakantan** (Fall), **Ms. Lejla Nuhanovic-Becic** (Spring), **Ms. Angela Spiller** (Spring), and **Dr. Shane Spiller** (Fall & Spring)!

You can read more about the incredible opportunities these and other faculty members create for students in this issue.

As we look to the fall, our department is poised to build on these achievements. Our **enrollment remains strong with more than 750 Management students**. This represents more than a quarter of the 2700 students enrolled in GFCB.

Further, across our concentrations, minors, and certificates, our department currently serves approximately 1000 students. This fall, **we work to expand our reach with the launch of two new certificates**: Business Fundamentals, offered to non-GFCB students, and Business Law.

Perhaps most exciting, we will get the chance to serve these new students **in the new business building which will open for classes in August 2025**.

It is truly an exciting time for us. However, this work of continuous improvement is made possible only through your ongoing support. We look forward to connecting - or reconnecting - with you as we strive to reach even greater heights.

Sincerely,

Whitney Oliver Peake

Whitney Oliver Peake,
Vitale Professor and Chair



Spring 2025 Highlights

Learn.Grow.Lead

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HRising Stars

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Learn. Grow. Lead.



Learn. Management Department faculty have been working hard to give students hands-on experiences and opportunities to engage with industry professionals in the classroom.

This past semester:

- More than a dozen guest speakers discussed topics ranging from career expectations to solving real-world supply chain problems.
- Just under 50 industry professionals served as mock interviewers in April for the Career Readiness in Management seminar (MGT 399).
- Three students attended the 2025 [MTSU Midsouth Supply Chain Summit Meeting](#) in Murfreesboro.



Lead. Students in Dr. Bob Hatfield's MGT 417 - Organizational Behavior got to see first-hand how critical management concepts like leadership and communication manifest in real organizations.



Working in teams, students observed the operations of local charities across the community. Each team wrote a paper and presented an oral report related to their observations and interactions.

Many thanks to the organizations that provided this hands-on learning opportunity. This semester, teams worked with Curbside Ministries, Goodwill Industries, Habitat for Humanity, the International Center of Bowling Green (City Light Church), Lil' Angels Attic, Lost River Cave, ServeBG, and the Warren County Human Society.

Grow. Midsouth SHRM HRising Stars Mentorship Network

Midsouth SHRM is proud to announce the launch of the HRising Stars Mentorship Network, a dynamic new initiative designed to foster meaningful connections between seasoned HR professionals and the next generation of HR leaders.



Running from April 2025 - March 2026, this year-long program brings together professional members of Midsouth SHRM with student members from Western Kentucky University's SHRM chapter and invited students from Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC).

The goal of HRising Stars is to provide student participants with valuable mentoring experiences that deepen their understanding of human resource management, sharpen their professional skills, and expose them to real-world HR practices. Mentors and mentees commit to connecting for approximately 1-2 hours each month to enable impactful dialogue and support throughout the academic year.

The program began with an in-person kickoff event in the spring, with participants engaging in virtual activities throughout the summer. As the school year begins, the program will offer a blend of in-person and virtual activities, allowing students and mentors to stay connected in ways that best suit their schedules and preferences.

To ensure all students can participate fully, Midsouth SHRM will sponsor each student's national SHRM membership — a generous investment in the professional growth and development of future HR leaders.

In a message to our WKU SHRM Chapter, John Oliver, the Mid-South SHRM Chapter President shares, "Together, we can elevate the HR profession and strengthen our community through collaboration, learning, and shared purpose which perfectly aligns with our values and mission."

Alumni & Department Highlights



Chase Carpenter ('12) Named WKU "Under 40 at the Top" honoree

Chase Carpenter ('12 - Entrepreneurship) is the owner of Bundles of Joy Childcare in Bowling Green, Ky. Founded in 2012, Bundles of Joy serves more than 100 children, providing quality childcare and preschool education with a philosophy of "love first, and educate second."

Read more about Chase and his honor [HERE](#)



Students Consult with Local Organizations

This spring, students in ENT 496: Hilltopper Student Consulting Experience had the opportunity to work with small businesses and non-profit organizations in Kentucky. Students put in over 1300 hours helping partner organizations address critical, strategic challenges, engaging in projects ranging from market analysis to the development of social media strategies to engage potential consumers and volunteers.

A sincere 'thank you' is due to our community partners: The Blowout Co., Junior Achievement of South-Central Kentucky, Local Taco, Wixology, and the SCKY Nonprofit Alliance.



WKU Graduating Senior Pitcher, Calen Higgins

Calen Higgins graduated in May with a Major in Management and concentration in Business Administration, while pitching for the Hilltoppers baseball team. He boasted a 3.65 GPA and was named to the CUSA All-Academic Team.

During his three years at WKU, Calen made more than 50 appearances on the mound. He appeared in 18 games in the 2025 season, while boasting a 1-2 record with a 1.65 ERA and six saves. He tallied 41 strikeouts and just seven walks in 32.2 innings pitched.



Dr. Peake Leads Chamber of Commerce AI Masterclass

Dr. Whitney Peake delivered the April Chamber of Commerce Masterclass Training presented by Service One Credit Union.

During the one-hour workshop, Whitney shared strategies on AI for small businesses related to marketing and communication, customer engagement and service, and business operations.

MGT Dept. Alum, Steven Dossey, '16 receives GFCB Recent Alumni Achievement Award



Congratulations to Steven Dossey, this year's recipient of the GFCB Recent Alumni Achievement Award.

Steven graduated from WKU in 2016, with a degree in Management and a minor in Entrepreneurship. Today, he is the General Manager and Winemaker at Purple Toad Winery, Kentucky's largest winery.

Since joining the family business, Steven has doubled the workforce, increased revenue by 200%, and expanded the product line with innovations like fizzy wines, canned wines, and mini bottles.

Steven's leadership journey started early. He helped run operations at Purple Toad Winery before college and stepped up as General Manager and Lead Winemaker just a few years after graduation. He now manages all production and strategy for the Paducah facility and recently launched a distillery as part of the business.

Steven has also stayed connected to the Hilltopper community, serving on the Management Department Advisory Council, guest speaking in classes, and supporting student events.

**Interested in engaging with our students?
Do you have an update or news to share?
We'd love to hear from you!**

Please reach out to whitney.peake@wku.edu to discuss the ways in which you can support our efforts to create new and engaging learning opportunities for students. Any news, updates, and/or photos may be shared [HERE](#).

Student Spotlights



**Skylar Johnson -
Outstanding Senior in
Management**

Skylar Johnson graduated this spring from Management with a concentration in Supply Chain Management and Business Data Analytics.

As a student, Skylar worked with Holley Performance Products as a Material Planner Intern. This allowed Skylar to analyze data for thousands of parts, optimizing procurement strategies, and working with vendors across six countries.

Skylar plans to work as a supply chain analyst, bridging the gap between logistics and analytics.



**Maggie Jukes, Human
Resources Management**

Congratulations to Maggie Jukes! She is graduating with a degree in Management with a concentration in Human Resources.

Hometown: Bowling Green, KY

Future Plans: Maggie plans to become a Human Resource Manager who creates a workplace where people feel satisfied, supported, and safe.



**Ellie Burdette -
Outstanding Junior in
Management**

Ellie Burdette is a junior Management Major with a Concentration in Business Administration and a minor in Global Business. She is from White House, TN, but has spent most of her life in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Ellie's aspirations are to pursue a career in hospitality management. She plans to live abroad, managing a hotel or resort and has actively pursued this goal through study abroad in Barcelona Spain and a summer 2025 internship in Hilton Head, SC.



**Lauren Morrison,
Business Administration**

Congratulations to Lauren Morrison! Lauren graduated with Business Administration concentration and minor in Marketing.

Hometown: Henderson, KY

Future Plans: Lauren plans to continue growing with her current employer, Matthew 25. She's passionate about the organization's mission and says it keeps her dedicated and eager to grow within the team.

2024 Hilltopper Student Consulting Experience Students Win National Recognition



Two 2024 Hilltopper Student Consulting Experience teams distinguished themselves in the SBI Experiential Learning Project of the Year Competition at the 2024-2025 Small Business Institute (SBI) Conference in New Orleans.

The winning projects originated from ENT 496, a course led by Dr. Whitney Peake, Chair of the Department of Management in 2024. Each spring, students collaborate with local small businesses and nonprofits to analyze operations, identify opportunities, and deliver strategic recommendations.

The Kentucky Science Center Team claimed 1st place in the Undergraduate Feasibility/Comprehensive category. Team members included Chase Claymier, Drew Ericson, Andrew Trapp, Ethan Herman, Jonathan Roberts, and Kate Smith.

The Feel-Good Food Team secured 3rd place in the Undergraduate Specialized category. The client was Rachel Gonzalez. Team members included Grace Evans, Taylor Greulich, Maura Lamberth, Anthony Lashley, Skylar Latham, and Hunter Robinson.

For more information visit:
<https://loom.ly/vuBcRKs>

Alumni Spotlight - Jess Anderson '04

Director, Data Strategy & Delivery Operations for Marsh McLennan



For Jess Anderson, the path from Cherry Hall to the cutting edge of artificial intelligence was anything but conventional—but it was always driven by curiosity, leadership, and a love of language.

As a high school student, Jess was the editor of her school's literary magazine and a proud 1998 Kentucky Governor's Scholar. Her passion for reading and writing, combined with a natural inclination toward leadership and teaching, made WKU's vibrant campus and strong humanities program a perfect fit. "When I toured WKU, it just felt alive," she recalls. "The honors dorms, the energy of Bowling Green—it all clicked." She began her undergraduate journey confident in her love for the humanities, but with the guidance of a supportive advisor, she explored broader career paths.

That exploration led her to the Gordon Ford College of Business, where she earned a B.S. in Human Resources Management. Still, her heart never strayed far from the humanities—her favorite elective was a graduate-level Civil War history course, where she was the only undergraduate (and the only woman) in the room.

"I tell my kids now: take electives that light you up. Sometimes learning is just about expanding your awareness of the world."


Jess's career began at the Best Buy in Bowling Green, where she worked throughout college. That job opened the door to a corporate role in Minneapolis, launching her into the world of business with hands-on experience that proved invaluable. From sitting in on executive meetings to discovering a passion for project management, Jess quickly found her stride. She earned her PMP certification and later completed one of the first online MBA programs available at the time.

Jess's journey took her to Mercer Human Resources Consulting, where she transitioned from project management to technology, and eventually to data, analytics, and AI. Today, she leads Mercer's global Data, Analytics, and AI delivery team—bringing her love of leadership, teaching, and communication full circle.

Her career highlights are as dynamic as her path: she led the project that inspired Best Buy's first-ever Super Bowl ad in 2011 (featuring Ozzy Osbourne and Justin Bieber), and spearheaded Mercer's first major agile project, which earned the 2019 IDG CIO Digital Edge 50 Award. She was also named a Fortune Fellow in 2023.

But for Jess, the most meaningful accomplishments are the quiet ones: mentoring breakthroughs, team wins, and collaborative moments that make the work worthwhile. "Those small, quiet interactions lead to the big wins and make life fun."

Thank you for reading!

	
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